

ROUSSEAU AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

Among the many crises in the world's history few have attracted the attention of historians and political writers as has the French Revolution. Nor is it remarkable that all who are interested in problems of government should inquire carefully into the causes and history of the movement from which constitutional rule in France has developed, and which is to-day considered the source of whatever democratic institutions Continental Europe possesses.

No less noticeable than the number of authors who have treated the period, is the variety of causes to which the final outbreak has been attributed. One writer has considered it an outgrowth of the spirit of rationalism in Europe; another has regarded the movement only as the natural revolt of an oppressed people; while a third, it may be, has seen in it a special visitation of Providence upon a corrupt and wicked government.

In all discussion of causes, there is great danger that essentials and non-essentials may be confused. Forces which powerfully affected the work of reconstruction, but were of little influence in earlier years, may be considered the chief factors aiding the downfall of the *ancien régime*. This cannot be illustrated more effectively than by comparing such causes as the financial weakness of the Bourbon monarchy, and the political condition of its subjects. If a series of corrupt administrations had produced a deficit so large, and a discontent so universal that some change was necessary, it was probable from the political methods in which France had been trained, and from the absence of any centres of resistance between the king and the individual citizens, that the change would be a radical one. It is not to be denied that literary France exerted an influence in hastening the revolution, for in every country whose

institutions are decaying, writers appear who devote themselves to portraying abuses, as well as to elaborating new systems. Some of the most influential Frenchmen entered this field of complaint with an effect that cannot be ignored. In a country, however, where the theory of absolute government is so universally accepted as it was in France, under the Bourbons, and where so much is endured rather than to disturb theoretically perfect conceptions, there is, it would seem, little opportunity for the development of a new ideal into an active force, until the old has been proven extremely defective.

In marked contrast with the hesitancy with which the French recognize fatal defects in a method of government to which they have unreservedly given themselves, is the zeal with which a new and complete system is sought, when once such defects are perceived. The ideal then proposed is not the improvement of the old, but its entire replacement. The mediæval feudal monarchy was thus replaced by the later absolutism; and it was thus that the papal hierarchy was replaced, so far as it was discarded at all, by Deism or Atheism, rather than by the Protestant compromises found in other countries. Is it not this eagerness for a complete system which, even among professed reformers, accounts for the differences between the ideas of Calvin and Luther in religion, and which explains the development of the physiocratic ideas into an economic system in France, rather than in England?

There is something attractive about such a method of thought, and yet there is always the danger that the results of its application to practical affairs may be very different from those intended. Let us take an example among questions of government. When changes of system are the result of modifications introduced singly, but successively, there is comparatively little danger of the overthrow of all government and a temporary period of anarchy, for even should the addition be unpopular, the body of the structure

yet remains as a steadying force. In proposing a total change, it too frequently happens that instead of providing an adequate foundation on which the new system may rest and which was an essential part of its original conception, minor writers, or shallow political leaders who do not realize the necessity for such a foundation, seek to establish the new ideal without it. With such methods anarchy or despotism can be the only result. There is not only the danger of a poor system but the added possibility that acceptable features may lose force by not being correctly applied. It does not follow that the democratic ideas developed by Rousseau in his social compact, were intended to be applied to France just emerging from ignorance and political inexperience, even though he presents an ideal of government very different from the existing absolutism. Nor does it follow that there were not portions of his political system which would have been of immense value to France, had they been correctly applied. Nothing is more certain, however, than that certain of his phrases were caught up by political leaders during the Revolution, that an effort was made to establish a government for which his approval was claimed, and that the result was anarchy, followed by a despotism as powerful, if not as bigoted, as any that France had seen. It was not the complete system which Rousseau had developed that was adopted when the time came for constructive work, but a hasty plan based on a few phrases taken from one of his writings. Even in a constitution built in this way, there were incorporated many features from Rousseau's ideals, which have proven of lasting value to France, although others of as much importance were lost.

