Jean jacques rousseau discourse on the origin of inequality

Unearthing the Roots of Inequality: A Deep Dive into Rousseau's Discourse

Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality Among Men* remains a cornerstone of philosophical thought, sparking debate and resonating with contemporary concerns about social stratification. This seminal work, published in 1755, meticulously explores the evolution of human society and the factors contributing to the inequalities that plague it. Rousseau's radical ideas challenged the prevailing Enlightenment narratives, offering a critical perspective on the relationship between nature, civilization, and the corrosive influence of societal structures. This delves into the intricacies of Rousseau's argument, examining its historical context,

key arguments, and enduring relevance.

The Historical Context: A World on the Brink of Change

The 18th century witnessed a burgeoning intellectual ferment, with thinkers grappling with burgeoning industrialization, shifting political power structures, and a rapidly evolving social landscape. Rousseau's *Discourse* emerged from this tumultuous period, reflecting a profound unease with the perceived corruption of Enlightenment ideals. The burgeoning scientific advancements and philosophical inquiries into human nature were not without their critics. Rousseau, a prominent figure in the burgeoning Enlightenment, challenged the prevailing optimism by highlighting the darker aspects of societal progress. His critique stemmed not only from intellectual curiosity but also from his own experiences of social ostracism and marginalization.

Rousseau's Theory of the "Noble Savage"

A central theme in the *Discourse* is Rousseau's conception of the "noble savage." This fictionalized pre-social human, unburdened by societal constructs,

is characterized by innate goodness, empathy, and self-sufficiency. Rousseau argued that this natural state, while not necessarily idyllic, lacked the complex inequalities that arose with the development of private property, societal hierarchies, and the complex systems of civilization. This concept, though often romanticized, is crucial in understanding Rousseau's analysis of human nature.

From Natural to Civil Society: The Seeds of Inequality

Rousseau argues that the transition from the natural state to civil society was pivotal in the genesis of inequality. This shift, driven by factors such as the development of agriculture, the concept of private property, and the desire for social recognition, gradually eroded the natural equality among individuals. The emergence of competition, exploitation, and a complex web of societal expectations marked a significant departure from the supposedly harmonious natural state. This transformation, however, is not presented as a linear process, but rather as a sequence of evolving stages.

The Development of Private Property and Its Consequences

A critical component of Rousseau's argument lies in the genesis of private property. The accumulation of resources and the demarcation of territory, he posits, is a catalyst for inequality. This isn't a straightforward causal relationship, however. Rousseau acknowledges that early forms of property might have been relatively harmless, yet the subsequent desire for greater accumulation and the defense of these possessions fostered social stratification. The concept of wealth and social status became intertwined, leading to the emergence of distinct classes and the exacerbation of existing inequalities.

The Role of Law and the State in Perpetuating Inequality

Rousseau doesn't simply criticize private property; he also critiques the institutions that legitimize and defend it. The development of law and the state, in his view, serves to codify and perpetuate existing inequalities. Rather than fostering justice, he argues that these structures often serve the interests of the powerful, solidifying their position and further marginalizing the less privileged. This perspective, in

its implicit critique of entrenched power structures, continues to resonate with modern discussions surrounding social justice.

The Discourse's Enduring Relevance

Despite its historical context, the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* remains incredibly relevant in contemporary society. Its exploration of the roots of social stratification resonates with current discussions on issues like wealth inequality, racial injustice, and economic disparities. Rousseau's critique of the social contract, for example, provides a fertile ground for questioning the equity and efficacy of modern political systems.

Related Concepts

• **Social Contract Theory:** Rousseau's views on the social contract are interconnected with his theory of inequality. He examines how the social contract evolved and its impact on the very fabric of society. • *Moral Philosophy:* The *Discourse* is deeply embedded in moral philosophy. Rousseau's examination of human nature, the noble savage, and the gradual corruption of virtue has influenced generations of moral philosophers. • Political

Philosophy: Rousseau's work constitutes a pivotal moment in the development of modern political thought. His critique of inequality and the inherent biases of societal structures have inspired subsequent generations of political theorists to critique and propose alternatives for achieving a more just society.

