Editors’ welcome

Welcome to Issue 2 of the Queen Mary History Journal 2013, ‘Intellectual History’. We were impressed with the calibre of submissions this month; thanks to all who sent their essays in, and if you were not successful this time around we’d love to hear from you again. The thinkers considered in this edition range from Niccolò Machiavelli to Jean-Jacques Rousseau to Mary Wollstonecraft, via several ancient Greeks and Immanuel Kant. We hope you enjoy reading it as much as we relished putting it together. The speakers at this edition’s launch are Dr. Robert Saunders and PHD student Callum Barrell. They will be discussing the development of democratic ideals in Britain and John Stuart Mill respectively.

We have exciting things planned for the coming months. We are currently accepting submissions for December’s edition, entitled ‘East and West’. It is an intentionally broad theme; we have already received essays on such diverse subjects as the Crusades and the Cold War, so if you have marked work that fits this wide interpretation of the title, please send it in by December 4th. The launch will be on Monday 9th, when Dr Yossef Rapoport will compare the cartography of Middle Eastern and European travellers during the Middle Ages.

In the New Year we will be launching the first of two print editions of the QMHJ for this academic year. This edition does not have a theme; it will simply contain the best five-to-six essays submitted so far, including those already published in online editions. Print editions of the QMHJ are kept by the British, Senate House and Queen Mary Libraries. General submissions for this edition are now open.

All essay submissions should be sent to qmulhistoryjournal@outlook.com. For December’s edition put ‘East and West’ in the subject line, and for print put ‘General’. Please note that ALL submissions are being considered for the print edition. By submitting under a theme you are doubling your chances of getting published, not reducing them. We look forward to reading your essays and to seeing you at our upcoming events.

All the best,

Sam Winton and Ruth Irwin

Editor-in-Chief and Commissioning-editor
What did Wollstonecraft’s thought share with Rousseau’s and in what ways did she differ from him?

Abigail Hayton

Jean-Jacques Rousseau had a major influence on the thought of Mary Wollstonecraft. She was so enthusiastic about his work that in 1794 she declared herself to be “half in love with him”.¹ Wollstonecraft’s thought is based on many of the same assumptions as Rousseau’s. She rejects much of natural rights theory and has a negative attitude toward sensibility and civilisation. However, there is a clear division between the two of them on the issue of women. In this case, Rousseau deviates from his underlying beliefs in the conventional character of society and posits that the subjugation of women is a natural phenomenon, which must be cultivated as such. Here, Wollstonecraft takes a position which is more consistent with the rest of Rousseau’s thought and argues that through changing the way women are educated, their position in society can and should be elevated.

Mary Wollstonecraft was a writer of the late eighteenth century. Her major works followed the death of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who clearly influenced her more than any other thinker, which has led to her being described as “a Rousseauist”.² Wollstonecraft first rose to prominence in 1790, with Vindication of the Rights of Men, the first response in the so-called ‘Pamphlet War,’ which debated Edmund Burke’s Reflections on The Revolution in France. Here, Wollstonecraft attacked not
notions of hereditary privilege and accused Burke of holding onto a “feudal worldview”. Beyond this, she accused him of “effeminacy”. This trait in Wollstonecraft’s thought, as in Rousseau’s, is usually associated with aristocracy. She later came to write *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* for which she is most famous. This work has been described as “the intellectual manifesto of Western feminism”. Within this work, she is sharply critical of Rousseau, whose views of women are diametrically opposed to her own. She takes central ideas of Rousseau’s about the conventional nature of society and applies them to the question of education for women. As Barbara Taylor has put it, she took “Rousseau’s opinion respecting men which she extended to women”.

Rousseau’s ideas about the foundation of societies, the capacity for human self-improvement and civilisation were all taken up by Wollstonecraft. Rousseau’s attitude toward natural law theory is uncertain, but he explicitly disregarded the attempt by many to “explain the state of nature with ideas derived from civil society”, which must refer, at least in part, to Thomas Hobbes, whose conception of ‘The State of Nature’ is entirely different from Rousseau’s. Rousseau is in fact very positive about the so-called ‘State of Nature’. He asks ironically in his *Discourse on Inequality*, “if anyone has ever heard of a savage in a condition of freedom even dreaming of complaining about his life and killing himself”. Rousseau does not see the condition of his society as natural at all, but rather, based on convention. Therefore, his view that women are naturally inclined to serve men which forms the basis for part of his argument in *Emile*, his famed work on education, is not in keeping with the rest of his thought, as Wollstonecraft points out.

A metaphor that is common in the work of both Rousseau and Wollstonecraft is that of chains representing imprisonment. *The Social Contract* famously begins with the words, “Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains”. Both thinkers engage deeply with the question of liberty and the effects that a lack of liberty have on one’s desire for liberty. Rousseau observes this phenomenon in slaves, who he believes, “lose everything in their chains, even there desire to be rid of them”. This line of reasoning is taken up by Wollstonecraft, and applied to the contemporary situation of women, many of whom “hug their chains,” metaphorically embracing their inferior station. Regarding the slave, Rousseau does not believe his status to be a natural one, as Aristotle did, but rather his slavish behaviour is the effect, not the cause of his enslavement. It is this argument that Wollstonecraft employs regarding the supposed inferiority of woman. Through “cramping [her] mind” with limited educational opportunities, she is certain to occupy the subservient role Rousseau has ordained for her. This metaphor of slavery is so important in Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* that it is referenced over eighty times.

Another form of analogy used by both Rousseau and Wollstonecraft, is that
of personal relationships, which can be extended to explain concepts relating to society. Indeed, as will be demonstrated, Wollstonecraft criticises Rousseau’s ideas about society, in light of his inexperience of personal relationships. For her, it is friendship as opposed to love, which forms the basis of an enlightened, virtuous society. This can be contrasted with Rousseau’s notion of the patriarchal family as the foundation of civilised society. However, paradoxically, he refutes this conception in his *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*. Friendship is prized so highly by Wollstonecraft, as it is a relationship that can only exist between equals and therefore, unlike hierarchical relationships, it does not degrade either party. She defines friendship as a “serious affection, the most sublime of all affections”. This use of the word “sublime” is notable, as in her *Vindication of the Rights of Men* Wollstonecraft critiques Burke’s *A Philosophical Enquiry into Our ideas of The Sublime and the Beautiful*, in which the sublime is associated with men, and beauty with women. Despite her advocating increased opportunities for women, Wollstonecraft plays into a narrative that sees the elevation of women in their masculinisation. Within the work of both writers, analogies of equality between individuals are extended to make broader points about the benefits of equality for all society. Though this concept is strong in Rousseau, it is Wollstonecraft who extends it to women. In critiquing Rousseau’s ideas she promotes a view of friendship and of equal partnership as the ideal in marriage and in society more broadly. This conception of male-female relationships is opposed by Rousseau in his *Second Discourse*, which conceives of a “happy marriage” on the basis of the woman’s “persuasive gentleness” and “simple and modest attire”. This kind of feminine power is potent, though it stems from the subjugation of women and is dependent upon a belief in innate difference, which Wollstonecraft rebukes.

In her *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Wollstonecraft contextualises her own thought with regard to Rousseau’s. “Rousseau exerts to prove that all was right originally; a crowd of authors that all is now right: and I, that all will be right.” She takes issue with Rousseau’s idealisation of the past, as she did Burke’s. Barabara Taylor has described this feature of her thought as “anti-historicalism,” which she views as the root of Wollstonecraft’s quarrel with both thinkers. Wollstonecraft certainly viewed herself as optimistic about the potential of civilisation, whilst maintaining a Rousseauian disdain for its excesses. Taylor believes however, that Wollstonecraft’s understanding of Rousseau was flawed and that he was in fact an advocate of “democratic political progress,” as opposed to the “back-to-nature primitivist” he represents in the thought of Wollstonecraft and other eighteenth century writers.

Rousseau’s view in his *Second Discourse*, is that inequality can only be defined as such when natural, psychological or physiological differences between individuals or sets of individuals, are recognised and rewarded by society and that even socially sanctioned inequalities must correspond to physical inequalities in order to be considered legitimate. For Timothy O’ Hagan, this would give us good
grounds to believe that Rousseau encouraged moves toward gender equality. However, in *Emile* he advocates entirely different forms of education for the two characters, Emile and Sophie on the basis of their innate difference. It was with this contradiction between Rousseau’s ideas about equality and his attitudes towards women that Wollstonecraft took issue.