It is the purpose of this paper to show how far Rousseau was responsible for the revolutionary governments, as well as to indicate the essential features of the ideal which he offered to France, and its influence on later political thought.

What was the ideal which Rousseau sought to obtain by his proposals? I doubt if this question can be answered better than by the hackneyed phrase, "popular sovereignty." Distinctly abandoning the notion of divine right, or long established custom, Rousseau takes a position which has never since been abandoned, declaring that governments derive all their power from the consent of the governed. He advances an hypothesis concerning the development and historical justification of this idea, which may, or may not, have been true, and on which he places little weight, regarding it as an unessential portion of his argument. His position is that governments ought to be based on this consent, and not that all governments are in fact so founded. At a later point we shall consider the question whether Rousseau regarded his ideal as immediately attainable. For the present we ask what credit should be given him for placing it before the world?

It is frequently argued that the falsity of Rousseau's historical allusions condemns his entire theory, but to this position I would take vigorous exception. History was, by no means, the science a century ago which it is to-day, and the political writer was obliged to use authorities which, to-day, are ranked as second rate, for the simple reason that there were none better. Rousseau is not the only writer of the period who looked back to some golden age long past. The difference between him and his contemporaries was that almost alone he maintained the possibility of attaining a future condition no less ideal than that which mankind had once enjoyed. This, in itself, was an improvement over the despondency which had characterized the first half of the century, for it made prominent an object worthy of attainment. The picture of the state as a society, in which every member had duties and privileges equal to those enjoyed by his neighbor, was yet more important, since it furnished an incentive which appealed to the sentiment of justice, as well as hope. It was to furnish a

logical foundation on which such a society could be erected, that Rousseau developed his theory of the social compact, a voluntary union between the individuals living within a given territory.

Although his writings did not originate the conception of society as created by compact, nowhere else had it been so clearly stated, and its conclusions so logically drawn. Neither Locke nor Hobbes gave the entire control of the government to the people, and thus limited the power which should belong to the governed under the logical development of the idea. The Pilgrims, on the Mayflower, who first applied the principle to practical affairs, had long since abandoned the complete theory by recognizing the right of special legislation vested in the Crown, and it was not until Rousseau once more boldly announced it as a logical whole, that the idea again became a living force in the world.

When the state has been formed by the express or implied consent of its members, justice becomes the rule of action for the people, and there is a true harmony of interests among them. A certain policy is for the best interests of the community as a whole, and it is for the general will of the state to determine whether any proposal is in agreement with this policy. By becoming a part of the state, every citizen has in effect said that he wishes the general will to prevail, and it only remains to be seen whether any proposition is in accord with this will. Government is instituted for this purpose, and Rousseau is careful to say that the form of government best for a nation varies in different cases. The people should have, at all times, the right to suggest laws, or to veto any law suggested by the legislative body, for in this way alone can that harmony be maintained between people and law, which is essential to national well-being. The magistrates, *i. e.*, all administrative officials, should be chosen directly, or indirectly, by the people and should be held closely responsible to them, in order that the true will of the community may always be supreme. Such,

then, is his plan, and its one object is to assure to the people at all times, and in all matters, a definite control.* Now the question to be asked is merely this: Can any state whose legal rulers profess to draw all their powers from the consent of the ruled, demand any less guarantee than the one which Rousseau offers?

If we examine the various systems of government then in force, we shall find none so democratic as this. The mere announcement of such a principle, therefore, marks a decided advance. Yet all that has been said may be granted, and usually is granted, without affecting the argument of those who consider Rousseau's proposals injurious to the nation. Such a system, it is said, offered no guarantee of good government, because the people had not, in 1789, the capacity of judging what was best for themselves while they were being incited to overthrow the existing system of control, and exercise sovereign powers of their own right. Let us examine the basis of such a criticism.

