JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU

ESSAY ON THE ORIGIN
OF LANGUAGES and
WRITINGS RELATED
TO MUSIC

THE COLLECTED WRITINGS OF ROUSSEAU
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their effect. Passions alone, without discourse, will leave you almost unprepared, discourse without gestures will leave more from you. The passions have their gestures, but they also have their accents, and these accents, which make us terrible, these accents from which we cannot shield our organs, prevent us to the bottom of the heart, and inspire us to carry it to the movements that seem to be, and make us feel what we hear. Let us conclude that visible signs convey a more precise imitation, but that interest is aroused more effectively by sounds.

This makes me think that we never had anything but physical needs, we might very well have spoken and would have understood one another perfectly by the language of gestures alone. We might have established societies little different from what they are today, or even which might even have preceded to their end better. We might have inducted laws, chosen leaders, invented arts, established commerce, and, in a word, done almost as many things as we do with the aid of speech. The suppositional language of savages transmits the secrets of oriental galleries across the best guarded Harem, without fear of the prudent. The Grand Vizier's curses make themselves understood among one another and understand everything that is said to them by signs quite as well as could be done by discourse. Many Poesye and those who like him much must not only how to speak but to know what they are saying, are first compelled to teach them another language, no less complicated, with whose aid they help them understand spoken language.¹

Chaucer says that in the Indies traders, by taking one another by the hand and modifying their grip in a way no one can perceive, in this way transact all their business in public yet secretly, without having said a single word to each other.² Assume that these traders are blind, deaf, and mute: they will make themselves understood among themselves no less well. This shows that of the two senses by which we are active, a single one would suffice to form a language for oneself.

It would further seem from the same observations that the invention of the set of communicating ideas depends less on the organs we use for that communication than on a faculty that belongs to man, which makes him employ his organs for that use, and which, if he lacked them, would make him employ others to that same end. Give man a physical organization as entirely different as you please: disable him he will acquire fewer ideas.

¹ I have said elsewhere why SIGNS impart so much more than gestures trace.² He is as a singly in all his days but not prized one second person. It is the assumption of the Rosicrucians that create people for foregoing reason with all the virtues we seek.

² Sabine are a number of the most common things. But an orange, a ribbon, a piece of wood, etc., the naming of which denotes meaning known to all the lovers in the countries in which that language is in use.

but provided only that there be some means of communication between him and his fellows by which one might act and be understood, they will succeed at length in communicating altogether as many ideas as they have to one another.

Animals have a physical organisation more than sufficient for such communication, and none of them has ever made that use of it. Here, it seems to me, is a most characteristic difference. Those who, among them, work and live in common, such as Beavers, ants, and bees, have some natural language in order to communicate amongst themselves—I raise no doubt about it. There is even reason to believe that the language of Beavers and that of ants are in gesture and speak only to the eye. Be that as it may, precisely because all such languages are natural, they are not acquired; the animals that speak them do so from birth, they all possess them, and everywhere the same one; they do not change them, nor do they make the slightest progress in them. Convivial language belong only to men. That is why man makes progress, whether for good or bad, and why the animals do not at all.³ That single distinction seems to lead a long way. It is said that it is explained by the difference in organs.⁴ I would be curious to see that explanation.

CHAPTER II

THAT THE FIRST INVENTION OF SPEECH DERIVES NOT FROM SEEDS BUT FROM THE PASSIONS

It is therefore to be supposed that needs dictated the first gestures and that the passions wreted the first voices.⁵ By following the path of the facts with these distinctions in mind, it might perhaps be necessary to reason about the origin of language altogether as differently that has been done until now. The genius of the external languages, the most ancient known to us, absolutely contradicts the didactic course that is imagined in their formation. These languages have nothing methodical and reasoned about them; they are lively and figurative. The language of the first men is put before us as though it were the languages of Geometers, while we see that they were the languages of Bees.⁶ This must have been so. We did not begin by reasoning but by feeling.⁷ It is claimed that men invented speech in order to express their needs.⁸ This opinion seems unanswerable to me. The natural effect of the first need was to separate men and not to bring them together. This had to have been so for the species to spread and the earth to be populated promptly, other-
wise mankind would have been crammed into one corner of the world while the rest of it remained deserted.

From this alone it evidently follows that the origin of languages is not at all due to men's first needs; it would be absurd for the cause that separates them to come to be the means that unites them. From where, then, could this origin derive? From the moral needs, the passions. The passions all bring men together, but the necessity of seeking their livelihood makes them flee one another.24 Neither hunger nor thirst, but love, hatred, pity, anger wrested the first voices from them. Fruit does not chafe our grasp, one can feed on it without speaking; one suffers in silence the prey one wishes to devour; but in order to move a young heart, to repulse an unjust aggressor, nature dictates accents, cries, complaints. The most ancient words are invented in this way, and this is why the first languages were tuneful and passionate before being simple and methodical. All this is not true without qualification, but I shall come back to it below.25

CHAPTER III
THAT THE FIRST LANGUAGES
MUST HAVE BEEN FIGURATIVE

As the first receives that made man speak were the passions, his first expressions were tropes. Figurative language was the first to arise, proper meaning was found last. Things were not called by their true name until they were seen in their genuine form.26 At first, only poetry was spoken. Only long afterwards did anyone take it into his head to reason. Now, I am sure that the reader will judge me here, and will ask me how an expression could be figurative before having a proper meaning, since it is only in the translation of the meaning that the figurativeness consists. I admit this; but in order to understand me it is necessary to substitute the idea that the passion presents to us for the word that we transpose; for words are transposed only because ideas are also transposed, otherwise figurative language would signify nothing. I therefore respond with an example.