An area of agreement between Rousseau and Wollstonecraft is with regards the “right of the stronger” argument, which gives authority to whosoever may seize it. Both thinkers strongly reject this argument. Rousseau states in *The Social Contract* that, “the right of the stronger is no right at all.” However, he does not apply this reasoning to the case of women, who because of their relative physical weakness are presumed to be “specially made for man’s delight” and required only to be “weak and passive” in their relationships with men. For Wollstonecraft, Rousseau is here inferring normative statements from factual ones, thus violating his own principles.

Wollstonecraft highlights a similar issue with Rousseau’s rejections of the “naturalist fallacy,” prevalent in the writings of both Hobbes and Locke which leads them to project constructs of civil society, such as family ties, onto their conceptions of ‘the state of nature’. She demonstrates how Rousseau himself has fallen into the same trap in *The Social Contract* by presenting the family as “the only natural society”, where the initial ruler-ruled relationship takes place between father and son. Here he has failed to recognise that the patriarchal family emerged from a particular stage of development, which could not have existed in Rousseau’s conception of the state of nature. Rousseau’s ideas about ‘the state of nature’ had stripped hereditary kingship of its validity, whilst simultaneously subjecting women to submission, according to a logic, which he himself had rejected.

For Wollstonecraft, Rousseau’s ideas about the ‘state of nature’, which were foundational to the rest of his thought, demonstrate his being “enamoured” with solitude. She sees his conception of male-female relationships, as stemming from the same loneliness which Rousseau personally felt, never having experienced true love or companionship. She made similarly discrediting remarks regarding his credentials as a writer on education, citing herself as a more reliable authority given her greater experience with child rearing. Despite using his apparent misunderstanding of human relationships to undermine him, Wollstonecraft clearly identified with the solitude of Rousseau. Her *Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution* opens with a very pessimistic perspective of the pursuit of progress, in light of Man’s “miserable weakness as a solitary being,” and her *Letters from Sweden* are clearly influenced by Rousseau’s *Reveries of a Solitary Walker*.

Rousseau is famously pessimistic about the pursuit of progress. He does not favour grand schemes to remake politics. As he says in a letter to Mirabeau of 1767, all people “attribute too much force to [their] calculations and not enough to the inclinations of the human heart and the play of the passions.” Wollstonecraft notes
that such a perspective could lead to the advocating of despotism on the part of “superficial observers,” who would see it as the only way to maintain order in a world where all are “unqualified to judge with precision of their civil and political rights.” In that same letter Rousseau advocates what he calls, “arbitrary despotism”, which would, “place man as much above the law as he can be.” Wollstonecraft however, takes the opposite approach to this problem of the interaction between human reason and passion in politics. She suggests creating a legal system, which will guide governments in accordance with logic toward enacting the greater good, thus overcoming the problem of individuals being motivated by their passions. Rousseau had however, rejected this approach, as he did not believe it to be viable. In terms of their ideas about the potential for a rational re-creation of society, it is apparent that Wollstonecraft was more optimistic than Rousseau. Whilst sharing his concerns, she demonstrated a greater faith in the “perfectibility of human reason”, which she called, “the stamen of immortality.”

Boyd Hilton points out that it is difficult to call Wollstonecraft a feminist in the conventional sense of the word, “as she obviously despised her own sex as much as she resented the other.” She mostly appears to concur with Rousseau’s view that civilisation has made man “feeble, timid, servile” and “effeminate,” expressing many criticisms of the society in which she finds herself. In Chapter I of the Vindication of the Rights of Woman, she expresses particular disdain for the “wretchedness that has flowed from hereditary honours, riches and monarchy.” This association between wealth or civilisation and effeminacy, seems to be taken for granted in the works of both writers. Both Wollstonecraft and Rousseau see the hierarchical nature of civilised society as leading to the degradation of all involved, especially the most elevated. Wollstonecraft puts it as, “every extrinsic advantage that exalt a man above his fellows, without any mental exertion, sink him in reality below them.” In common with other Enlightenment thinkers, they attack the eighteenth century mentality of ‘sensibility’. Wollstonecraft explains this culture in which “sentiments” triumph over “passions,” as being particularly prevalent amongst women and the rich, due to them “being seldom absolutely alone.” These notions of the corrupting effects of society are a recurring theme in Rousseau, who describes reflection as, “contrary to nature” and repeatedly praises the Spartans for their basic way of life. This connection between civilisation and women means that Rousseau seems to blame the “artificial” nature of his society on its so-called feminisation. He even attributes the creation of “moral” notions of love to the work of women attempting to “establish their empire of men.” This highly cynical and negative portrayal of the role women have played in the development of society not only goes unchallenged by Wollstonecraft, but is to a large extent accepted by her.

Despite her obvious belief in the potential of women, Wollstonecraft suggests that their route to advancement involves becoming more like men. As previously stated, Wollstonecraft accepts femininity as a broadly negative influence on society
in contrast with masculinity, which she clearly favours. She does not believe that men
are innately masculine, or women innately feminine. This is the root of this particular
quarrel with Rousseau’s Emile. These ideas about sexual difference fed into the wider
Enlightenment project of “replacing the idea of an innate, immutable human nature by
one open to change and improvement.” Since Rousseau believes human agreement to
provide the only basis for binding rules of right or wrong,

it would logically follow that
he would be supportive of this project with regards to women, as he is in terms of its
opposition to hereditary privilege and paternal authority. However, Rousseau is in fact
so opposed to more fluid conceptions of gender, that he sees woman’s attempt to
“usurp [male] rights” as furthering her inferiority. For him, “woman is worth more as a
woman and less as a man.” According to his perspective in Emile, Wollstonecraft’s
vision for women would lead to their further degradation as opposed to their
emancipation.

Wollstonecraft’s intellectual debt to Rousseau is undeniable. He has influenced
her view of civilisation, of equality and of freedom. However, Wollstonecraft takes
Rousseau’s egalitarian, rational principles and applies them to women’s rights and
education, an area where he, paradoxically held to a position of innate inequality.
Wollstonecraft’s Oeuvre, it could therefore be argued, is more in keeping with what one
might term the Rousseauian worldview than Rousseau’s. Despite their disagreement on
the relative mutability of the female situation in society, both Wollstonecraft and
Rousseau associate effeminacy with weakness, therefore conflating feminisation with
civilisation, a process which both believed to have had negative consequences. The
broad worldviews of these two thinkers are very similar, in that they accept many of
the same principles as axiomatic. However, with regards the issue of women,
Rousseau repeatedly violates his own principles, a problem Wollstonecraft
attributes to his personal failings, making her perhaps, in this issue, a better
advocate of Rousseauianism than Rousseau.

Notes

1. Barbara Taylor, ‘Mary Wollstonecraft and the Wild Wish of Early Feminism’, History
Workshop, No. 33 (Spring, 1992), pp. 197-219, (p. 198).
2. Barbara Taylor, Mary Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination, (Cambridge
University Press, 2003), p. 73.
Woman and A Vindication of the Rights of Men, (Oxford University Press, 1999),
pp. vii-xxx, (pp. x-xiii).
4. Ibid.
5. Barbara Taylor, ‘Mary Wollstonecraft and the Wild Wish of Early Feminism’, History
University Press, 2003), p. 73.
Notes


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**Books**


Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings*, (Cambridge University Press).


Bibliography


**Articles**


**Primary Sources**


Abigail Hayton  What did Wollstonecraft’s thought share with Rousseau’s and in what ways did she differ from him?
Analyse closely the passage and situate it in the context of Book I of Niccolò Machiavelli’s Discourses.

Sam Allen

Machiavelli’s Discourses encompasses a political treatise in which Niccolo Machiavelli, the Italian Renaissance political theorist, offers a humanistic theory of government based on the ancient Roman Republic model. Book I takes a constitutional focus and the passage in question relates to one of Machiavelli’s most radical and subversive assertions; namely that conflict, “between the nobility and the people,” brings about laws that are favourable to preserving liberty rather than damaging it. Thus, the extract pertains to three key inter-related elements of Machiavelli’s political treatise; firstly, the role of class conflict in establishing and sustaining a mixed constitutional system, or ‘popular’ form of government, thus safeguarding the liberty of citizens; secondly, the paramountcy of liberty itself within the context of republicanism and citizen virtu; thirdly, Machiavelli’s conception of human nature and the notion that positive outcomes or “good effects” can excuse immoral actions.

Machiavelli’s heterodox assertion that class factionalism and discord between the nobility and the people created laws “in favour of liberty” countered Ciceronian conceptions of republican political thought. A considerable number of political commentators at the time agreed that factionalism and disorder disrupted the functioning of a republic. Machiavelli stated that there are “two different dispositions” which made up the “opposed factions;” the nobility and the masses. The inevitable clash that occurred between these class factions was one that “many so inconsiderably condemn.” Machiavelli considered, however, that each faction acts as a positive block on sectional interests and this prevented any other faction from gaining precedence in the enactment of law.