In defence of this position, it is assumed that Rousseau intended all men, of whatever grade, to possess an equal influence in the state. Nothing could be more false. So long as there is a difference in intellectual capacity, our author distinctly says that the lower grades should not be considered a part of the state, but he does not hesitate to

*In spite of the frequent assertions that Rousseau did not set forth any method of ascertaining just what the general will was, that indeed he denies it to be the sum of individual wills or the possibility of its being determined by a party (Bk. 2, cap. iii), I would yet maintain that he relies for its ascertainment on a vote of the people. A majority may not in this manner formulate the general will but it can say that a proposed measure is in harmony with it. Indeed it is doubtful if after the organization of the state the general will is again declared, but the people act as a government. The factions which controlled European politics at that time might well have awakened mistrust in Rousseau's mind. In the same way Bluntschli speaks of sovereignty as "not a sum of particular isolated rights but a general or common right" ("Theory of State," vii, 1). We do not deny the existence of sovereign power. Why should we deny the existence of a general will predominant over individual wills as sovereign authority is above the separate powers exercised in its name? Is it not a society like the one set forth by Rousseau as ideal which Herbert Spencer pictures in his concluding volume on the "Principles of Sociology"?

affirm that these classes should be prepared for citizenship as soon as possible, and when qualified should be admitted to full rights. The controlling power of the more competent, which has been presented by writers since his time, as a new development of democratic government, is thus maintained.

The only aristocracy, however, which he would recognize is one of intellect. Wealth, or family, is no reason why one man should stand above his fellows, nor are there any reasons why aught but justice should regulate social relations. Here, in the opinion of the writer, are stated the essentials of democracy, and to the recognition of these essentials the world has been gradually approaching ever since Rousseau wrote. Even the fact that the first idea was incorrectly applied has not prevented the second from transforming France and parts of the neighboring countries from a régime of privilege to one of legal equality.

Regarding the immediate abolition of privilege, it is often assumed by careless critics of Rousseau, that he was in favor of revolt against the Bourbon government in France, but a careful study of his works shows that only indirectly does he favor any such proposition. His chapter on sovereignty in the "*Contrat Social*," in which are found practically all the quotations so commonly taken from his works during the revolutionary period, merely declares that the general will is sovereign, inalienable and indivisible. It does not sanction revolution against legitimate government. On the contrary Rousseau again and again asserts that revolutions do not make men capable of conducting the government. This indeed is the crucial point of the whole discussion. For whom is the system of government outlined in the "*Contrat Social*" intended? Every citizen whom it considers as exercising a share in the control of the nation is a man of enlightened character and of political ability. At the time of the adoption of the contract, Rousseau considers men as morally perfect, and political capacity as being at once

obtained; but in the case of a young person growing up under eighteenth century conditions, the same result can be reached only by submitting him to a proper course of education, and in this course, experience and example, rather than verbal instruction, is insisted on. In rare cases alone, is any such result produced by a revolution. Thus, when Rousseau discusses the admission of a new class into the state as in the case of Poland, he insists that a careful education be given to prepare them for their duties and rights as full members of the community. There were, without doubt, many technically free citizens of France in Rousseau's time quite as incompetent in matters of statesmanship as were the slaves of Poland, and it is hardly fair to consider our author as ignorant of such conditions, especially if at the same time he is held to advocate a revolution, which shall secure an impartial distribution of advantages.

The cause of the error is that Rousseau's critics deem him to desire a re-creation of the state, and assume that in his mind, Frenchmen of the eighteenth century were in the same condition as the original creators whom he had pictured. In fact, however, he does not consider such action as possible, since after the state has been instituted, its form of government only may be altered. He would regenerate its members by education and training until they had the same qualifications as those which the original units possessed. They would then be sufficiently wise to select the most advantageous form of government, and national prosperity would be assured.