Upon encountering others, a savage man will at first be afraid. His fright will make him see those men as taller and stronger than himself. He will give them the name Giant.27 After many experiences he will recognize that as these supposed Giants are neither taller nor stronger than himself, their stature does not agree with the idea that he had first attached to the word Giant. He will therefore invert another name common to them and

to him, such as the name man for example, and will leave that of Giant for the false object that had struck him during his illusion. That is how the figurative word arises before the proper word, when passion fascinates our eyes and the first idea it offers us is not the true one. What I have said about words and names is applied without any difficulty to turns of phrase. The illusionary image offered by the passions being presented first, the language which corresponded to it was likewise the first to be invented. It then became metaphorical when the enlightened mind, recognizing its first error, employed the expressions only with the same passions that had produced it.

CHAPTER IV
ON THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS
OF THE FIRST LANGUAGE AND THE CHANGES
IT MUST HAVE UNDERGONE

Simple sounds issue naturally from the throat, the mouth is naturally more or less open; but the modifications of the tongue and palate that produce articulation require attention, practice; one does not make them unless one wants to make them, all children need to learn them and some do not easily succeed in doing so. In all languages the most lively exclamations are unarticulated; cries and groans are simple voices. Muses, that is the deaf, utter only unarticulated sounds. Father Lamy cannot even conceive how men could ever have invented others unless God had not expressly taught them to speak.28 Articulations are few in number, sounds are infinite in number, and the accents which mark them can be multiplied in the same way. All musical notes are so many accents; we have, it is true, only three or four in speech, but the Chinese have many more of them; on the other hand, they have fewer consonants. To this source of combinations add that of tense or quantity, and you will have not only a greater variety of words, but of syllables, than the richest language needs.

I do not at all doubt that, independent of vocabulary and of syntax, if the first language still existed it would have retained the original characteristics that would distinguish it from all the others. Not only would all the turns of phrase in this language have to be in images, in feelings, and in figures of speech; but in its mechanical aspect it would have to answer to its first object, and to present to the sense as well as to the understanding the almost inevitable impressions of the passion that is sought to be communicated.

As natural voices are unarticulated, words would have few articulations;
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a few interposed consonants eliminating the hiatus between the vowels would suffice to make them flowing and easy to pronounce. In contrast, its sounds would be quite varied, and the diversity of accents would multiply these same voices. Quantity and rhythm would provide further sources of combinations; in this way—since voices, sounds, accent, and number, which are from nature, would leave little to be done by articulations, which are conventional—one would sing it rather than speak it. Most of its root words would be imitative sounds, either of the accent of the passions, or of the effect of perceptible objects. Onomatopoeia would constantly make itself felt.

This language would have many synonyms to express the same being in its different relations*; it would have few adverbs and abstract words to express these same relations. It would have many augmentatives, diminutives, compound words, and expletive particles to give cadence to periods and roundness to phrases. It would have many irregularities and anomalies, it would neglect grammatical analogy to stick to the euphony, number, harmony, and beauty of sounds. Instead of arguments it would have aphorisms; it would persuade without convincing, and depict without reasoning.\(^{30}\) It would resemble Chinese in certain respects, Greek in others, and Arabic in others. Develop these ideas in all their ramifications, and you will find Plato’s Cratylus is not as ridiculous as it seems to be.\(^{31}\)

CHAPTER V

ON WRITING\(^{33}\)

Whoever studies the history and progress of languages will see that the more voices become monotone, the more consonants multiply, and that as accents are eliminated and quantities are equalized, they are replaced by grammatical combinations and new articulations; but it is only by dint of time that these changes are brought about. In proportion as needs increase, as affairs become entangled, as enlightenment extends, language changes character; it becomes more precise and less passionate; it substitutes ideas for feelings, it no longer speaks to the heart but to reason. As a result, accent is extinguished, articulation extends, language becomes more exact and clearer, but more drawn out, more muted, and colder. This progress appears completely natural to me.

*Arabic is said to have more than a thousand different words to say camel, more than a hundred to say sword, etc.\(^{32}\)
have been lively, sonorous, accented, eloquent, and often obscure by dint
of their energy; those of the North must have been muted, crude, articu-
lated, shrill, monotonous, clear by dint of their words rather than by a
good construction. Modern languages, mingled and recast a hundred
times, still retain something of these differences. French, English, and
German are the private languages of men who help one another, who
coolly reason with one another, or of quick-tempered people who get an-
gry; but the ministers of the Gods proclaiming the sacred mysteries, the
wise giving laws to peoples, leaders carrying along the multitude must
speak Arabic or Persian.* Our languages are better written than spoken,
and there is more pleasure in reading us than there is in listening to us. In
contrast, when written, oriental languages lose their life and warmth.
Only half of the meaning is in the words, all its force is in the accents. To
judge the genius of the Orientals by their Books is like wanting to paint a
man from his corpse.

In order to appraise men’s actions properly, they have to be considered
in all their relations, and this is what we have not at all learned to do. When
we put ourselves in the place of others, we always put ourselves there such
as we have been modified, not such as they must have been, and when we
think we are judging them by reason, we are only comparing their prejudices
with ours. Someone who can read a little Arabic smiles when leafing
through the Koran, had he heard Mohammed in person proclaim it in that
eloquent and rhythmic language, with that sonorous and persuasive voice
which seduced the ear before the heart, and constantly animating his
aphorisms with the accent of enthusiasm, he would have prostrated him-
self on the earth while crying out: great Prophet, Messenger of God, lead
us to glory, to martyrdom; we want to conquer or to die for you. Fanatic-
cism always appears ridiculous to us, because among us it has no voice to
make itself heard. Even our fanatics are not true fanatics, they are merely
knaves or fools. Our languages, instead of inflections for the inspired, have
only cries for those possessed by the Devil.