Machiavelli sees class rivalry as serving to establish a desired bicameral constitutional system. This, for Machiavelli, was integral to the maintenance of the liberties of a commonwealth. In order to substantiate his argument Machiavelli referred to ancient Rome. In the Discourses he highlighted the tumults between the plebs and patrician senate in Rome and the consequent founding of the Plebeian Tribune. Rome’s republican constitutional government which represented “all three estates,” exemplified, for Machiavelli, how a constitutional state could be established when there is conflict between different classes of people. “Tumults deserve the highest praise”, wrote Machiavelli, because they “served as the guardian of Roman liberties.”

Machiavelli asserted that it is important to give the masses an equal share in governance because their demands “are seldom harmful to liberty.” Thus the clash between the “two opposed factions” is perceived as a creative and necessary force, in Machiavelli’s thought, because it leads to the establishment of institutions and the enactment of laws “whereby the liberties of the public benefit [sic.].”
According to Machiavelli, the safeguarding of liberty is vital to any government aspiring for long-term stability and civic greatness. Although the Discourses appeared to be a radical subversion of contemporary notions of political relations in its presentation of “discord” as a healthy political element of republican society, its hypothesis is in fact more of a development on the classical theory of liberty. Machiavelli maintained this classical theory in his endorsement of the independence of citizens from external aggression and servitude by promoting the power of laws in guarding these freedoms. Machiavelli argued that the flourishing of liberty is conducive to the citizen body exercising ‘virtu’ because it allows the populace to engage in political activity, generating a collective public spirit. Machiavelli regarded the virtu of the populace as integral to civic greatness and glory, hence his advocacy of a republic over other forms of government. In Rome’s case the “laws made in the favour of liberty” made the city “so rich in virtue.” The positive role of class dissension, detailed in the passage, is central to Machiavelli’s preference of republican forms of government because it was conducive “to its perfection.”

The passage reflects Machiavelli’s controversial stance that “reprehensible actions may be justified by their effects,” particularly when they benefit the ‘common good’ of the public. He accused his fellow commentators of “only considering the quarrels and the noise” that class conflict in Rome entailed rather than “the good effects” it brought about.

Machiavelli presented the example of Romulus and the Murder of his own brother. Machiavelli excused Romulus for this action because it brought about the founding of Rome by providing a strong single figure to govern it. Machiavelli’s assertion that violent and immoral actions can be excused if their outcome is good pervaded all of Machiavelli’s political postulations.

Machiavelli based his abstraction that mankind is naturally violent on his cynical perception of human nature. Throughout Book I, Machiavelli stressed that “men are more prone to evil than good” because envy was, to him, inherent in man’s nature. In relation to Machiavelli’s considerations of class friction, both the demands and actions of the nobility and the populace are fuelled by selfishness. Selfishness, for Machiavelli’s contemporaries, was not a justified motive for violence. For Machiavelli, however, if an action provided positive results, such as the maintenance of a Republic’s bicameral system, it should be praised. Machiavelli considered that the maintenance of a Republic relied on the careful exploitation of the selfish demands of citizens by turning these into forces that contribute to the ‘common good’ of a commonwealth.

The passage in book I of the Discourses shows Machiavelli subverting the classical and renaissance notions of class relations and their role in promoting virtu and political stability. Machiavelli’s more implicit message was that the art of governance entails the careful balancing of human egotistical desires. In chapter 3 of Book I, Machiavelli warned his reader that one constituting
and legislating for a community must accept that “all men are wicked” and that all men “give vent to the malignity that is in their minds when opportunity offers.”

Machiavelli’s cynical perception of human nature, as well as his often-condemned adherence of political opportunism, are discernible in this important passage.

**Notes:**

2. Ibid., p. 184.
4. Ibid., p. 114.
5. Ibid., p. 111.
6. Ibid., p. 115.
7. Ibid., p. 114.
8. Ibid., p. 114.
10. Ibid., p. 206.
12. Ibid., p. 106.
13. Ibid., p. 132.

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Machiavelli’s work on political philosophy is best understood in a general humanist, and more specifically, Florentine historical and intellectual context. Republican governments and civic administration of independent cities had already been established in Italy by the 12th century. A genre of treatise on city government sprang to existence, and although consensus was reached that the best form of government for a city was elective as opposed to monarchical, no tradition of specifically ‘civic’ virtue or ideology emerged until the 14th century. The 14th century saw the beginnings of the process of ‘rediscovery’ of ancient Greek and Roman writers and the quadrocento of Italian history continued the process even more intensely. Aristotle’s work was introduced piecemeal to Europe via Arabic translations compiled in Andalucía, and the discovery of Cicero’s De Oratore and Quintilian’s Institutio Oratoria led to a revaluation of the long-static field of ars dictaminis, the medieval corpus of rhetorical models and tradition on which the earlier city governance-genre was based. Cicero and Aristotle in particular would form the basic models of humanist political thinking and especially the revival of republicanism: whereas earlier writing emphasised the attainment of glory as the ultimate goal of a city, Cicero links the notion of true honour, verum decus, to that of virtus or virtue, which could be only attained by serving the state. The Ciceronian conception of virtue served as the template for the humanist idea of a good man being a good citizen, paving the way for the idealisation of civic participation as a moral precept. Likewise Aristotle in the first chapter of the first book of his Politics establishes the city-state as the telos of human nature as it provides the best framework for living a fulfilling life, and his work also provided the first taxonomical framework for writers such as Leonardo Bruni and Pier Candido Decembrio to compare different types of constitutions in a more subtle way than the pre-humanist monarchical-republican division. In the words of Nicolai Rubenstein, the work of Aristotle and Cicero “provided a unique key to the urban world of politics” as “no had existed before the ‘rediscovery’ of [Aristotle’s] work,” and established a sense of newfound continuity between the Greek polis and Italian city-state.

A the time of humanist ‘rediscovery’ of the classics the majority of the Italian city-states had lost their independence, and for example Decembrio’s treatise on government took on the form of an advice book for the Duke of Milan. It was part of the flourishing genre of ‘mirror for princes’ that presented princes with analysis of Christian and classical virtues as examples by which to govern a monarchy justly. Though similar scholastic work had existed prior to the quadrocento and humanist revival, Seneca’s De Clementia proved to be the most influential model to draw on in the 15th century. The most famous work done in this humanist tradition is Machiavelli’s The Prince, and as a product of this time the works of Cicero, Aristotle
and Seneca play an important part in defining the key concepts of the work. In the very beginning of the first chapter of *The Prince* Machiavelli lays out the distinction between two kinds of newly acquired principalities: hereditary ones which are “like limbs which are joined to the hereditary state of the prince who acquires them,” and ones which have been acquired “with the arms of others or of his own, either by fortune or by prowess.”

The word used by Machiavelli to denote prowess is *virtù*, and it is contrasted with *fortuna*, fortune. Machiavelli’s *virtù* is very different from those used by the ancients and his contemporaries, as it does not denote traditional moral ‘virtue’. Rather, it denotes the masculine qualities of leadership, decisiveness, and above all flexibility to adapt to the ever-changing circumstances of human life. The masculinity of virtue established by Cicero in his *Tusculan Disputations* in which he derives *virtus* from the Latin word *vir*, man, and stipulates that in order to be a true man one must possess *virtus* ‘to the highest degree.’

*Virtus*, which he considers to be both ‘virtue’ in the contemporary sense and ‘manliness’ in an implicit manner, is a prerequisite for political life. In politics it is ‘subjected to the paramount test, and greatness of soul is most decidedly required if one is to pass the test.’ Thus *virtus*, though ostensibly categorised as a moral and not a political concept, was already linked in Roman thought to its use in politics and they in which individuals should serve the state.

The masculine nature of *virtù* becomes even more apparent when viewed in contrast to the feminine *fortuna*, the fortune and fickleness of human affairs. *Fortuna* was the Roman goddess and personification of luck and fate, and in the classical histories of Rome, notably Plutarch’s *Parallel Live’s* and Livy’s *Ab urbe condita* that forms the nucleus of the Machiavelli’s *Discourses*, she is granted an important role in enabling the greatness of Rome. *Fortuna* is inherently a fickle force, and fluctuates between bestowing gifts upon those she favours subsequently withdrawing it. What she gifts varies from author to author: for Seneca it was honour and riches, for Sallust glory, power and *dignitas* for the noble family, but in the most widespread formulation of Cicero it was personal honour and glory.