Potential Benefits of Studying Rousseau's Discourse

While not directly offering "benefits" in a tangible sense, the study of Rousseau's work yields significant intellectual advantages, including: • Enhanced critical thinking skills: Rousseau compels readers to engage with complex questions of human nature, social structures, and the genesis of inequality. • **A deeper understanding of societal dynamics:** The Discourse provides a framework for understanding how power, privilege, and social disparities are perpetuated. • **A more nuanced view of political and economic systems:** By critically examining the historical evolution of inequalities, one gains a more comprehensive understanding of their complexities and limitations.

Expert FAQs

1. *Q: How does Rousseau's *Discourse* differ from other Enlightenment thinkers on the state of nature?* **A:** While many Enlightenment thinkers posited a rational and progressive view of human nature in the state of nature, Rousseau emphasized the inherent goodness of the noble savage, highlighting the corrosive influence of civilization. 2. *Q: Is Rousseau's conception of the noble savage historically accurate?* A: No, Rousseau's noble savage is a theoretical construct, not a historical account. He uses this idealized representation to serve as a contrast to the societal ills he observes. 3. **Q: Can Rousseau's critique of inequality be applied to modern societies?** A: Absolutely. The issues of wealth concentration, social stratification, and the role of institutions in perpetuating inequalities remain relevant today. 4. **Q: What are the criticisms levelled against Rousseau's *Discourse*?** A: Some critics argue that the concept of the noble savage is overly romanticized and unrealistic. Others debate the validity of his historical interpretation. 5. **Q: How has Rousseau's *Discourse* influenced subsequent political thought?** *A:* His ideas have deeply influenced political thinkers, particularly those advocating for social justice and challenging existing

power structures. His emphasis on collective will and participatory governance continues to resonate today. By engaging with Rousseau's *Discourse*, readers gain valuable insights into the enduring complexities of human interaction, societal evolution, and the perpetual struggle for a more equitable world. This exploration ultimately encourages a critical examination of our own society and an ongoing commitment to understanding the forces that shape our social landscape.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Discourse on the Origin of Inequality: A Revolutionary Look at Humanity's Downfall

Ever wondered why society feels so… unequal? Why some have so much and others so little? For centuries, thinkers have grappled with these profound questions. But few have offered a perspective as radical and enduring as Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his seminal work, the Discourse on the Origin of Inequality, also known as the Second Discourse.

Published in 1755, this philosophical bombshell didn't

just critique existing social structures; it traced the very roots of inequality back to the dawn of human civilization. Rousseau, a Genevan philosopher whose ideas would profoundly influence the French Revolution and subsequent political thought, argued that humans were not born inherently corrupt or competitive. Instead, he painted a picture of the "noble savage" – a primitive human existing in a state of nature, guided by self-preservation and compassion.

The State of Nature: A World Without Strife?

Before the corrupting influence of society, Rousseau envisioned humans as solitary, independent, and driven by two fundamental sentiments: *amour de soi* (self-preservation) and *pitié* (compassion). In this primal state, there was no private property, no organized government, and no artificial hierarchies. People lived simple lives, their needs met by the abundant natural world. They were essentially equal, not in a contrived social sense, but in their freedom and lack of dependence on one another.

Imagine it: no kings, no queens, no rich landlords, no struggling peasants. Everyone was on their own, but

this isolation wasn't necessarily a negative. It fostered a kind of natural freedom. Rousseau argued that human vices like greed, envy, and vanity didn't exist in this early stage. These were not innate flaws but rather products of social interaction and the development of artificial needs.

The Serpent in the Garden: The Birth of Society and Property

So, if humans were so content in their natural state, what went wrong? Rousseau pinpointed the emergence of civil society and, crucially, the concept of private property as the turning point. He famously declared, "The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, bethought himself of saying *This is mine*, and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society."

This act of claiming ownership, according to Rousseau, was the genesis of inequality. It created a divide between "mine" and "yours," leading to competition, conflict, and the establishment of laws and governments to protect property. This, in turn, led to the development of more complex social structures, where individuals began to compare themselves to others, fostering *amour-propre* – a self-love that is

dependent on the opinions of others. This is where vanity, pride, and the desire for recognition take root.

The Corruption of the Soul: From Natural Man to Social Man

Rousseau's critique is deeply pessimistic about the transformation from natural man to social man. He argued that as societies grew more complex, the natural qualities of self-preservation and compassion were distorted or replaced by artificial desires and a constant struggle for social status. The pursuit of wealth and power became paramount, leading to exploitation and oppression.