CHAPTER XII

ORIGIN OF MUSIC

Along with the first voices were formed the first articulations or the first
sounds, depending on the kind of passion that dictated the one or the

* Turkish is a northern language.
other. Anger wreath menacing cries which the tongue and the palate articulate; but the voice of tenderness is gentler, it is the glottis that modifies it, and this voice becomes a sound. Only its accents are more or less frequent, its inflections more or less acute depending on the feeling that is joined to them. Thus cadence and sounds arise along with syllables, passion makes them all the vocal organs speak, and adorns the voice with all their brilliancy; thus verses, songs, and speech have a common origin. 112 Around the fountain of which I have spoken, the first discourses were the first songs; the periodic and measured repetitions of rhythm, the melodious inflections of accents caused poetry and music to be born along with language, or rather, all this was nothing but language itself in those happy climates and those happy times when the only pressing needs that required another's help were those to which the heart gave rise.

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The first stories, the first harangues, and the first laws were in verse; 114 poetry was discovered before prose; this had to be so, since the passions spoke before reason. The same was so for music: at first there was no music at all other than melody, nor any other melody than the varied sound of speech, the accents formed the song, the quantities formed the meter, and one spoke as much by sounds and rhythm as by articulations and voices. In olden days to speak and to sing were the same thing, says Stрабы; which shows, he adds, that poetry is the source of eloquence. 8 He ought to have said that they both had the same source and at first were merely the same thing. Considering the way in which the first societies were bound together, was it surprising that the first stories were set to verse and that the first laws were sung? Was it surprising that the first Grammarians subordinated their art to music and were at the same time teachers of them both? 9

A language that has only articulations and voices therefore has only half its riches; it conveys Ideas, it is true, but in order to convey feelings, images, it still needs a rhythm and sounds, that is a melody; that is what the Greek language had, and what we lack.

We are always astonished by the prodigious effects of eloquence, poetry, and music among the Greeks; 115 these effects cannot be sorted out at all in our heads because we no longer experience similar ones, and all that we can manage for ourselves, seeing them so well attested, is to pretend

1. *Georg., Bk. 2, 116
2. *Aristot. in Quaest. Phys. lib. ii. cap. 100: "Vulgaris sit Artaurica etiam nobis signum grammatis musicae passatem, ut modum suavissimum iniquitatis, fide, ... Turn Europae signa quibus Prodemus et maxime at illius destruatur." Quint. *Bk. 1, chap. X. 117

PL, V, 430–432

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to believe them out of indulgence for our Scholars. 8 Burret, having transcribed as best he could some pieces of Greek music into our musical notation, was simple enough to have these pieces performed at the Academy of Belles-Lettres, and the Academicians had the patience to listen to them. 116 I admire this experiment in a country whose music is indiscernible for every other nation. Give any foreign Musicians you please a monologue from a French opera to perform: I defy you to recognize any of it. These are nonetheless the same Frenchmen who presume to judge the melody of an Ode of Pindar set to Music two thousand years ago.

I have read that the Indians in America, seeing the astonishing effect of firearms, used to pick up the musket balls from the ground, then, throwing them with their hands while emitting a loud noise from their mouths, were quite surprised that they had not killed anyone. Our orators, our musicians, and our Scholars resemble these Indians. The wonder is not that we no longer accomplish with our music what the Greeks did with theirs; on the contrary, it would be that the same effects should be produced with such different instruments.

CHAPTER XIII

ON MELODY

Man is modified by his senses, no one doubts it; but because we fail to distinguish their modifications, we confound their causes; we attribute both too much and too little dominion to sensations; we do not see that often they affect us not only as sensations but as signs or images, and that their moral effects also have moral causes. 116 Just as the feelings that painting arouses in us are not at all due to colors, so the dominion music has over our souls is not at all the work of sounds. Beautiful colors, finely shaded, please the sight, but that pleasure is purely one of sensation. It is

* Doubtless allowance has to be made for Greek exaggeration in all things, but it is to concede too much to modern prejudice to carry such allowances to the point of making all differences vanish. "When the Music of the Greeks of the time of Amphion and of Orpheus," says the Abbe Terson, 119 "was at the level at which it is today in the towns farther from the Capital, it was at the time that it appeared the cause of divines, that it attracted souls, that it made them move. Today, having reached a very high level of perfection, it is much beloved, to fashion have ever been preserved, but it loses everything in place. It was the same with the verses of Socrates: a Poet born in the times which still showed the effects of the childhood of the human mind, in comparison with those that followed. People were amusi

* There is no denying that the Abbe Terson is a sentimentalist philosopher, but he certainly doesn't show it in this passage.
the design, it is the imitation, that endows these colors with life and soul, it is the passions which they express that succeed in moving our own, it is the objects which they represent that succeed in affecting us. Interest and feeling do not depend on colors; the contours of a touching painting touch us in an engraving as well; remove those contours from the Painting, the colors will no longer do anything.  

Melody does in music precisely what design does in painting; it is melody that indicates the contours and figures, of which the accents and sounds are but the colors. But will not be said that melody is merely a succession of sounds? Doubtless; but design is also merely an arrangement of colors. An orator makes use of ink to pen his writings; does that mean that ink is a most eloquent liquid? 

Imagine a country where no one had any idea of design, but where many people who spend their lives combining, mixing, and blending colors believed themselves to excel in painting; those people would reason about our painting precisely as we reason about the music of the Greeks. Even if they were told about the emotion that beautiful paintings cause in us and about the charm of being touched by a pathetic subject, would their scholars not straightaway probe the material, compare their colors with ours, examine whether our green is more delicate or our red more brilliant; would they not try to find out which accents of colors could cause weeping, which others could arouse anger? The Burettes of that country would put together a few disfigured fragments of our paintings on rags; then it would be asked with surprise what so marvelous about such coloration.