The most important issue for Machiavelli’s prince is thus to attain the *virtù* required to successfully rule a state and protect it from the fluctuating will of *fortuna*, as often cited by Livy in the Roman maxim *fortes fortuna adiuvat*.

The most famous treatment of the relationship between the two can be found in chapter XXV of *The Prince*. He compares *fortuna* to “those violent rivers which, when they are enraged, flood the plains, tear down trees and buildings...Yet it does not follow when they are flowing quietly one cannot take precautions, constructing dykes and embankments.” Those who adapt to the fluctuation of *fortuna* through the prudence of sound policy and decisiveness to execute it will be successful as rulers. The decisive and masculine nature of *virtù* is emphasised, “because fortune is a woman and if she is to be submissive it is necessary to beat her and coerce her,” and she favours men as “being a woman, she favours young men because they are less circumspect and more ardent, and because they
command her with greater audacity.” Roman socio-political concepts in the form of virtù and fortuna, as the prerequisite for successful governance as outlined in Cicero and purveyed by the humanists and as the force that affects all human political venture respectively, are thus inalienable from Machiavelli’s political philosophy of statecraft and how a prince is able to maintain a successful state.

The political virtues of the prince are also defined in relation to Ancient Roman and Greek moralists. Chapter XVII, ‘Concerning Cruelty and Clemency’ is a rather direct inversion of Seneca’s De Clementia, in which Seneca uses historical biographies as a pedagogical tool to convince Nero of the virtues of mercy. Machiavelli, citing the example of Hannibal, claims that his success “arose from nothing else than his inhuman cruelty, which, with his boundless valour, made him revered and terrible in the sight of his soldiers, but without that cruelty, his other virtues were not sufficient to produce this effect.” In the following chapter Machiavelli establishes two ways of establishing political hegemony and exerting influence over other men, by law and by force. Cicero in De Oficiis uses the same distinction in his conceptions of how injustice is wielded within a state, and uses the difference between a fox and a lion to distinguish the two. The use of power in the manner of beast such as a lion is the unjust use of force, and deception and the twisting of truth is the manner of the fox. Drawing upon this, Machiavelli cites how ‘ancient writers’ had for a long time referred to the education of a prince to that of Achilles, who was raised by the centaur Chiron, a creature that was half-man and half beast, exemplifying the noble force of nature and that of man’s laws. The result of Machiavelli’s synthesis of ancient political thought and his own political philosophy on the use of power is possibly the most well-known and contentious passage in The Prince: “A prince, therefore, being compelled knowingly to adopt the beast [in reference to Chiron], ought to choose the fox and the lion; because the lion cannot defend himself against traps and the fox cannot defend himself against wolves. Therefore, it is necessary to be a fox to discover the traps and a lion to terrify the wolves. Those who rely simply on the lion do not understand what they are about.” Political virtue for Machiavelli is thus the ability to acquire and maintain a state successfully, and is formed as a refutation of classical and humanist thinking. Political expediency is placed over what is considered morally correct, and the Ciceronian maxim of nihil utile quod non honestum celebrated by humanists is abandoned by Machiavelli as being simply false.

Though ancient Roman and Greek political thought profoundly influence Machiavelli’s political philosophy, it is important to note that he is self-consciously a highly original thinker. It is doubtful that chapter XVII is a direct refutation of specifically Seneca’s work. Likewise when Machiavelli is advocating the use of an armed citizen militia in Chapter 18 of book two of The Discourses and in chapters XII and XIII in The Prince he is not merely advocating Aristotle’s idea that a the citizenry of a polis should form a militia as expounded in Politics. Rather, they are the result of
his self-proclaimed inductive method of statecraft, which uses both history and contemporary events as guidelines to how to conduct successful policy. Therefore for example the impact of Seneca’s ideas of virtues in political governance on Machiavelli’s treatment of princely virtues is not explicit but implicit as it forms a crucial part of the humanist framework of statecraft and political philosophy Machiavelli is arguing against, such as that clemency is one of the main components of successful governance.

Machiavelli’s discussion of the ten first books of Livy’s *Ab urbe condita* brings forth two distinct uses for the word ‘republic’: firstly as that of a general term for the Roman *res publica*, a system of relation between state and society where the common good is upheld, and secondly as a more specific form of active and participatory citizenship.²⁶ Owing to rediscovery of *Politics* in Machiavelli’s time, his analysis of optimal constitutions shows a strong Aristotelian tendency. In chapter two of book one he lays out the simplified version of the Aristotelian division of constitutions into principality, aristocracy and democracy, with their respective degenerate forms being tyranny, oligarchy and anarchy. Instead of looking at these forms of government in isolation as the ideal *telos*²⁷ of a constitution the way Aristotle and Plato did, in the preceding chapter he looks at the origins of cities and how they are founded and their history as the key to understanding them, as echoed by Leonardo Bruni’s *History of the Florentine People* and his own attitude towards how to govern principalities based on the origins of their acquisition in *The Prince*.²⁸ Typical of his inductive method, Machiavelli rejects all of the considered constitutions, the former because they do not last very long and are thus not feasible, and the latter because of their ‘inherent malignity,’ and praises Lycurgus for adopting a constitution which mixed all three elements.¹⁹ The point of analysis where Machiavelli’s work becomes truly Aristotelian, however, is after he concludes that the expulsion of the Tarquins and thus the monarchical element of the Roman constitution lead to “utmost harmony between the plebs and the senate.”²⁰ Like Aristotle, Machiavelli advocates a mixed constitution of aristocracy and democracy, both keeping each other in check and providing stability for the state.

Aristotle describes one of the most important features of this form of government as the ability ‘for the people to learn to both govern and be governed’ synthesising ‘the wisdom of aristocracy and the consent of democracy.’²¹ But whereas Aristotle sees conflict rising from the natural jealousy of the *hoi polloi* and advocates just rule and limited democracy to appease them; Machiavelli deems the aristocracy to be the most detrimental force to the balance, as their fundamental political motivator is ‘oppression or fear of oppression,’ whereas the patricians have an inherent desire to increase their power. In short, Machiavelli reverses the Aristotelian balance of a republic where the people, not instead of the aristocracy, are ‘the keepers of liberty’ since “the former long to rule, whereas the latter merely long not to be ruled.”²² For the counterargument of potential mob rule makes recourse to Cicero’s claim that the people can be led to reason in public assemblies by 'a man worthy of trust.'²³
not feasible, and the latter because of their ‘inherent malignity,’ and praises Lycurgus for adopting a constitution which mixed all three elements.\textsuperscript{19} The point of analysis where Machiavelli’s work becomes truly Aristotelian, however, is after he concludes that the expulsion of the Tarquins and thus the monarchical element of the Roman constitution lead to “utmost harmony between the plebs and the senate.”\textsuperscript{20} Like Aristotle, Machiavelli advocates a mixed constitution of aristocracy and democracy, both keeping each other in check and providing stability for the state.

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Further than simple commentary or using them as tools for reflection on his opinions on how constitutions should be formed. He engages in what would is better described as a dialogue on the causes of the success of the Roman republic in \textit{The Discourses}. He begins Book Two by stating that both Livy and Plutarch “are of opinion... that the Roman people were indebted to the empire it acquired rather to fortune than to virtue,”\textsuperscript{29} and that “the Roman people by their own confession admit this since they ascribed all their victories to fortune, and erected more temples to Fortune than any other god.”\textsuperscript{29} However, he does not simply let the issue rest, but counterattacks: “With this view I cannot by any means agree, nor do I think it can be upheld,”\textsuperscript{30} and subsequently reiterates his view that the success of Rome lay in the nature of her constitution and social organisation. Not only does Machiavelli confront and correct Livy, but he is also aware of the points made by Plutarch and is ready to counter them. Far more so than in \textit{The Prince}, Machiavelli often defines his general political philosophy and individual conclusions as explicit reactions to the classical works of political thought such as Aristotle, Polybius or Livy. Therefore \textit{The Discourses} is not a way to bolster the arguments of the ancients; nor does it simply use them as a source of reflection. Instead it engages in a dialogue with its sources, which in turn enables Machiavelli to discuss various constitutional interpretations and use what he considers faulty inferences as ways to bring out the uniqueness and veracity of his arguments.