Consider the evolution of human interactions. Initially, they were based on immediate needs and a degree of mutual understanding. But with the advent of agriculture and metallurgy, people began to specialize, leading to interdependence. This interdependence, coupled with the concept of property, created power imbalances. Those who owned land and resources could exploit those who didn't. The rich became richer, and the poor became poorer, a cycle that Rousseau saw as inherently unjust.

The Role of Government and Law in Perpetuating Inequality

Rousseau's analysis extends to the very institutions designed to maintain order. He argued that governments, far from being neutral arbiters, often serve to legitimize and entrench existing inequalities. Laws, in his view, are often designed by the powerful to protect their interests and suppress the less fortunate. The social contract, which in his later work, *The Social Contract*, he proposed as a legitimate form of governance, was, in the context of the Discourse, often a fraudulent agreement that benefited the wealthy at the expense of the poor.

Think about it: a legal system that upholds property rights, even when those rights were initially established through questionable means, can perpetuate an unfair distribution of resources. Rousseau would argue that such a system, while appearing just on the surface, is fundamentally flawed because it doesn't address the root cause of inequality – the initial act of private appropriation and the subsequent social stratification.

The Noble Savage vs. Modern Man: A Stark Contrast

The "noble savage" is a central figure in Rousseau's argument. This hypothetical individual, living in a state of nature, possesses inherent goodness. They are driven by instinct and operate on principles of self-interest and empathy, not by complex social rules or artificial desires. This contrasts sharply with modern, "civilized" man, who Rousseau believed was riddled with vices, driven by vanity, and constantly seeking external validation.

This is a powerful idea because it challenges the prevailing notion of progress. Many Enlightenment thinkers celebrated human advancement through civilization. Rousseau, however, suggested that this progress came at a steep price: the corruption of human nature and the creation of a deeply unjust society. He wasn't necessarily advocating for a return to primitive life, but rather for a re-examination of what truly constitutes a good and just society.

Rousseau's Legacy and Relevance Today

The Discourse on the Origin of Inequality is not just a

historical document; its ideas continue to resonate powerfully in the 21st century. As debates about wealth inequality, social justice, and the role of government rage on, Rousseau's insights offer a compelling framework for understanding the problem.

Keywords like wealth inequality, social inequality, social contract theory, Rousseau's philosophy, and the concept of state of nature are all intrinsically linked to his groundbreaking work. His critique of private property and its role in societal stratification remains a potent argument for those who advocate for more equitable distribution of resources.

Furthermore, Rousseau's examination of *amour-propre* – the self-love rooted in the opinions of others – offers a prescient commentary on our contemporary obsession with social media, celebrity culture, and external validation. We are, in many ways, more concerned with how we are perceived than with our inherent worth, a phenomenon Rousseau identified centuries ago.

Key Takeaways from Rousseau's Discourse

1. **Natural Equality:** Humans in the state of nature are inherently free and relatively equal, driven by

basic instincts of self-preservation and compassion.

2. **The Corruption of Property:** The introduction of private property is the primary catalyst for social inequality, leading to competition, conflict, and the establishment of artificial hierarchies.
3. **The Rise of Amour-Propre:** Social comparison and the desire for external validation corrupt natural self-love into a destructive force driven by vanity and envy.
4. **Government as a Tool of Inequality:** Laws and governments, often established to protect property, can serve to legitimize and perpetuate existing social and economic disparities.
5. **The Noble Savage Ideal:** Rousseau presents a critique of civilization by contrasting the perceived goodness of primitive man with the vices of modern, "social" man.

Rethinking Our Foundations

Rousseau's Discourse on the Origin of Inequality is not an easy read. It challenges deeply ingrained assumptions about human nature and societal progress. But its enduring power lies in its ability to make us question the very foundations of our world. It compels us to ask: are the inequalities we experience an inevitable part of the human condition, or are they

a consequence of choices we have made, choices that could, perhaps, be unmade?

In a world still grappling with vast disparities, Rousseau's call to examine the origins of our social structures and to consider the true meaning of human flourishing remains as urgent and relevant as ever. His work serves as a perpetual reminder that true progress might not lie in accumulating more possessions or achieving higher social status, but in reclaiming a more authentic and compassionate existence, both individually and collectively.