And if, in a neighboring nation, someone began to form some sort of contour, a sketch, a still imperfect figure, it would all pass for scribbling, for a capricious and baroque painting, and, in order to preserve taste, they would hold onto this simple beauty, which in truth expresses nothing, but which makes fine shadings, large well-colored slabs, extended progressions of hues without any contour.

Finally, they might perhaps by dint of progress arrive at the experiment with the prism. Straightaway, some learned artist would establish a beautiful system on the basis of it. Gentlemen, he would say to them, in order to philosophize properly, one has to go back to the physical causes. Here you have the decomposition of light, here you have all the primary colors, here you have their ratios, their proportions, here you have the true principles of the pleasure that painting causes for you. All this mysterious talk of design, representation, figure is a pure chimerey on the part of French painters, who think that by their imitations they produce I know not what movements in the soul, while it is known that there is nothing in it but sensations. You are told of the marvels of their paintings, but look at my hues.

French Painters, he would continue, may perhaps have observed the rainbow; they may have received from nature some taste for shading and some instinct for coloration. But I, I have shown you the great, the true principles of the art. What am I saying, of the art? Of all the arts, Gentlemen, of all the sciences. The analysis of colors, the calculation of the refractions of the prism, gives you the sole exact relationships found in nature, the rule of all relationships. Now, everything in the universe is merely relationship. One therefore knows everything once one knows how to paint, one knows everything once one knows how to match colors.

What would we say about a painter so lacking in feeling and taste as to reason in this way, and stupidly to limit the pleasure that painting causes in us to the physics of his art? What would we say of the musicians who, filled with similar prejudices, believed he saw in harmony alone the source of the great effects of music? We would send the first off to paint woodwork, and would condemn the other to compose French opera.

As painting is, therefore, not the art of combining colors in a way pleasing to the sight, no more is music the art of combining sounds in a way pleasing to the ear. If there were nothing but this in them, they would both be counted among the ranks of the natural sciences, and not the fine arts. It is imitation alone that elevates them to that rank. Now, what makes painting an imitative art? It is design. What makes music another? It is melody.

CHAPTER XIV
ON HARMONY

The beauty of sounds is from nature; their effect is purely physical, it results from the interaction of the various particles of air set in motion by the sounding body, and by all its aliquots, perhaps to infinity. All of this together produces a pleasant sensation: every man in the universe will take pleasure in listening to beautiful sounds; but unless this pleasure is animated by melodious infections that are familiar to them, it will not be delightful, it will not pass into voluptuous pleasure. The most beautiful songs, to our taste, will always only indifferently touch an ear that is not at all accustomed to them; it is a language for which one has to have the Dietcary.

Harmony, properly so called, is in a still less favorable situation. Having only conventional beauties, it in no way appeals to ears that are not
trained in it; one has to have been long habituated to it in order to feel and
savor it. Rustic ears hear only noise in our consonances. When the natural
proportions are distorted, it is not surprising that the natural pleasure no
longer exists.

A sound carries with it all of its consonant harmonics, in the relations
of strength and interval that they must have among themselves in order to
produce the most perfect harmony of the same sound. Add to this the
third or fifth or some other consonance, you do not add to it, but redu-
ible it; you leave the relation of interval unchanged, but you alter that of
the strength, by reinforcing one consonance and not the others, you dis-
rupt the proportion. Wanting to do better than nature, you do worse.
Your ears and your taste are spoiled by a misunderstood art. By nature
there is no other harmony than unison.

M. Rameau claims that treble parts of a comparative simplicity natu-
really suggest their bases, and that a man who has a true but unpracticed
ear will naturally intone this bass. That is a musician's prejudice, belied
by all experience. Not only will a person who has never heard either a bass
or harmony not find either this harmony or bass on his own, but they will
even displease him if he is made to hear them, and he will like simple uni-
son much better.

Even if one were to calculate the ratios of sounds and the laws of har-
mony for a thousand years, how will this art ever be made an imitative art?
Where is the principle of this supposed imitation, of what is harmony the
sign, and what do these chords have in common with our passions?

Were the same question put about melody, the answer would come of
itself: it is in the readers' minds beforehand. Melody, by imitating the in-
flexions of the voice, expresses complaints, cries of sadness or of joy,
threats, and sounds; all the vocal signs of the passions are within its scope.
It imitates the accents of languages, and the turns of phrase appropriate in
each idiom to certain movements of the soul; it not only imitates, it
speaks, and its language, inarticulate but lively, ardent, passionate, has a
hundred times more energy than speech itself. Here is from whence the
strength of musical imitations arises; here is from whence the domination
of song over sensitive hearts arises. Harmony may, in certain systems, co-
operate with this by linking the succession of sounds through certain laws
of modulations, by making the inimations more exact, by providing the
ear with reliable evidence of this exactness, by bringing together and de-
termining imperceptible inceptions into consonant and linked intervals.
But by thus shackling the melody, it deprives it of energy and expression,
it diminishes passionate accent in order to substitute the harmonic interval
for it, it subjects to two modes alone songs which should have as many
modes as they have ornamental tones, it effaces and destroys multitudes of
sounds or intervals that do not enter into its system; in a word, it separates
song from speech so much that these two languages combat one another,
contradict one another, deprive each other of every characteristic of truth
and cannot be united in a pathetic subject without being absurd. That is
how it happens that the people always find it ridiculous for strong and se-
rious passions to be expressed in song, for it knows that in our languages
these passions have no musical inflections, and that the men of the north
no more die singing than swans do.

By itself harmony is even inadequate for the expressions that appear to
depend uniquely upon it. Thunder, the murmurings of waters, winds, and
storms are poorly rendered by simple chords. Whatever one may do, noise
alone says nothing to the mind, objects have to speak in order to make
themselves heard, in every imitation a type of discourse always has to sup-
plement the voice of nature. The musician who wants to render noise with
noise is mistaken; he knows neither the weakness nor the strength of his
art; he judges it without taste, without enlightenment; teach him that he
should render noise with song, that if he would make frogs croak, he has
to make them sing. For it is not enough for him to imitate, he has to
touch and to please, otherwise his glut imitation is nothing, and, not in-
teresing anyone, it makes no impression.