Though an incredibly original thinker, a large part of Machiavelli’s political thought in the fields of political virtue and ideal of republicanism is framed within the
humanist modes of thought that ‘rediscovered’ ancient Greek and Roman Political thought. The key concepts of virtú and fortuna, which play a crucial role in both The Prince and The Discourses, are both revaluations of the classical ideas of virtus and fortuna, the former more so than the latter. The overall conclusions he draws about political expediency using these concepts are a direct refutation of contemporary and classical ideas of Ciceronian political virtue, and the most famous passage of The Prince is a subversion of Cicero. Likewise the importance and rhetorical personification of fortuna are greatly indebted to Livy. In The Discourses Machiavelli is greatly influenced by Aristotelian constitutional moderation, but it is by subverting Aristotle that he identifies the aristocracy as the greatest danger to liberty. Under Livy’s interpretation of Roman history as one of continual conflict for access to public institutions Machiavelli adopts Sallust’s belief in competition as a source of strength. Thus a great deal of Machiavelli’s political philosophy is defined by Greek and Roman political thought; both as an endorsement of certain elements, notably his conception of Roman republicanism, and as a reevaluation of it.

Notes

2. Ibid, p. 76-77
Notes

24. Ibid., p.124
26. Machiavelli, p. 98
29. Ibid, p. 270
30. Ibid., 270
31. Ibid., 270

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Catriona Tassell

Analyse the forms of inequality in Rousseau’s Discourse on the Origins of Inequality and explain their underlying cause.

In his Discourses on the Origins of Inequality, Rousseau historically and anthropologically excavates the foundations of inequality and change over time, made possible through three fundamental human attributes: the capacity for perfectibility, pity and self-preservation. He explores the development of human beings from primitive to civilized man, establishing how humans came to acquire unequal characteristics through a series of revolutions, causing the original and pure state of nature to progress through excessive corruption into a new state of nature ‘based on force alone’.1 Although Rousseau’s work coincided with the European Enlightenment of the eighteenth-century, his approach is antithetical to the fundamental characteristics of Enlightenment philosophy, whereby an ‘almost blind faith’ was given to the ‘almightiness of human reason’ in relation to progress.2 Rejecting the tyranny of Reason, and advocating the return to nature, according to Rousseau’s degenerative theory of human development, inequality stemmed from the ‘denaturation of men in society’.3 Whilst his essay challenges the ‘foundations of modern jurisprudence from Grotius and Hobbes to Pufendorf and Locke’, Rousseau utilizes aspects of Bernard Mandeville’s poem, The Fable of The Bees, published in 1705, as precedence for his radical opposition to established contemporary philosophers in regard to the origins of inequality. In part one, Rousseau distinguishes between the different ‘species’ of inequality: physical and moral.4 Whilst natural or physical inequality is beyond our control and ‘did not constitute a problem’ in the state of nature, moral or political inequality is dependent on human consent.5 Rousseau focuses his investigation on moral inequality in civil society, showing its progress from the initial fluidity of esteem and honour, ‘subject to change’, through to the eventual ‘permanent structure of social inequality, made possible by a contract’.6

Rousseau introduces the essay as a critique of the argument of Hobbes by depicting the state of nature as devoid of any inequality and viewing human beings in the state of nature as equal. This ‘implies that it is impossible to speculate on human inequalities until one has understood nature, and especially human nature’.7 Rousseau’s state of nature portrays a condition of humanity so remote that ‘no historical research could possibly uncover its true features’, presenting savages in a devolved prehistoric condition as opposed to taking human beings as they are now and imagining them in a state of nature.8 This approach enables Rousseau to provide an analysis of nature that ignores the existence of God, assuming that ‘neither belief in God nor any particular metaphysical explanation’ necessarily reveals the status of man in the material universe.9 In the preface, Rousseau justifies his distance from religion, stating that:
‘religion commands us to believe, that men, having been drawn by God himself out of a state of nature, are unequal, because it is his pleasure they should be so; but religion does not forbid us to draw conjunctures solely from the nature of man, considered in itself, and from that of beings which surround him, concerning the fate if mankind, had they been left to themselves’.  

In accordance with this, he believed that savages were not bad, precisely because they didn't 'know what it [was] to be good'. Hobbes, on the other hand, failed to see that 'inner calmness and the ignorance of vice would be quite sufficient to restrain him from deliberate wrongdoing'. Furthermore, he alleged that men of equal abilities could ‘pursue the same objectives only at their own peril, for without a common power to keep them in awe, they would be in a state of war’. The only form of inequality Rousseau perceived to be active in the state of nature was physical, consisting of the differences in ‘health, bodily strength and qualities of the mind and soul’. This, he regarded as minimal because of the ‘uniformity in conditions of existence that all men will experience’. Furthermore, in the state of nature, savages are wholly independent, self-sufficient beings, meeting with each other ‘only haphazardly and momentarily’ and therefore, inept of the ability to acknowledge any superiority or desire any form of hierarchical system. Rousseau conclusively discredits authors who cry out that ‘the strongest would oppress the weakest’, observing that men who possess nothing have ‘no chains of dependence’, and since the bonds of servitude are ‘formed merely by the mutual dependence of men one upon another’, it would be ‘impossible to ever exact obedience' in the state of nature. Jean Starobinski questions whether the natural goodness, described by Rousseau, is lost forever once the conversion to civil society is complete. He concludes that natural goodness is lost ‘if we are looking at man in society' but that it is not ‘if we are looking at individuals'. Rousseau determines evil, and the consequential inequality that sprouts from evil, exempt from human nature and prevalent only in social structures, which eventually aid the downfall of the state of nature. 

Having proven that inequality is ‘barely perceptible’ and ‘of little effect’ in the state of nature, Rousseau expresses his aim, to track the progress of the formation of society in order to identify the main turning points in the evolution of inequality, whilst assessing the inevitability of its growth. In part one, Rousseau likens the savage to an animal through traits such as amour de soi, which translates to self-preservation, and pity, comparing primitive man to other beings. He distinguishes humans from other animals through the fundamental attribute of perfectibility, which comprises of the ability to perfect nature through the ‘faculty of self-improvement’, but also has ‘the capacity to make retrograde steps leading to his self-impairment'.
Rousseau believed that the savage developed his intelligence through the struggle for survival amongst other animals, enabling the discovery of the ‘potentiality that lay within him’, stirring human pride. The exposure of human strength, capable of surpassing almost all animals, alongside the increasingly frequent contact with other members of the same species, prompted the transition of amour de soi to amour-propre. The emergence of amour-propre, a new selfish social consciousness, facilitated the transformation of the savage, who ‘lived within himself’, to acquire a new sociable form, living ‘outside himself’, knowing ‘only how to live in the opinion of others’. This transition from natural to social man with an acquired ‘desire to be valued by others’ is crucial, foreshadowing the eminent rise of inequality through the inevitable division of the powerful and weak. Initially, the desire for self-esteem is channelled through a comparatively innocent outlet in primitive dancing and ‘he who sings or dances best; the handsomest, the strongest, the most dexterous, the most eloquent, comes to be the most respected’. Rousseau regards this as the ‘first step towards inequality and at the same time towards vice’, as the ‘first preferences there proceeded on one side vanity and contempt, on the other envy and shame’. Nannerl Keohane expands on the understanding that whilst the ‘preoccupation of the self becomes more intense’, human beings paradoxically ‘develop a multitude of new and complex needs that connect them inextricably with others of their species’, dependent on the joint effort of many individuals to satisfy, ‘while the swollen love of the self leads each to try and outstrip the other’. Rousseau declares that ‘from the moment one man began to stand in need of another’s assistance; all equality vanished’. Rousseau expansively reinforces the ability of men to be ‘free, healthy, honest and happy, as much as their nature would admit’ if they ‘continued to enjoy with each other all the pleasures of an independent intercourse’. From the ‘moment it appeared an advantage for one man to possess the quantity of provisions requisite for two, all equality vanished; property started up; labour became necessity; and boundless forests became smiling fields, which is was found necessary to water with human sweat, and which slavery and misery were soon seen to sprout out and grow with the fruits of the earth’. Rousseau’s emphatic metaphor of slavery and misery growing from the ground expose the significance of property and labour in aiding the development of inequality. By pursuing the progress of inequality in a series of revolutions, Rousseau refers to the establishment of laws and the right of property as the first, authorising the ‘different states of rich and poor’. Initially, it is probable that the ‘strongest were the first to make cabins’, highlighting inequality between the strong and the weak. Property exaggerated the difference between families and men and women became unequal through the adoption of different manners and customs. The conception of gender roles, spurred by co-habitation and cooperation within a proto-family, led to the development of sexual inequality.
Women ‘became more sedentary, and accustomed themselves to stay at home and look after the children, while the men rambled abroad in quest of subsistence for the whole family’. The rise of private property turned the pursuit of honour and public esteem into an ‘ignoble and dispiriting kind of competition’, bringing about economic interdependence, specialization and exchange resulting in huge inequalities in wealth. The divide between the rich and poor is spurred by the inequality of men’s talents, exemplified through the strongest performing the most labour and ‘the most dexterous’ turning his labour ‘to best account’. Rousseau adds that ‘the most ingenious found out methods of lessening his labour’, reflecting the increasingly cunning and devious nature of men. Likewise, the original sin of inequality was committed by he who employed his ‘mental powers for his own advancement’, instigating a series of deceptive ruses utilized by the powerful to exploit the weak. The “first man, who, after enclosing a piece of ground, took it into his head to say, “This is mine,” and found people simple enough to believe him’ Rousseau believed to be the ‘true founder of civil society’. Here, Rousseau illustrates that the creation of inequality itself ‘is the result of chance circumstances’ which occurred but which might ‘equally well not have happened in the course of time’. Had someone renounced the ‘true founder of civil society’, merely by challenging the notion that land could not belong to an individual because ‘the fruits of the earth belong equally to us all’, inequality could have been prevented or reduced. The nature of the creation of property opens the floodgates for further forms of inequality to mould the masses having proven that there are an abundance of people gullible enough to be tricked into relinquishing their own power. In accordance with Marx’s later work in the Communist Manifesto, which criticized public property in relation to freedom as individuals increasingly and openly ‘viewed others as separated and antithetical, rather than joined or united, by their interests’, Rousseau clearly identifies a direct link between private property and inequality. Whilst Voltaire portrays Rousseau as the adversary of the institution of private property, questioning, in disbelief, why “he who has planted, sowed and enclosed his land has no right to the fruit of his labour”, in actual fact Rousseau does not advocate the abolition of private property, but insists on the necessity of resolving the unequal distribution of wealth, made evident in the Social Contract. He emphatically reinforces the inequality resulting from the establishment of private property, linking property to numerous crimes, wars, murders, misfortunes and horrors.