That the scheme of government outlined in the "*Contrat Social*" was not considered by its author as applicable to France of 1760 is evident if we examine his other writings. In his discourses, Rousseau had said that existing governments were the outgrowths of injustice, and that no mere change in form would give to man the true possibilities of his development. The real change must come first of all

in the man himself. Thus he recognizes that if man is not already suited for an ideal government, the change to that form will not produce such an effect. He could not have maintained that man had remained perfect in France since that state of nature had been abandoned, for if so, the government could not have been degenerate. He must have considered the various régimes which had controlled France, rather as examples of those systems which degraded their subjects.*

If Rousseau had mentioned no method of individual initiative by which men could be made good citizens, we might conclude that he intended the change in government to have preceded all others, but this is not the case. Such an error is only possible to those who consider the "*Contrat Social*" as Rousseau's only work, containing his whole system. If he had written no other treatise than this, or if there had been a long interval of time between the publication of his various writings, the neglect of all but one would be more excusable, but the "*Contrat Social*" was only one of a series of works published at the same time, which must be read together to understand the real theory of their author. In "*La Nouvelle Heloise*" (1761) he considers the true relations which should exist between members of the family; in the "*Emile*" (1762) he shows how a man should be educated to make him fitted for social and political duties; while in the "*Contrat Social*," published in the same year, is pictured the true method of government, although this volume is intended to be followed by a fuller exposition of this subject. The first two works being, in a sense, preparatory, we should expect that the immediate application of theories there set forth would produce more satisfactory results than an attempt to graft the governmental ideas on an undeveloped society, and such, indeed, was the outcome. It is in this field of influence that we find the best basis for an estimate of the man. Rousseau is recognized as a social

*"*Contrat Social*," Bk. I, cap. viii.

reformer by writers who see only revolution in his political ideas and it is largely because in this field of suggestion his advice was more faithfully followed. It is but fair to remember that society, at the time, was fitted for the application of social reforms, but had not reached the state where Rousseau considered his political system as applicable. It may be true that the three works together furnish neither a perfect nor a practical system of national life, but it is no less true that the separation of one from the others is unjust to the author, and deprives the system of any opportunity to prove its practical worth, or its essential falseness.

Indeed one of the most frequent criticisms of these two preparatory volumes is that they present ideal social schemes impossible of realization. The thought that the constitution of the state outlined in the "Social Contract" might have been another such plan, dependent for its success upon the accomplishment of radical changes in social matters, seems to have been neglected. Fair criticism of the three works considered as a whole, is hardly consistent with the declaration that Rousseau was a revolutionist, for if a great social and political change was considered desirable, in none of these works is it considered as attainable by the people themselves, except gradually and by a long system of training. If indeed this gradual revolution had been attempted and had failed, then a much firmer foundation for the charges of incapacity would have been furnished, than can be built from the actual occurrences of 1789.*

Nor do we lack further proof that Rousseau did not intend his system of government to be applied to an uneducated and disordered people. Ten years after the publication of the works we have been considering, he was called upon for plans regarding the government of Poland, and although many of his suggestions tend toward an improve-

* His system of training is similar to that of Turgot. See the works of Turgot, Vol. ii, pp. 785-94

ment of the government as well as of social conditions, he is careful to advise gradual and moderate, rather than sudden and violent changes in political methods. There are references to the "Social Contract," but he seems to realize that he is not planning a government for the ideal nation he pictured when writing that treatise.

In a word, Rousseau presents in his writings two series of propositions, the first intended to show how an ideal government could be gradually established and maintained; the second, found in his work on Poland, consisting of suggestions for the immediate reform of many existing social and political evils. It was not his fault that the writers and speakers of the revolution attempted to apply portions of his complete theory, and rejected his practical suggestions.*

It may be interesting to examine his position in regard to changes in the Polish government, for we may thus imagine how Rousseau would have acted in the crisis of 1789. His political suggestions are mainly found in Chapter VII of his "*Considerations sur Pologne*," and among them are the following: "We should never forget that necessity alone justifies changes in the existing order whether by a grant of new power or a retrenchment of the old."† These are hardly the words of a revolutionist for they imply the most cautious action. Again, when he is considering the necessity of changing the relative numbers of representatives in the Polish Diet in order to secure equality between the two houses, this ardent advocate of democracy, later assumed to be in favor of large legislative assemblies, remarks: "A natural remedy would seem to be secured by an increase in the number of the delegates, but I fear lest such action might cause too much commotion in

* Rousseau himself says that he takes his models from his own imagination, and then tries to see how they may be attained. See "*Rousseau juge de Jean Jacques*." Third dialogue, p. 193.