CHAPTER XV

THAT OUR LIVELIEST SENSATIONS OFTEN ACT
THROUGH MORAL IMPRESSIONS

As long as one wants to consider sounds only in terms of the distur-
bance they excite in our nerves, one will not have the true principles of mu-
sic and its power over our hearts. The sounds of a melody do not act on us
solely as sounds, but as signs of our affections, of our feelings; it is in this
way that they excite in us the emotions they express and the image of which
we recognize in them. Something of this moral effect is perceived even in
animals. The barking of one dog attracts another. If my cat hears me imi-
tating meowing, I see him immediately attentive, restless, agitated. If he per-
ceives that it is I who is counterfeiting the voice of his fellow, he sits back
and relaxes. Why this difference in impression, since there is none in the
disturbance of the fibers, and since he himself was at first deceived by it.

If the greatest domination our sensations have over us is not due to moral
causes, why then are we so sensitive to impressions which mean nothing
to barbarians? Why is our most touching music but an empty noise to the ear of a Carib? Are his nerves of a different nature than ours, why are they not disturbed in the same way, or why do these same disturbances affect some people so much and others so little?

The cure of Tarantula bites is cited as a proof of the physical power of sounds. This example proves entirely the contrary. What is required to heal everyone who has been bitten by this insect is neither absolute sounds nor the same tunes: each of them needs tunes of a melody familiar to him and lyrics he understands. Italian tunes are needed for the Italian, for the Turk, Turkish tunes would be needed. Each is affected only by sounds that are familiar to him; his nerves yield to them only insofar as his mind disposes them to it: he must understand the language that is spoken to him for what is said to him to be able to move him. Bernini’s carrioles have, it is said, cured the fever of a French musician; they would have given one to a musician of any other nation.

The same differences can be observed in all the other senses, down to the crudest of all. Let a man whose hand is placed and whose glance is fixed on the same object alternately believe it to be alive and not alive: although the senses are struck the same way, what a change in the impression! The roundness, whiteness, firmness, gentle warmth, elastic resistance, and successive rising no longer produce anything except a soft but insipid touch for him if he does not believe he feels a heart full of life throbbing and beating underneath it all.

I know only one sense whose affections have no admixture of anything moral in them. It is taste. So glutony is always the dominant vice only of people who fed nothing.

Let whoever wishes to philosophize about the strength of sensations therefore begin by setting aside purely sensual impressions apart from the intellectual and moral impressions which we receive by way of the senses, but of which the senses are only the occasional causes; let him avoid the error of attributing to sensible objects a power that they do not have or that they derive from the affections of the soul which they represent to us. Colors and sounds are capable of a great deal as representations or signs, of little as simple objects of the senses. Series of sounds or chords will amuse me for perhaps a moment; but in order to charm me and to move me, these series have to offer me something that is neither a sound nor a chord, and that succeeds in moving me in spite of myself. Even songs that are only pleasant and say nothing are still tiresome; for it is not so much the ear that carries pleasure to the heart as the heart that carries it to the ear. I believe that by developing these ideas better, we would have been spared much stupid argumentation concerning ancient music. But in this century, when every effort is made to materialize all the operations of the soul and to deprive human feelings of all morality, I am mistaken if the new philosophy does not become as fatal to good taste as to virtue.

CHAPTER XVI

TALES ANALOGY BETWEEN COLORS AND SOUNDS

There is no sort of absurdity to which physical observations have failed to give rise in the treatment of the fine arts. The same relationships have been found in the analysis of sound as in that of light. Straightway this analogy was keenly seized upon without troubling about experience and reason. The systematizing spirit confounded everything, and for want of knowing how to paint for the ears, they took it into their heads to sing to the eyes. I have seen that famous clavichord on which music was supposedly made with colors; it was to have quite misunderstood the operations of nature not to have seen that the effect of colors is due to their permanence and that of sounds to their succession. All the riches of coloration are spread out all at once over the face of the earth. Everything is seen by the first glance of the eye, but the more one looks, the more one is enchanted. One has only to admire and contemplate, coldly.

This is not so for sound: nature does not analyze it and separate out its harmonics; on the contrary, it hides them under the appearance of union; or if it occasionally separates them in the modulated song of man and in the warbling of certain birds, it is successively and one after another; it inspires songs and not chords, distant melody and not harmony. Colors are the finery of inanimate beings; all matter is colored, but sounds proclaim movement, the voice proclaims a sensitive being; only animated bodies sing. It is not the automated flautist that plays the flute, it is the mechanic who measured the air flow and made the fingers move.

Thus each sense has a field proper to it. The field of music is time, that of painting is space. To multiply the sounds heard at the same time or to develop colors one after another is to change their economy, to put the eye in the place of the ear, and the ear in the place of the eye.

You say: just as each color is determined by the angle of refraction of the ray that produces it, so too are sounds determined by the number of vibrations of the sounding body in a given time. Now, the relationships between these angles and these numbers being the same, the analogy is evident. So be it, but this analogy is one of reason, not sensation, and this is
music's portraits. It is known that noise can produce the effect of silence and silence the effect of noise, as when one falls asleep to an even and monotonous reading and wakes up the instant it stops. But music acts upon us more intimately by arousing through one sense affections similar to those that can be aroused through another, and as the relationship is perceptible only insofar as the impression is strong, painting, stripped of this power, cannot convey to music the imitations that music takes from it. Let nature as a whole be asleep, he who contemplates it sleeps not, and the musician's art consists in substituting for the imperceptible image of the object that of the movements that its presence excites in the heart of the contemplator. Not only will it agitate the sea, fan the flames of a blaze, make streams run, rain fall, and torrents swell, but it will depict the horror of a frightful desert, darken the walls of an underground dungeon, calm a tempest, make the air tranquil and clear, and spread from the orchestra a renewed freshness over the groves. It will not represent these things directly, but will awaken the same feelings in the soul that are experienced in seeing them.