So, the next time you ponder the vast gulf between the rich and the poor, or the pervasive sense of competition and anxiety in modern life, remember Jean-Jacques Rousseau and his radical exploration of how we, as a species, might have strayed from a path of natural harmony into the complex, often unjust, landscape of civilization.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s discourse on the origin of inequality stands as a foundational moment in philosophical thought, challenging conventional views on human nature and social development. In his seminal work, Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men, Rousseau invites readers to

reconsider the roots of societal disparity not as inevitable or divinely ordained, but as the product of historical, psychological, and institutional evolution. This essay does not merely recount Rousseau's argument—it explores its depth, enduring relevance, and the profound insights it offers for understanding human behavior and social structures.

Unveiling the Paradox of Progress

At the heart of Rousseau's critique lies a striking paradox: the more human societies advanced in civilization, the more pronounced the inequality became. Contrary to the prevailing Enlightenment belief that progress brought moral and social improvement, Rousseau contends that the emergence of private property marked a turning point, introducing greed, competition, and the erosion of natural equality. He imagines a pre-civilized state of nature where humans lived in relative harmony, guided by self-preservation and compassion, devoid of the artificial hierarchies that later defined human communities. It is not violence or instinctual aggression that created inequality, Rousseau suggests, but the quiet, insidious development of ownership—when individuals began to claim land and resources as their own, marking a profound shift from

shared existence to exclusive possession. Key Insights: From Natural Freedom to Social Oppression Rousseau’s analysis unfolds in two interwoven threads: the natural state and the rise of civil society. In the natural condition, humans are guided by simple needs and emotions, living independently and without the burdens of judgment or comparison. Yet, as populations grew and agriculture and metallurgy enabled surplus production, the concept of property emerged. This innovation, while fostering economic specialization, also generated jealousy and conflict. Rousseau argues that inequality did not begin with overt oppression but with subtle psychological shifts—pride, vanity, and the desire for recognition—all amplified by social comparisons. Over time, legal institutions and political power legitimized these inequalities, transforming personal advantage into systemic injustice. This distinction between biological difference and constructed inequality remains vital: Rousseau reminds us that what we often accept as natural is, in fact, a product of historical development.

Applications in Modern Society

Rousseau’s insights resonate powerfully in contemporary contexts. The widening gap between

wealth and poverty, the psychological toll of social media's curated realities, and the persistent hierarchies rooted in race, gender, and class all echo his warning about the dangers of unchecked inequality. His concept of "artificial inequality"—built through institutions, norms, and economic systems—challenges us to examine not just individual actions but the structures that perpetuate unfair advantages. In education, for example, Rousseau's emphasis on natural development inspires pedagogies that prioritize intrinsic motivation over competition. In governance, his critique urges vigilance against policies that entrench privilege rather than promote equity. By recognizing inequality as a socially constructed phenomenon, societies gain the agency to dismantle it, reclaiming the ideals of fairness and shared dignity. Benefits of Rousseau's Vision Embracing Rousseau's discourse offers profound benefits for both individuals and communities. It fosters a deeper awareness of how historical and institutional forces shape human experience, empowering people to challenge unjust norms. His emphasis on natural equality nurtures empathy, reminding us that beneath social distinctions lies a common human essence. For policymakers and reformers, Rousseau's framework provides a moral

compass—one that prioritizes the well-being of the most vulnerable and questions the legitimacy of entrenched power. Moreover, by highlighting the psychological roots of inequality, his work supports mental health and social cohesion, encouraging societies to cultivate environments where self-worth is not tied to material success or status.

Future Outlook: Reimagining Equality

As global challenges intensify—from climate crisis to rising social unrest—Rousseau's call for a renewed commitment to equality gains renewed urgency. His vision invites a rethinking of progress itself, shifting focus from economic growth alone to the quality of human relations and collective flourishing. Future societies may draw from his insights to build systems that balance innovation with justice, technology with compassion, and individual ambition with communal responsibility. Rousseau does not advocate a return to a primitive past but a conscious reconstruction of social contracts grounded in mutual respect and shared purpose. In this light, his discourse remains not a relic of philosophy, but a living guide—one that inspires ongoing dialogue, critical reflection, and the

persistent pursuit of a more equitable world.