† "Mais ne perdons jamais de vue l'importante maxime de ne rien changer sous nécessité ni pour retrancher ni pour ajouter."

the state and bring us too nearly to mob rule. If it is absolutely necessary to change the proportion, I should prefer to decrease the number of senators rather than to increase the number of delegates."* Here Rousseau is not arguing for the form of government best suited to ideal conditions, but as to what shall be done for a nation which is on the point of breaking to pieces, a nation much nearer the France of 1789, than France was to the ideal people for whom the "*Contrat Social*" was framed. It was a fact which was before him. How would he have the executive department administered? "In order that the government may be strong, pure and best able to justify its existence, all executive power should be in the hands of the same persons: it does not suffice that these persons should be replaced occasionally by others, but if possible they should be held responsible to the legislator who should be their real director."† Can we say that the revolutionary leaders who distributed power among a number of committees who repeatedly declared themselves independent of their constituents, who introduced a constitution without the approval of the nation at large, and who rejected anything approaching parliamentary government, as to-day understood, were the true followers of Rousseau? Such examples serve to show that Rousseau not only had the power of presenting plans for the attainment of ideal forms of government, but that he also recognized practical necessities. In the propositions of the Physiocrats we can see the same ideal of perfect government for it is only as the sovereign prince makes justice his rule of conduct that he is regarded as a legal in

* "Un remède naturel à ce défaut se présente de lui-même; c'est augmenter le nombre des nonces; mais je craindrois que cela ne fit trop de mouvement dans l'Etat et n'approchât trop du tumulte démocratique. S'il falloit absolument changer la proportion, au lieu d'augmenter le nombre des nonces j'aimerois mieux diminuer le nombre des senateurs."

† "Pour que l'administration soit forte, bonne et marche bien son but, toute la puissance exécutive doit être dans les mêmes mains; mais il ne suffit pas que ces mains changent, il faut qu'elles n'agissent s'il est possible que sous les yeux du législateur et que ce soit lui qui les guide."

distinction from an arbitrary ruler. Neither Turgot nor La Rivière designate any one to pass judgment on the justice of the ruler's actions and it would seem that in this respect their theory is inferior to Rousseau's, who would have the people made capable of criticising, as well as competent to rule. It is easy also to see how a people called on for advice and assistance by their king, as were the French in 1789, could readily imagine themselves the judges of the royal conduct, competent to decide whether it was legal or arbitrary, an excuse for revolution being thus furnished quite equal to any intended by the author of the "*Contrat Social*."*

It is also interesting to note that education in political duties is the method which Turgot would apply for making good citizens, a method which does not differ essentially from that proposed by Rousseau, and yet the great controller is rarely spoken of as a theorist in matters of government, a term so frequently applied to the author we are considering. Rousseau's real plans were followed neither by the writers who advocated the revolution nor by the legislators who planned its constructive work. In one sense he was as extreme in his proposals as they were. His ideal state presents as great a contrast to the France of 1789, as does any proposal advanced by the speakers or writers of the period. The fundamental distinction between them is found in the methods of realization proposed. Rousseau presents in clear outline a plan of gradual advance by education in the duties of life, expressly stating his disbelief in man's being at that time perfect, or the probability of the attainment of perfection by revolution. The more

* When he is discussing the basis of government Turgot says (Vol. ii, p. 503), "The rights of men united in society are not founded on their past but on their nature. Only reason justifies the continuance of old institutions." (p. 504), "The cause of the existing evils is that your nation has no constitution. It is a society composed of different orders badly united whose members have few social ties to bind them together. Where consequently every one is occupied with his own concerns almost exclusively, and hardly one pays attention to his duties to his fellows. Thus right has never ruled in this perpetual conflict of ideas and undertakings."