CHAPTER XVII
AN ERROR OF MUSICIANS HARMFUL TO THEIR ART

See how everything continually brings us back to the moral effects of which I have spoken, and how far the musicians who consider the power of sounds only in terms of the action of air and the disturbance of fibers are from knowing wherein resides the strength of this art. The more they assimilate it to purely physical impressions, the farther they take it from its origin, and the more they also take from it its primitive energy. By giving up oral accent and adhering to harmonic institutions alone, music becomes noisier to the ear and less sweet to the heart. It has already ceased to speak; soon it will no longer sing and then, with all its chords and all its harmony, it will no longer have any effect on us.

CHAPTER XVIII
THAT THE MUSICAL SYSTEM OF THE GREEKS DID NOT HAVE ANY RELATION TO OURS

How have these changes come about? By a natural change in the character of languages. Our harmony is known to be a gothic invention. Those
who claim to find the system of the Greeks in our own are making fun of us. The system of the Greeks had absolutely no harmony in our sense except what was required to tune instruments on perfect consonances. All peoples who possess stringed instruments are forced to tune them by consonances, but those who do not possess them have inflections in their songs which we call false because they do not enter into our system and because we cannot notate them. This has been noted about the songs of the American savages, and it might also have been noted about the various intervals of the music of the Greeks, if this music had been studied with less bias toward our own. The Greeks divided their Diagram into tetrachords as we divide our keyboard into octaves, and the same divisions were repeated on each tetrachord among them exactly as they are repeated on each octave among us: a similarity which would not have been possible to preserve in the unity of the harmonic mode and which would not even have been imagined. But as one proceeds by smaller intervals when speaking than when singing, it was natural for them to regard the repetition of tetrachords in their oral melody as we do the repetition of octaves in our harmonic melody.

They recognized as consonances only those which we call perfect consonances; they excluded thirds and sixths from this class. Why so? It is because, since the interval of the minor tone was unknown to them or at least proscribed from practice, and since their consonances were not tempered at all, all their major thirds were too strong by a comma, while their minor thirds were too weak by as much and, consequently, their major and minor sixths were reciprocally impaired in the same way. Consider now what notions of harmony one could have and what harmonic modes one could establish after banishing thirds and sixths from the class of consonances! If even the consonances they did accept had been known to them, by a true feeling for harmony, they would have at least made implicit use of them within their songs. and the tacit consonanc of the fundamental progressions would have lent its name to the diatonic progressions they would suggest to them. Far from having had fewer consonances than we do, they would have had more of them, and, for example, occupied with the bass do mi, they would have given the name consonance to the second do re.

But why then, it will be asked, diatonic progressions? By an instinct that leads us in an accentuated and tuneful language to choose the most convenient inflections: for between the overly strong modifications which must be given to the glottis in order continually to intone large intervals of consonances and the difficulty of regulating the intonation in the very complicated relations of the smaller intervals, the organ took a middle course and naturally hit on intervals smaller than consonances and simpler than commas—which did not stop the smaller intervals from also having their use in the more pathetic genera.

CHAPTER XIX
HOW MUSIC HAS DEGENERATED

In proportion as language was perfected, melody imperceptibly lost its ancient energy by imposing new rules upon itself, and the calculation of intervals was substituted for the subtlety of inflections. It is in this way, for example, that the practice of the cadiharmonic genus was gradually eliminated. Once theaters had assumed a regular form, one no longer sang in them except in the prescribed modes, and in proportion as the rules of imitation were multiplied imitative language grew weaker. The study of philosophy and the progress of reason, having perfected grammar, deprived language of that lively and passionate tone which had at first made it so tuneful. From the time of Menalippeides and Philoxenos, instrumental players—who were at first the employees of the Poets and worked only under them and, so to speak, at their dictation—became independent of them, and it is of this license that Music complains so bitterly in the Comedy by Pherecrates, a passage of which Plutarch has preserved for us. Thus melody, beginning to no longer be so attached to discourse, imperceptibly assumed a separate existence, and music became more independent of the words. That was also when the wonderers that it had produced when it was only the accent and the harmony of poetry gradually ceased, and when it gave to poetry that domination over the passions which speech has since exercised only over reason. Also, ever since Greece was filled with Sophists and Philosophers neither famous poets nor musicians were seen there any longer. By cultivating the art of convincing, that of moving the emotions was lost. Plato himself, jealous of Homer and Euripides, decreed the one and was unable to imitate the other.

Soon servitude added its influence to that of philosophy. Greece in chains lost that fire that warms only free souls, and no longer found for the praise of its tyrants the tone with which it had sung of its Heroes. The internment of the Romans further weakened that harmony and accent the language retained. Latin, a more muted and less musical language, wronged music in adopting it. The singing employed in the capital gradually altered that of the provinces; the theaters of Rome harmed those of Athens; when Nero was carrying off prizes, Greece had ceased to merit them, and the same melody shared by two languages suited both of them less well.
Finally the catastrophe occurred that was to destroy the progress of the human mind without removing the vices that were its work. Europe, inundated with barbarians and enslaved by the unlearned, lost at the same time its sciences, its arts, and the universal instrument of them both, namely, perfected harmonious language. These rude men whom the north had engendered imperceptibly accustom all ears to the coarseness of their organ; their voices, harsh and devoid of accent, were noisy without being sonorous. The Emperor Julian compared the speech of the Gauls to the croaking of frogs. Since all their articulations were as harsh as their voices were nasal and muffled, they could give only a sort of brightness to their singing, which was to stress the sound of the vowels in order to cover up the abundance and harshness of the consonants. This noisy singing, joined to the infeasibility of their organs, obliged these newcomers and the subjUGated peoples who imitated them to slow down all their sounds in order to make them understood. Tenuous articulation and strained sounds likewise contributed to drive away from melody every feeling for meter and rhythm; as what was hardest to pronounce was always the passage from one sound to another, there was nothing better to do than to pause at each one as long as possible, expand it, and make it hurt far forth as much as one could. Song was soon nothing more than a tiresome and slow series of drawn out and stunted sounds, without sweetness, without meter, and without grace; and if some scholars have said that the long and short syllables in Latin song had to be observed, it is at least certain that verse was sung like prose, and that it was no longer a question of feet, rhythms, or any species of measured song.