Rousseau references Locke’s astute axiom, ‘where there is no property, there can be no injury’. Property and the consequential revolution in metallurgy and agriculture, providing men with more or less possessions, coupled with men’s newfound ability to ‘extend their views to the future’, increased their fear of goods being lost. As estates grew in size and number, taking in whole countries and touching each other, ‘it became impossible for one man to aggrandize himself at the expense of some other’.
The inequalities between the weak and the powerful were already identifiable and the rich exploited this by domination, no longer thinking of anything ‘but subduing and enslaving their neighbours’, hence setting in motion, ‘according to the different characteristics of each, domination and slavery’. Rousseau maintained that this competition between the wealthy elite, comprising of ‘usurpations of the rich, pillages of the poor, and the unbridled passions of all’, rendered men wickedly ambitious, precipitating perpetual conflict. Although mankind ‘brought itself to the very brink of ruin’, such extensive warfare, resulting from the acquisition of private property, enabled the rich, who valued their possessions ‘to the extent that other [were] deprived of them’, to devise a plan capable of maintaining their happiness through the extension of inequality.

The second revolution outlined in Rousseau’s Discourse on the Origin of Inequality, shown to progress inequality, is the creation of the institution of magistrates. Rousseau argues that ‘superior authorities must have reinforced the antagonisms that set persons apart from one another’, clearly inaugurating the division of the powerful and the weak. While Hobbes’s central focus was ‘the political dimension of peace, Pufendorf’s the collective need for security, and Locke’s the civil protection of property’, Rousseau counteracts their collective agreement that ‘individuals were naturally unable to survive in the absence of government, and that an artificial power must always be established to reduce the dangers which accompany the unfettered equality of mankind’.

In contrast, as social institutions increase in power, the inequality depicted by Rousseau is intensified. Political society is created ‘as a response to disorders that are the product of an already social institution’ illustrating the positive correlation between social institutions and inequality. In what can only be described as a confidence trick perpetuated by the rich, the powerful enter into the ‘deepest project that ever entered the human mind; to employ in his favour the very forces that attacked him and make allies of his enemies’ in an attempt to bring an end to the state of war. Through tricking the poor that they wish to “unite” and “secure the weak from oppression, restrain the ambition and secure every man the possession of what belongs to him”, political inequality became consolidated by a new law, supporting property titles, ranks, and authority. Like Mandeville in The Fable of the Bees, Rousseau maintained that justice and inequality ‘were originally the inventions of the cunning and the powerful, in order to maintain and to acquire an unnatural and unjust superiority over the rest of their fellow creatures’. The act of men accepting political institutions and giving themselves chiefs ‘to defend their liberty and not be enslaved by them’ in fact increased the fetters of the weak irretrievably destroying natural liberty and ‘fixed forever laws of property and inequality’. Rousseau refers to the falsified hope, which, in reality, subjected mankind to perpetual servitude, through the metaphor that “All ran headlong to their chains, believing they had secured their liberty”. This phrase is reminiscent of one of the famous opening lines of the Social Contract, that ‘man was born free,
and he is everywhere in chains’. In the Social Contract, Rousseau advocates that the only ‘legitimate order of standing between men is each and every one holding a position of equal power, honour, title to take part in the common account and to be accounted to’. These political ideals, believed to be crucial for equality, are in contradiction with the ‘sinister’ formula of contract recounted in the second Discourse, ‘rendering them equal under law instead of subservient to their appointed political masters’. After establishing that the initial formation of political institutions increases inequality in his second Discourse, Rousseau’s Social Contract later provides the formula to render citizens equal under law, attaining rather than destroying their true liberty.

In the second Discourse, the types of government which could transpire and, therefore, the extent to which inequality reigns, is purely dependent on the ‘various degrees of inequality between members at the time they first coalesced into a political body’. Where a man happened to be ‘eminence for power’, he became the sole magistrate through a monarchy; if many ‘of pretty equal eminence out-topped all the rest, they were jointly elected’ in an aristocracy; those, ‘between whose fortunes or talent there happened to be no such disproportion’ formed a democracy, deviating less from the state of nature. The final stage in inequality occurs through the increase in consensual slavery to secure tranquillity, whereby men escaped the ‘periodic crisis’ of their political development by turning to new masters, ‘whose perverse eloquence would have persuaded them to adopt still further principles of slavery and despotism, framed in the midst of disorder and revolution’. With the advent of despotism and the conversion of legal to arbitrary power, generating the concept of master and slave, the historical process ‘has come full circle’, producing a new state of nature. The ‘equality’ in the new but excessively corrupt state of nature is characterized by the equal position of slavery where men of every nation ‘stand equal in poverty and wretchedness... against one triumphant despot’.

The forms of inequality exhibited by Rousseau are progressive, spurred by a chain of chance events. Inequality scarce existed in Rousseau’s initial state of nature and our ancestors ‘could have had no moral relations with or determinate obligations to one another’ whilst the natural physical inequality possessed by savage man did not constitute a problem. Rousseau stresses that inequality is not an inherent part of human nature, but rather ‘the product of social conditions in which man comes to exist’. It was only with ‘the birth of social institutions that his weakness became timidity or his strength a menace to his neighbours’. The inequalities described by Rousseau progressively advance alongside the growth of social institutions, revealing the underlying cause as ‘deeply rooted in the way of life and consciousness of civilized social man’. Aided by the pursuit of perfectibility, nascent society grew from a body of unrestricted beings, with fluid notions of inequality, to an institutionalized legally and politically governed nation,
where inequality became fixed. The epochs, described as revolutions, involving the establishment of laws and rights of property, the institution of magistrates and the transformation of legal into arbitrary power give rise to the three different forms of inequality: the different states of rich and poor, those of powerful and weak and, finally, that of master and slave.

Notes:

5. Ronald Grimsley, The Philosophy of Rousseau, p. 35.
11. Ibid., p. 20.
19. Ibid., p. 295.
23. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Discourse on The Origin of Inequality, p. 32.
24. Ibid., p32.
27. Ibid., p. 33.
28. Ibid., p. 33 and p. 34.
29. Ibid., p. 47.
30. Ibid., p. 30.
31. Ibid., p. 30.
33. Ibid., p. 30 and p. 31.
35. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Discourse on The Origin of Inequality, p. 36.
36. Ibid., p. 36.
40. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Discourse on The Origin of Inequality, p. 27.
43. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Discourse on The Origin of Inequality, p. 27.
46. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Discourse on The Origin of Inequality, p. 33.
47. Ibid., p. 33.
48. Ibid., p. 35.
49. Ibid., p. 37.
50. Ibid., p. 37.
51. Ibid., p. 37.
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55. Ibid., p. 48.
58. Ibid., p. 38.
66. Ibid., p. 46.
71. Ibid., p. 6.
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Once upon a time there were three babushka dolls, the biggest and most enveloping was named morality, the second was politics and the third smallest one was international relations (thereafter IR). It is through such a narrative that one can most readily draw out the subtle assembly of Kantian thought. However, given that Kant was very candid about the interplay between morality and politics, it seems more appropriate to refer to these dolls as forming a perfect Gordian knot rather than a gentle assembly. As such, one will attempt to disentangle that knot to expose the subtle links Kant makes in his writings. Additionally, Kant wrote for many years, on a variety of subjects, and worked tirelessly to explain the very fabric of humanity; it would be reductionist to explain anything Kantian in isolation to the rest of his thoughts. Kant’s thoughts on international relations relate not only to his overall moral and political philosophy, but also to his metaphysics; his comments on peace and war form a whole that is inextricable from his categorical imperative. Yet, this does not answer the real question which is ‘how’ it relates. To answer this, in a manner that does not further blur the waters surrounding Kantian thought, and without falling into an endless pit of polemic scholarship, one must first thoroughly outline what politics and morality signified for Kant. Kant explains in Towards Perpetual Peace (thereafter TPP) that morality and politics are irrevocably intertwined; more precisely, morality is the first babushka doll which embeds politics. Hence, it is logical to expect that Kant’s categorical imperative – the core of his moral philosophy – flourishes in very subtle ways throughout his thought on IR. Since morality permeates everything, as it is an extension of the telos of natural law, it serves as the linchpin of Kantian thought.