radical leaders throughout the country—the men who determined the direction the movement should take—as distinctly express their belief that the people of the time are able to operate the machinery of the state, and that they, themselves, can execute the wishes of the people. Rousseau intended his plan for small states, expressly saying that further development was needed to make it applicable to a populous nation. The leaders in the Assembly had no hesitancy in applying their conclusions to the whole of France. The fundamental needs of a nation according to Rousseau, are distinctly recognized by so able a man as Turgot in his proposals for reform, made to the King, but the leaders of 1791-93 considered them only secondarily, if at all. Before Rousseau, there were writers like Morelly, more radical than he, and with the progress of discontent, these radical views gained not only by extension among the people, but their intensive force increased. In accord with the spirit of his time, Rousseau looked back to an ideal period but also forward to a renewal of such conditions if a long, faithful effort were made, and thus he intensified the longing for ideals which was characteristic of France, throughout this period. Further than this, he does not go. It took a later and more hopeful generation than his to expect to realize ideals at once. Turgot places the interval at ten years,* but it was not until the last decade of the century that it was considered possible to at once establish a heaven upon this earth.

The tide of expectation advanced, but unless we can see the views of Rousseau in the proposals of Marat and his associates, we have no right to hold that author responsible for their conduct. Such responsibility is not proven by the quotations from the "Social Contract" which we find used by the later leaders, nor would it be proven if this work could be shown to have been their sole guide. A half truth may be no less a lie than a deliberate mis-statement, and in this

* Works, Vol. ii, p. 508.

way only can the theories of the revolutionists be said to have been drawn from Rousseau. Not isolated statements, chapters or books, but his whole doctrine must be the final test, and in this connection the statement already made that in the political pamphlets of the revolutionary period there is hardly a reference to Rousseau's works aside from his chapters in the 'Social Contract' on sovereignty, is of marked importance. By 1789-93 society had advanced so far in its discontent with the Bourbon absolutism and the limited government which had been placed in its stead, that even the radical doctrine based on only a few phrases taken from these chapters developed ideas which every one had in his heart. If we are seeking some writer who above others inspired this growing discontent and restlessness so characteristic of the period and which prepared the nation to accept any scheme which was complete and promised much, we must look to Necker with his work on the administration of the finances in France, rather than to any writing of the philosophers.

Rousseau, to be sure, placed before the world the picture of a nation under an ideal government, and thus excited an enthusiasm for liberty, equality and fraternity which, it is to be hoped, will never cease to exist. If to arouse a desire for such a condition is an offence against rational government, if we ought never to seek anything or be inspired by anything better than a system of compromise, then was Rousseau a bar to all political advance and an enemy to progress. But if it is necessary to disregard the main body of his writings entirely and to judge the remaining few passages and phrases distinct from their context, and wholly by the use made of them by men who did not understand them; if all this is necessary to make Rousseau a revolutionist, can we not honestly say that such an indictment has small basis in fact. We may believe that unless Rousseau had lived, France and the world would have lacked the inspiration to progress which a noble political ideal

attractively presented, is sure to furnish; we may possibly say that but for him, the French Revolution would not have followed the exact course it did pursue, but that is entirely different from making him the inciter of the revolutionary policy. It is no condemnation of a man or his system, when the ends he proposes are sought by means which he has denounced, and the result is failure. Finally, it must be remembered that Rousseau intended writing a larger work on government in which some of the ideas of the "*Contrat Social*" should be developed and doubtful points explained. Indeed it is said that he left notes on several subjects, among others the application of his ideas to large states, but they have been destroyed. Thus, we can not conclude that a neglect to give all the details of his plans is necessarily fatal to their practicability.