Song, thus stripped of all melody and consisting uniquely in the strength and duration of sounds, must finally have suggested ways of making it still more sonorous with the aid of consonances. Several voices, endlessly drawing out in unison sounds of an indefinite duration, accidentally hit upon certain chords that, reinforcing the noise, made it seem more pleasant to them, and it is in this way that the practice of descant and of counterpoint began.

I know not how many centuries musicians twiddled about frivolous questions where the known effect of an unknown cause made them debate for so long. The most tireless reader would not endure the verbiage of eight or ten large chapters in Jucian des Murs in order to learn whether in the interval of the octave divided into consonances it is the fifth or fourth that must be the lower one; and four hundred years later, one still finds in Bonetepi no less tiresome enumerations of all the bases that must carry the sixth instead of the fifth. In the meantime, though, harmony imperceptibly took the route that analysis prescribed to it, until finally the invention of the minor mode and of dissonances introduced into it the arbitrariness of which it is full, and which prejudice alone prevents us from perceiving.

Melody being forgotten and the attention of the musician having been turned entirely toward harmony, everything was gradually directed toward this new object; the genera, the modes, the scale, everything took on a new appearance; it was harmonic successes that regulated the progress of the parts. Once this progression had unbarred the name of melody, it was indeed impossible to mistake its mother figures in this new melody, and as our musical system gradually became purely harmonic, it is not surprising that oral accent suffered for it, and that music lost almost all its energy for us.

This is how singing gradually became an art entirely separated from the speech from which it takes its origin; how the harmonics of sounds have caused vocal inflections to be forgotten; and how, finally, limited to the purely physical effect of the combination of vibrations, music found itself deprived of the moral effects that it used to produce when it was doubly the voice of nature.

CHAPTER XX

RELATIONSHIP OF LANGUAGES TO GOVERNMENTS

This progress is neither fortunate nor arbitrary, it depends on the vicissitudes of things. Languages are naturally formed according to men's needs; they change and decay in accordance with the changes in these same needs. In ancient times, when percussion took the place of public force, eloquence was necessary. What use could it serve today, when public force substitutes for persuasion? Neither art nor figures of speech are needed to say, each is my pleasure. What discourses are then left to deliver to
the assembled people? Sermons. And what does persuading the people
matter to those who deliver them, since it is not the people that confers
benefices? Popular languages have become as perfectly useless to us as elo-
quence has. Societies have assumed their final form; nothing is changed in
them any longer except by arms and cash, and as there is no longer any-
tHING to say to the people but, \textit{give money}, it is said to them with placards
at street corners or with soldiers in their homes; it is not necessary to as-
semble anyone for this: on the contrary, the subjects have to be kept scat-
tered; this is the first maxim of modern politics.\footnote{155}

There are languages favorable to liberty; these are sonorous, prosodic,
harmonious languages, in which discourse can be made out from a dis-
tance. Ours are made for the murmuring in sultans' Council-chambers. Our
preachers torment themselves, work themselves into a sweat in churches,
without anyone having known anything of what they have said. After tiring
themselves out shouting for an hour, they leave the pulpit half dead.
Surely this was not worth such an effort.

Among the ancients it was easy to make oneself heard by the people in the
public square; one could speak there a whole day without becoming un-
comfortable. Generals harangued their troops; they could make themselves
heard and did not tire themselves out. Modern historians who have wanted
to put such harangues in their histories have gotten themselves laughed at.
Imagine a man haranguing the people of Paris in French in the Place Ven-
dôme. Let him scream his head off; people will hear that he is screaming;
not a word of it will be made out. Herodotus read his history to the peo-
bles of Greece assembled in the open air and all rang out with applause.\footnote{156}

Today the academician who reads a paper on a day of public assembly can
hardly be heard in the back of the hall. If the charlatans in the public
squares are less bountiful in France than in Italy, it is not that in France
people listen to them any less, it is only that they cannot hear them as well.
M. d'Alembert believes a French recitative could be delivered in the Italian
fashion;\footnote{157} it would have to be delivered right in one's ear, otherwise none
of it would be heard.\footnote{158} Now, I say that every language with which one
cannot make oneself understood by the assembled people is a servile lan-
guage; it is impossible for a people to remain free and speak that language.

I shall conclude these superficial reflections, but ones which may give
birth to more profound ones, with the passage that suggested them to me.

\textit{It would be the matter of a rather philosophic study to observe in fact and show
by examples how much the character, morals, and interests of a people influence
its language.}\footnote{159

\textit{Remarks on the gen. and reason. gramm.,} by M. Duclos, page 11.\footnote{158}
responsible for the articles on music in the *Encyclopédie*, d’Alembert added remarks in his own name to Rousseau’s articles.