The main analytical scope of this essay will be driven by a microcosmic interpretation of Kant’s moral philosophy that focuses on human inclinations and their justifications. The essay will focus on Kant’s thought in TPP and will be divided into two main parts: the first part will analyse how Kant’s moral philosophy prohibits inclinations towards war; the second part will do the same but on inclinations towards peace. In both these sections, the links to the overall philosophy will be highlighted and analysed.

This section aims to analyse Kant’s preliminary articles for perpetual peace (thereafter PA) to show that Kant’s thoughts on IR relates to his overall philosophy in that the prohibitive nature of the articles reflects that the actions they condemn violate moral law.

One must first lay out some definitions. In the Metaphysics of Morals (thereafter MM), Kant explains how morality forms a superimposing framework that guides human endeavour towards peace. Hence, war, for Kant, is always immoral. However, in order
to hold a proper discourse on inclinations to war, the two relevant premises of the categorical imperative must be outlined. (1) The ‘formal principle’ which reads: ‘act so that you can will that your maxim should become a universal law.’ (2) Kant’s conception of natural law states that the ultimate end of nature is the human being. Hence, the second premise has indirect implication in that it asks that human beings should be treated as ends, and not as mere means to ends; as it violates the ‘ultimate end of nature.’ These two premises are extremely important and will be referred to throughout this essay.

The third PA, which states that ‘standing armies shall gradually be abolished entirely’, seems to feed particularly on Kant’s moral justifications. In this article Kant calls for the abolishment of standing armies for three reasons. (1) The cost of maintaining standing armies, if unused, ‘becomes more oppressive than a brief war’ and therefore create a further incentive to use them to wage war. (2) ‘They continually threaten other states with war by their willingness to appear equipped for it at all times’; a subtle reminder of Hobbesian diffidence. (3) ‘Being hired out to kill or be killed seems to constitute a use of human beings as mere machine and tools […] a use which is incompatible with the rights of humanity.’ In other words, soldiers are just means to the end of the state, a statement which the second premise of the categorical imperative would reject as immoral. Later on in his third PA, Kant notes that ‘the power of money […] may well be the most reliable tool of war.’

This last comment is then taken up by his fourth PA where Kant states that ‘states shall not contract debts in connection with its foreign affairs.’ There he summons two main reasons. (1) The credit system has no limit and can hence give easy to funding for war. (2) ‘The ultimately unavoidable bankruptcy of one state would necessarily involve other states in the loss, […] which would thus cause them a public injury.’ In this second reason, Kant summons another kind of objection. The ‘public injury’ is a form of injury that is legally wrong because it infringes on the legal rights of the public. This is a particularly important moment where political and moral philosophy join in that everything that is legally wrong is morally wrong for Kant, but the inverse is not true. The inherent moral duty to follow the laws stems from Kant’s categorical imperative. By following laws one is acting in such a way that he can will his action to become universal law; legality is a subset of morality. This also explains why Kant never prescribed revolution to attain peace, but rather ‘gradual’ reforms. Yet, Kant is fully aware that laws are not always moral themselves. Namely, the lawmakers have not acted in a way that fulfils the categorical imperative. For example, laws that promote inequality – such as slavery laws – exist, but have no moral worth according to Kant; to argue otherwise would imply a willingness to sell oneself into slavery. Therefore, the fourth PA presents a particular legal and moral objection to war that uses credit funding; thus relating his IR thoughts to his doctrine of right.

In this fourth PA Kant also relates to metaphysical grounds when he states that war ‘is an inclination which seems to be an essential aspect of human nature.’ In contrast, Kant
argues that natural law drives us to ‘emancipate from the state of [nature]’. However, for Kant since ‘the state of nature is a state of war’—and a state of war merely requires the threat of war—it is clear how all inclinations towards war are morally prohibited. Furthermore, these moral prohibitions must themselves be legislated into constitutional laws if one is to ever get close to the conditions allowing for perpetual peace. It can be argued that all six preliminary articles exist to hamper the natural human inclination towards war; thus explaining how Kant relates it to his overall philosophy. In other words, Kant sees the prohibitions laid out by the six preliminary articles as morally obligatory. This also accounts for Kant’s statement that there can be no ‘right to war’ as it is in itself an oxymoron. For there can be no moral rights that lead to war because it would entail, due of the categorical imperative, that a right to war would be a universal law, thus perpetuating the state of war and violating natural law. In TPP Kant also explains how a ‘right’ to war has no legal worth since a right is defined as ‘depending on an external juridical process’, which is blatantly lacking in the case of war. This allows for a generalisation of the special case made by the fourth PA. War, by having neither moral nor legal worth, ought to never be justified.

The last important point to be analysed concerning the immorality of inclinations to war is through the fifth PA which reads: ‘No state shall forcibly interfere in the constitution and government of another state.’ This is a very interesting and implicit comment on the Westphalian status quo of state sovereignty. It is interesting because his thoughts neither validate that status quo nor reject it. It is implicit because it draws on what has previously been said in the first and second PA. Kant would reject the Peace of Westphalia as it violates his first PA which states that ‘no peace settlement which secretly reserves issues for a future war shall be considered valid.’ There can be no doubt that the Westphalia Peace treaties, although formally ending the Thirty Years’ War and the Eighty Years’ War, has served as grounds for justifying centuries of wars thereafter; thus why Kant would reject them. Yet, Kant seems also to accept it when he glorifies the importance of the sovereignty of the state in his second PA. When stating that states cannot be ‘inherited or bought’ he states that ‘the state acquires a ruler, whereas the ruler does not [cannot] acquire the state.’ Kant further adds that ‘a state is not a possession […] it is a society of human beings whom no one but the state may command or dispose of.’ Hence it makes the state to be the highest form of sovereign political community; thus validating the major tenant of the Peace of Westphalia. One can explain Kant’s ambivalence as the dichotomy of the nature of the state. On the one hand the despotic state often wages war, and on the other, the republican state is best apt to create inclination for peace through its legislative process.

In making that comment on sovereignty, Kant also implies that the ‘state of war can never exactly be declared unjust.’ That is, despite being always immoral, the state
of war is not universally unjust as each state believes it has a right over the other. However, we have shown that this use of the word ‘right’ is not valid, even though states use it. If one looks further into the text, one sees a very interesting supplement which states that:

“This homage paid by every state to the concept of right (at least through their word), demonstrates, however, that there is an even greater, although presently latent, moral predisposition to be found in the human being, to eventually overcome the evil principle within himself (the existence of which he cannot deny) and also to hope to others do the same.”

This passage is of paramount importance in explaining the core entanglement explored by Kant with regards to morality, politics and metaphysics. The first implication is that human nature is influenced by more than an inclination towards waging war; it is also potentially moral. This obvious contradiction makes much more sense if one recalls that morality and peace represents the deontology of natural law. To further explain, natural law is predisposed towards peace, and human nature is predisposed towards progress. But since progressing towards peace requires moral agents, human nature has to be imbedded with the principles of morality, namely reason. The fact that they seemingly do not act upon it on is another matter altogether; one which will be discussed in the next section.

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How does Kant’s thought on international relations relate to his overall moral and political philosophy?

So far we have discussed how Kant’s preliminary articles reflect his thought on existing IR practices. If it were not for these articles, the state of war would continue to exist and perpetual peace would never be achievable. We have also explained why perpetual peace was preferable to war. Furthermore, in the very end, we have begun to suggest how inclinations towards peace could be promoted. Indeed, although Kant knew that perpetual peace was ‘a state that could be approached but not attained’, his three definitive articles (thereafter DA) were quite descriptive about how politics should be done, and how perpetual peace should be achieved. This will remain the focus of this second section.