In our study and interpretation of Rousseau's writings we have seen that writers, speakers and listeners have obtained ideas regarding his system of government, which even the "*Contrat Social*" fails to support, and for whose origin we must hold the speakers themselves, or at least, other and more radical writers responsible. The Assembly added to this misinterpretation being influenced by its own ambition, and thus framed a composite doctrine, which may have been accepted as Rousseau's, but which differed widely from his conceptions. The people thought they were getting popular government, their leaders were aiming at an oligarchy, although a few recognized this as a preparatory stage.

But this is not all. We see that a more serious misjudgment was made at the time, which is not absent from more recent writings. Frenchmen of the eighteenth century, had not the discrimination to understand that the doctrine for society outlined in the "*Social Contract*" was not intended for France of their time. They did not see that if portions of it could be safely followed, the complete theory was intended only for an ideal society, a condition which France

was expected to reach, but which as surely she had not yet attained.

The works in which Rousseau outlined his method of attaining an improved government, as well as those which proved his ability to distinguish between the desirable and the expedient, were neglected at the time, and have been largely neglected ever since. Probably our author did not anticipate the present methods of parliamentary government in their entirety. Very few, if any, thinkers of that period did understand such a system, yet I doubt if anywhere in Europe, Rousseau could see in practice, or read in theory, a nearer approach to the idea, than he gives us in his considerations on Poland. If his plans do not advocate parliamentary government, they surely do favor a system like that of Switzerland to-day, and which is regarded with so much favor. The safeguard found in the Swiss referendum is but the execution of Rousseau's proposals, while the political ability of that nation has been so raised by generations of governmental training, that it is not far from that which he would have considered attainable, had the methods of training set forth in the "*Emile*" been applied in France. With every advance in qualifications, the last century has seen an extension of political power to the masses of Western Europe, and it is Rousseau, more than any of his contemporaries, who advocated such gradual progress.

But these are, by no means, the commonly accepted views of Rousseau and of his philosophy. To what shall we attribute the difference? First, to the fact again and again emphasized that the real work of the author was not judged as a whole, but by the action of men who professed to be following his doctrine, while in reality using certain of his phrases in a sense different from that intended by their author. Secondly, to the intense reaction against popular influence which controlled Europe during the period immediately following the Revolution and which rendered impossible any serious investigation of its causes, or any

impartial judgment of its supposed inciters. So far as there was an honest spirit of criticism, stress was laid on the powers of analysis shown by writers and the correctness of the authorities quoted in their works. In both of these fields, Rousseau was weak; in the latter, because no good history of the past existed at his time, and because the correctness of these allusions was no essential part of his work; in the former, because he had not an analytical mind, dealing rather with bodies as a whole than with their component parts.

Somewhat akin to this reaction against freedom in politics, was the rejection by succeeding generations of that atheism and loose morality, which the revolution was thought to have advanced, and of which Rousseau was regarded as a marked example. Against the former of these charges, Rousseau may be defended, for he was no atheist, but rather a pronounced deist; against the latter it is true little can be said, unless the frankness with which he confessed his faults, and but for which many of his offences would be unknown, may be regarded as lessening the offence. Always quarreling, always considering himself as ill-treated, always reflecting on the honesty of others, Rousseau was not a man to be admired. Probably an epileptic from birth, and at any rate afflicted with an emotional temperament, which became partial insanity before his death, his writings contain many fanciful passages and vulgar allusions, which have made them tiresome or ludicrous to the searcher for practical political guidance, and offensive to the moralist. These defects have doubtless caused many readers to throw down his works in disgust, and yet is it not more remarkable that a man educated as was Rousseau, and partially insane, as he was during his later years, should not have left more traces of his weakness in his works? The writer is no admirer of Rousseau's personality, and yet is it not possible that it is this which has hindered an impartial judgment of his political theories?

If we are to consider his writings by themselves, let us not judge their author by a single work; if his theories are to be valued by their results, let us not confine our attention solely to the Revolution, but consider also the advance which democracy has made since his time. Finally, if we are considering Rousseau as a writer on government, we must not allow his moral weakness to blind us to the grandeur and completeness of his political conceptions.

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