SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND MORAL MAN As we already pointed out earlier, prior to reason, man was character- ized by the two sentiments of self-love and pity for other sentient beings.Rousseau seems to be implying here 'a natural and painless transition from the study of Nature to the search for its author; and when the idea of God is acquired, as the most reasonable explanation of the cosmos, it follows that with the natural love of self, there will be associated a natural love of the Creator of the self and the universal order, of which the self feels itself to be an inte- gral part...[then is born] an active conscience which, although it operates through feeling, does not supplant reason, but supplements it.'13 As a moral being, Emile now has a conscience, which, for Rousseau, is based both on the sentiments and on reason.In Emile in 1762, Rousseau, writes that, 'Everything is good as it comes from the hands of the Author of Nature; but everything degenerates in the hands of man.'11 A little later, he laments that, 'All our wisdom consists in servile prejudices, all our customs are but servitude, worry and constraint.'Emile is not a primitive, but an artificially-produced natu- ral man for an artificially-produced natural society.'14 Just as Emile is for a certain kind of education completing or perfecting our nature, similarly, is not The Social Contract about the rightly organized political society building on what nature already provides us with?As an adolescent, Emile naturally experiences a sexual urge which the tutor is to sublimate into 'friendship and the general sense of human community', by using the natural sentiment or pre-rational nat- ural instinct of compassion.Civilized man is born, lives and dies in a state of slavery...and as long as he preserves the human form, he is fettered by our institutions.'12 Emile, interestingly enough, is a treatise on education.Since, Rousseau (1712-1778) 151 Box 8.4 on the social contract and the creation of the body politic: "The problem is to find a form of asso- ciation which will defend and protect with the whole common force the per- son and goods of each associate, and in which each, while uniting himself with all, may still obey himself alone, and remain as free as before."By this time, Rousseau had come to the conclusion that education, organized along the right lines, would build on the strengths of our human nature instead of perverting it. Therefore, he advocates the education of Emile, in the countryside; close to nature, and away from the city.The tutor ensures that the child has the freedom to move about freely in this natural and solitary environ- ment, and keeps him away from any books till the age of 12.Rousseau defined freedom thus: 'Obedience to a law which we prescribe to ourselves is liberty.'15 Which kind of society, however, will establish such freedom?Society, characterized by inequality, becomes responsible not only for the corruption of human beings, but also for the lack of liberty in their lives.It is due to these views of Rousseau, that he is often associated with the slogan 'Back to Nature'.The early Rousseau, of the two discourses, seems to give us an extremely negative judgement on society and civilization.Is this judgement reit- erated in Emile?During this time Emile is also to learn some basic manual skill or a useful art, like carpentry.As a created natural order, nature has purposes or ends imbued in it, and with this realization, Emile comes to know himself as a moral being.Rousseau (1712-1778) 149 150 Chapter 8 It is at the end of this stage, by about the early twenties, that Emile learns that the order of which he is part, is also a social order, and that he has grown up not merely to be a man, but also a citizen.The individualism of Emile does not imply that men in general can find personal fulfilment outside society.Emile is a child who is removed from his parents and sent away, with a tutor, to the countryside.Between 12 and 15, the only book Emile is to be allowed access to, is

Robinson Crusoe. It is only when the boy has turned 15, that the tutor introduces him to the study of philosophy and religion. From play- ing in the lap of nature, when the student turns to metaphysics and religion, he acquires a sense of being part of the natural order. Rousseau seems to suggest that human beings need to come together in society to achieve a better life, but he is also makes it clear that this society has to be organized on certain lines. However, if Rousseau really had this contempt for human learning, then why would he write a work on education? Rousseau thinks that the child should learn to reason for himself, on the basis of his experience and not because of what he learns from books. This moral sense can only be born in society, and we need to establish a society in which, not only do we pre- serve the liberty of the state of nature, but also provide the conditions for us to achieve moral freedom. In place of a society in which a few rule over the many, human beings need to set up a society guaranteeing civil and moral freedom for all. These pure emotions are corrupted in society. In the state of nature, not only do we have free will, we also enjoy natural liberty, since 'no man has a natural authority over his fellow in the state of nature'. However, we have no moral liberty in the state of nature, because we have not yet developed a moral sense.

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