The Root of All Evil? Rousseau's Provocative "Discourse on the Origin of Inequality"

Jean-Jacques Rousseau's 1755 treatise, "Discourse on the Origin of Inequality," is not merely an academic exercise in historical philosophy; it's a seismic jolt to the foundations of Western thought. Often referred to as the "Second Discourse," this seminal work challenges prevailing notions of progress, civilization, and the inherent goodness of humanity. Rousseau dares to ask: if we are born free and equal, as he famously posited in his earlier "Social Contract," then where did the chains of inequality and suffering originate? The answer, he argues, lies not in some inherent flaw in human nature, but in the corrupting influence of society itself. This exploration delves deep into Rousseau's radical arguments, examining his depiction of the "noble savage," the transformative power of private property, and the enduring legacy of his critique of modern civilization.

From Natural Man to Social Chains: Rousseau's Hypothetical History

Rousseau's "Discourse on the Origin of Inequality" is a hypothetical reconstruction of humanity's journey from a pre-social state to the complex, stratified societies of his time. He deliberately eschews historical evidence in favor of a thought experiment, aiming to isolate the fundamental forces that shaped human existence. His starting point is "natural man," a creature remarkably different from the civilized individual we recognize today. This natural man, living in a state of nature unburdened by social conventions or complex desires, is characterized by two primary impulses: self-preservation (amour de soi) and pity or compassion (pitié). These instincts, Rousseau contends, are sufficient for his survival and well-being. Natural man is solitary, driven by immediate needs, and fundamentally independent. He experiences no complex emotions like pride, envy, or shame, as these arise from social comparison and the desire for recognition.

The transition from this idyllic, albeit primitive, state is not marked by a cataclysmic event but by a gradual process of change, propelled by man's unique capacity for self-improvement and his ability to

transcend his immediate needs. This capacity, while seemingly positive, becomes the seed of societal ills. As humans begin to interact more, to cooperate in rudimentary ways, and to develop simple tools, their needs become more complex. This leads to the development of language, not as a tool for abstract thought, but initially as a means of expressing emotions and coordinating actions. The emergence of language, however, is a double-edged sword. It allows for the sharing of ideas and the formation of rudimentary communities, but it also fosters comparison and the seeds of vanity.

The Tyranny of Opinion: Amour-Propre and the Dawn of Inequality

The most significant catalyst for inequality, according to Rousseau, is the development of "amour-propre," a term often translated as vanity or self-love. Unlike the natural "amour de soi," which is a healthy concern for one's own preservation, amour-propre is a comparative and egoistic desire to be esteemed by others. It arises when individuals become aware that they are being judged by their peers, leading them to seek approval and to cultivate a public persona. This shift from internal satisfaction to external validation is, for Rousseau, the original sin of society.

With amour-propre comes the awareness of difference. Individuals begin to perceive themselves as superior or inferior to others based on perceived qualities, abilities, or possessions. This fosters competition, envy, and a constant striving for dominance. The family unit, initially a pragmatic arrangement for reproduction and protection, begins to evolve. As people compare their families and their capabilities, notions of property and ownership start to take root. The individual who first enclosed a piece of land and declared "This is mine" is, in Rousseau's dramatic rendering, the true founder of civil society and the ultimate architect of its inequalities.

Private Property: The Original Sin of Civilization

Rousseau's indictment of private property is one of the most controversial and enduring aspects of his "Discourse." He argues that the very concept of ownership, which allows individuals to claim exclusive rights over resources that were once held in common, is the primary source of social conflict and injustice. Before private property, man was largely independent and self-sufficient. With it, dependence becomes inevitable. Those who own property gain power and influence, while those who do not are forced to seek

employment, enter into subservient relationships, and accept their subordinate position. This creates a fundamental division between the rich and the poor, a division that breeds resentment, exploitation, and the erosion of natural freedom.

The establishment of property rights necessitates the creation of laws and governing institutions to protect these rights. However, Rousseau argues that these institutions are ultimately designed to benefit the powerful and to maintain the existing social hierarchy. The "rich," having gained their advantage through cunning and exploitation, now conspire to create a system of laws that legitimizes their gains and protects them from the wrath of the "poor." The social contract, in this context, is not a free and equitable agreement but a deceptive pact designed to perpetuate inequality and secure the property of the wealthy.