One may say that Kant is an idealist and an optimist – as some critics such as Howard Williams have done – however it can be argued that his optimism is strongly rooted in his definitions of what constitutes practical reason. In the Critique of Practical Reason Kant explains how the categorical imperative is not concerned with explaining the desire fulfilled by the maxim, but rather the universal intent behind the maxim itself. Hence, while a true state of perpetual peace is not practically achievable, it is still a moral duty to act upon it nonetheless because the underlying intent is universal. Kant further explains this in the Appendix of TTP where he comments on the difference between a ‘moral politician’ and a ‘political moralist’ to be a difference of inclination. The moral politician will follow the formal principle and then act accordingly through the material principle, whereas the political moralist will try to do the opposite. Kant goes further to explain that morality is necessary because reason alone is not enlightened
enough to know with certainty the outcome of human affairs. Hence it would be
difficult to rationally discover certainties without morality there to guide us as to
how we ought to act in order to achieve our ends. Overall, it is possible to say that
much of Kant’s normative recommendations for perpetual peace are based on the
assumptions that ‘fate’ or ‘providence’ in nature will prevail.

From this long, albeit necessary, tangent on Kant’s moral and political philo-
sophy, one can link his IR thoughts to international law. Ideally for Kant, international
right should be premised on a federation of republican states. For Kant, the state of
perpetual peace can only be achieved in a world where every state has a republican
constitution; that is, one where those who make the laws do not execute them. This is premised on the fact that according to Kant, Republican constitutions are
formed on the principle of freedom, dependence on common legislation and
equality under that latter; all of which fulfil the two premises of the categorical
imperative. More importantly, republican constitutions allow for a reduced
inclination towards war as, unlike with despotism, ‘the agreement of the citizens is
required to decide whether or not [...] to wage war, then nothing is more natural
than that they would consider very carefully whether to enter into such a terrible
game, since they would have to resolve to bring the hardships of war upon
themselves.’

Kant, in his second DA, argues that perpetual peace can be reached through a
‘federation of people’, and not a ‘state of people’. This is because perpetual peace
must come from a ‘treaty among people, and for this reason a special sort of federation
must be create which one would call a pacific federation.’ Kant gives two reasons why
a state of states ought not to be. (1) Large states usually fail to promote their laws well.
(2) Even though nature’s design is to leave the state of nature to achieve perpetual
peace; one must not conflate the state of war facing states, which have already
overcome the state of nature at home by assembling into civil constitutions, with the
state of war faced by individuals. This is a subtle point but it relates to Kant’s
metaphysics and his thought on sovereignty. Individuals were driven by nature’s design
to unite under civil constitutions. But since each state already represents that civil union,
it would be counterproductive to subject the constitutions of the states to a new higher
one as it would violate the fifth PA. In addition to negative reasons, Kant also offers two
positive ones. (1) Given his belief that nature’s design is for perpetual peace, he can hold
the belief that once republics start forming there is a chance that they might influence
others to do the same. (2) It is in the nature of republics to associate to promote a sort
of General Will, akin to what Rousseau said a few years before. Kant explains that, given
the moderation principle intrinsic to republican constitutions, ‘though [citizens] strive
against each other in their private intentions, that latter will check each other in such a
way that the result in their public conduct is just as if they had no such evil intentions.’

Essentially, Kant believes that the federation of states will always self-regulate itself.
Federalism is a fundamental recommendation for perpetual peace and it is inextricably
linked with his teleology as he explains that ‘nature ultimately wills that right gains supreme authority.’

In his third DA Kant argues that inclinations towards perpetual peace will be achieved through two major things: (1) the principle of hospitality and (2) the viability of a cosmopolitan world. One of the first major differences is that cosmopolitan law no longer deals with states, but with the individuals within the state; in that sense it is different from international law. Pauline Kleingeld remarks quite rightly that cosmopolitanism, although it was not Kant’s own creation, was an entirely novel idea in the time of rising colonization. However, even in his wildest creative spurs, Kant does not escape the grasp of the babushka doll hierarchy. The principle of hospitality, from which cosmopolitanism stems, relies on his theory of freedom and property. There are four premises. (1) In MM, Kant explains that citizens of the earth are bearers of cosmopolitan rights, regardless of their nationality. (2) ‘Before any particular acquisition of property’ humankind holds ‘the earth in common possession.’ (3) ‘Because the earth is round, all nations stand in a community of possible interactions.’ (4) In TPP, Kant firmly adds that the right to hospitality is not a right to entry, but it is a right to attempt to establish interactions. Given that we all shared the common possession of the earth at some point, we all had an equal right to it. Hence, ‘since being on land is necessary for the very existence of human beings, people have a right to be on the land on which they are through no choice of their own, since denying them this right would mean denying them their existence and innate freedom.’ However, one might argue that this would be contradictory at first glance. For example, a shipwrecked sailor stranded on the coastline would clearly fulfil the latter proposition. But yet, in following the principle of hospitality, and letting him use my land I am myself having my private property rights violated for the seemingly greater purpose of public right. Yet, this can be reconciled through Kleingeld’s analysis. In MM Kant allows for the state to tax the rich to feed the poor. This he justifies by saying that the representative nature of the republican constitution provide for ‘a rational general will’ under which the state is there to help those in need. Kleingeld extends this analysis to justify the same sort of solution for cosmopolitan law and private property law.

There are three last points that must be made with regards to Kant’s cosmopolitanism. First it is a clear criticism of colonizing attitudes of the later 18th century. Kant rejects the idea of Lockean property rights and explains that the right to hospitality prohibits ‘that anyone has a right to settle on anyone’s soil.’ Furthermore, Kant seems to acknowledge that savages, despite not being assembled into states, could nonetheless benefit from ‘rightful claim to the land’ because of the premises established above. Second, it is important to acknowledge why Kant believed that cosmopolitanism would promote inclination towards peace. Even though it has been said before, Kant’s principle of hospitality correlates with his categorical imperative and what he saw to be nature’s design; it is a universal law hence it ought to be followed. Third, one will conclude on Kant’s so-called guarantees. Not only does this author concur with Pauline Kleingeld when she assesses that ‘the spirit of trade’ is not a sufficient guarantee, it seems that
Kant is not clear as to whether he wished for his federation of states to have coercive powers. In MM he explicitly linked rights with coercion, yet in TPP he calls for a non-coercive federation.

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Despite the occasional lack of clarity and the sporadic contradictions, Kant’s thought on IR is sound and firmly embedded in his moral, political and metaphysical philosophy. This essay has shown how Kant’s preliminary articles for peace were prohibitive in nature because they sought to hamper natural human inclination toward war, which is itself a violation of natural law. This essay then went on to show what sort of positive claims Kant made and analysed the relevance of his federalism and international right to his broader doctrine of right. It concluded with a segment on cosmopolitan law and its intricate links to Kant’s broader jurisprudence. Overall this essay showed that wherever Kant comments on international relations, he employs –whether implicitly or explicitly – moral justifications for his claims. Given the universal nature of Kant’s moral philosophy, the claims that stem from it should also be universal. In the end, one must not forget that Kant’s theory when dealing with inclination towards peace is highly normative. He himself recognizes the many practical problems that will occur when his formal principle is applied; especially since miscalculations could lead to immoral actions. Yet, it seems that the usual solution applies: it does not matter if it is difficult to achieve, all that matters is that we understand why it ought to be achieved. One hopes to have cogently proven that this is the linchpin of Kant’s thought on IR.

Notes

5. Ibid., p. 297.
8. Ibid., p. 104.
9. Ibid., p. 70.
11. Ibid., p. 72.
12. Ibid., p. 80.
13. Ibid.
15. Ibid., p. 70.
17. Ibid., p. 68.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid., p. 80.


26. Ibid., p. 95.

27. Ibid., p. 76.

28. Ibid., p. 74.


30. Ibid., p. 78.

31. Ibid., p. 80.

32. Ibid., p. 91.

33. Ibid., p. 80.

34. Ibid., p. 80.

35. Ibid., p. 91.


38. Ibid., p. 77.

39. Ibid., p. 77.

40. Ibid., p. 75.

41. Ibid., p. 79.


43. Pauline Kleingeld, "Kant's Cosmopolitan Law.", p. 81.

44. Ibid., p. 75.

45. Ibid., p. 82.


Bibliography


What did Wollstonecraft’s thought share with Rousseau’s and in what ways did she differ from him?