The "Noble Savage" and the Critique of Progress

The concept of the "noble savage" is inextricably linked to Rousseau's "Discourse." While not necessarily a literal depiction of a historical figure, the noble savage represents an idealized state of natural

man, uncorrupted by the artifice and vices of civilization. This "savage" is characterized by his independence, his contentment, and his inherent goodness. He lives in harmony with nature, driven by natural instincts and basic needs, and experiences none of the artificial desires and social pressures that plague civilized man. He is, in essence, a barometer of societal corruption.

Rousseau's critique of progress is thus a critique of civilization itself. He argues that the advancements in arts, sciences, and technology, while often lauded as signs of human progress, have in fact led to the degradation of human character and the exacerbation of social ills. The pursuit of luxury, the refinement of manners, and the development of complex knowledge have all served to alienate individuals from their true selves and to foster a culture of superficiality and deceit. The sciences and arts, he suggests, are often mere ornaments that mask deeper societal problems and serve to distract from the fundamental injustices that prevail.

Enduring Relevance and Philosophical Legacy

Jean-Jacques Rousseau's "Discourse on the Origin of

Inequality" remains a profoundly influential and challenging work. Its radical critique of private property, its exploration of the psychological effects of social comparison, and its unflinching examination of the corrupting influence of civilization continue to resonate with contemporary readers. The work has had a profound impact on subsequent philosophical and political thought, influencing thinkers from Karl Marx to contemporary critics of capitalism and consumerism. His ideas about the inherent goodness of man, the corrupting influence of society, and the importance of authentic living continue to be debated and reinterpreted.

In an era grappling with widening economic disparities, the pervasive influence of social media, and the environmental consequences of unchecked industrialization, Rousseau's questions about the origins of inequality and the true meaning of progress are more pertinent than ever. His legacy is not one of offering simple solutions, but of posing uncomfortable questions that force us to re-examine our assumptions about human nature, the purpose of society, and the true cost of our "civilized" existence. The "Discourse" serves as a timeless reminder that the pursuit of progress without a deep understanding of its human consequences can lead us down a path of increasing

alienation and suffering.

Keywords for SEO:

1. Jean-Jacques Rousseau
2. Discourse on the Origin of Inequality
3. Second Discourse
4. Origin of Inequality
5. Social Contract theory
6. Noble Savage
7. Private Property
8. Amour-propre
9. State of Nature
10. Critique of Civilization
11. Social Philosophy
12. Political Philosophy
13. Enlightenment Thinkers
14. Natural Goodness
15. Inequality
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Inequality and continue their journey of lifelong learning in the digital age.

Questions & Answers About jean jacques rousseau discourse on the origin of inequality

No	Question	Answer
1	What's the central argument of Rousseau's 'Discourse on the Origin of Inequality'?	Rousseau argues that inequality is not natural but a product of social development, specifically the establishment of private property, which corrupts man's natural goodness and leads to vice and unhappiness.
2	How does Rousseau describe the 'state of nature' in this work?	He envisions a primitive 'noble savage' who is solitary, self-sufficient, and driven by self-preservation and pity. This natural man is not inherently good or evil, but free from the corruptions of society.

3	What role does private property play in Rousseau's theory of inequality?	Rousseau famously states, 'The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, bethought himself of saying This is mine, and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society.' Private property is seen as the root of social conflict and dependence.
4	How does Rousseau differentiate between natural and political inequality?	Natural inequality refers to differences in physical and mental abilities (age, health, strength, intelligence), while political (or moral) inequality is established and legitimized by convention and the consent of the governed, leading to power and wealth disparities.
5	What is Rousseau's view on the 'social contract' as presented in this discourse?	While later elaborated in 'The Social Contract,' this discourse critiques existing forms of social organization, suggesting that current social contracts often serve to protect the powerful and perpetuate inequality, rather than establishing genuine freedom and equality.

6	Why does Rousseau believe that society corrupts natural man?	He believes that social life introduces 'amour-propre' (vanity or pride), a desire for recognition and comparison with others. This leads to competition, envy, and a loss of natural independence and authentic self-worth.
7	What is the lasting impact of Rousseau's 'Discourse on the Origin of Inequality'?	It profoundly influenced Enlightenment thought, socialist ideas, and revolutionary movements by questioning the legitimacy of existing social hierarchies and advocating for a more egalitarian society, emphasizing the corrupting influence of civilization.

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