**EDITOR’S NOTES TO *Essay on the Origin of Languages***

This translation is based on the text found in *Pélaude*, V, 311-20. The Pélaude edition is based on the original manuscript found in the Bibliothèque publique et universitaire de la ville de Neuchâtel, Neuchâtel, Switzerland (MS R no. 1). The original manuscript was also consulted for the present translation and was provided thanks to M. René Marti of the Bibliothèque de Neuchâtel.

1. In the manuscript, Rousseau originally added “Citizen of Geneva” but crossed it out in the final copy. Rousseau was born in Geneva, but lost his citizenship when he converted to Catholicism after running away from Geneva at the age of sixteen, in 1728. His citizenship was officially restored in 1754 (see Confessions, VIII, Collected Writings, V, 229). In his Nouvilles Histoires, which does not bear the designation “Citizen of Geneva”, Rousseau explains that he only added “Citizen of Geneva” to the title page of those works he believed would do honor to his native city (Second Trieste, Pélaude, II, 27). Rousseau’s reasons for removing “Citizen of Geneva” from the title page of the *Essay* are unclear.

2. Rousseau planned on publishing the *Essay* as the second text in a volume composed of *On Theoretical Imitation* and the *Letters of Embrun*, both translated below. This draft for a preface appears to have been written about June 1763 in the circumstances related by Rousseau there:

3. Despite Rousseau’s statement about the connection of the *Essay* with the *Second Discourse*, the relationship between the two works is a matter of some dispute. See the Introduction to this volume.

4. Rousseau refers to Ramée’s *Errors on Music* in the *Encyclopédie*, published anonymously in 1775, and translated above. The first draft of Rousseau’s reply was entitled by him *On the Principle of Melody*, or *Response to the Errors on Music*. A revised version of this response became the *Examination of Two Principles Advanced by M. Ramée*, translated above, and part of the response omitted from the final version, translated above as *On the Principle of Melody*, were later incorporated by Rousseau into the *Essay on the Origin of Languages*. For these passages, see the editorial notes to the *Principle of Melody*.

5. The magistrature was Christin-Guillaume de Lavoisier de Malebranche (1638-1715), then head of censorship in France. Rousseau showed the *Essay* to Malebranche in late 1765, and he counselled Rousseau to edit it as a separate work, explaining: “I believe that you would do great harm to the public by depriving them of it or by waiting for the collected edition of your works to present it” (Leigh, IX, 132, 205, 237). In his *Confessions*, Rousseau mentions that he had Malebranche read the *Essay* and had subsequently put it into the hands of Du Peyrou, the editor of his collected works (XI, Collected Writings, V, 468).

6. In the draft manuscript of the *Essay* the chapter divisions are in the margin, and appear to have been added to the text by Rousseau at a later date than the initial composition of the work. The Pélaude edition uses ordinal numbers for the chapters, for example “First Chapter” but this translation follows the manuscript, which uses cardinal numbers, for example “Chapter I”.

7. On the word *mœurs*, translated here as “morals”, see Collected Writings, II, 203-204 n7.

8. “Similar” translates *semblable*, which is elsewhere translated “follow” or “followed.” Rousseau describes a man’s initial recognition of a similarity between himself and his fellows in the *Second Discourse*: “Although his fellows were not for him what they are for us, and although he scarcely had more intercourse with them than with other animals, they were not forgotten in his observations. The conformity that time could make him perceive among them, his female, and himself led him to judge of those which he did not perceive” (Collected Writings, III, 44).

9. Rousseau alludes to the legend of Dido’s daughter as related by Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, XXXVII.11: “examined of a young man who was leaving for a faraway country, she enclosed in fine the shadow of his face as projected on a wall by the light of a lamp”.

10. Rousseau incorporated this paragraph and the following one with some changes into his *Emile*, IV (Pélaude, IV, 647; Bloom, 228).


12. See *Judges* 19-21. Rousseau wrote a prose poem based on this poem, the *Letters of Embrun*, which he intended to publish together with the *Essay* and his *On Theoretical Imitation*, both of which are translated below. See note a above.


14. See Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*, XIII.296e. Phædra opened her robes and corrupted her judges with her dazzling beauty.

15. Horace, *On the Art of Poetry*, 1.60-62. "What excess only by the ear makes less impression on the heart than what is put before the eyes, and about which the spectator assures himself by those faithful witnesses.”

16. In his *Letter to Voltaire on the Theater*: I hear it said that tragedy leads to pity through fear. So it does; but what is this pity? A fleeting and vain emotion which lasts no longer than the illusion which produced it; a vestige of natural sentiment snuffed out by the passions; a sterile pity which feeds on a few tears and which has never produced the slightest act of humanity. Thus, the sanguinar Sulla cried at the account of evils he had not himself committed. Thus the tyrant of Thebes laid himself at the theater for fear of being seen groaning with Andromache and Priam, while he heard without emotion the cries of so many unfortunate victims slain daily by his orders. Tacitus reports that Valeria Antias, customarily accused by...
the order to Messalina, who wanted him to perish, defended himself before the emperor in a way that touched this prince very deeply and drew tears from Messalina herself. She went into the next room in order to regain her composure after having, in the midst of her tears, whispered a warning to Vitellius not to let the accused escape. I never see one of these weeping laden in the boxes at the theatre, so proud of their tears, without thinking of the tears of Messalina for the poor Valerius Asiaticus. (Péladé, V, 23, and var. 2; ed. and trans. Allan Bloom in Politics and the Arts [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984], 24-25).

See also Second Discourse (Collected Writings, III, 36).

17. Giacomo Rodrigo Peretti or Pereire (1710-1785) presented his method for teaching the deaf at the Academy of Sciences in Paris in 1749.


19. In his Second Discourse, Rousseau locates the distinctive difference between man and the animals in "the faculty of self-perfection" or "perfectionability" and relates that faculty to speech (Collected Writings, III, 37, and 37-38).

20. See esp. Julius Offray de la Mettrie, Man: A Machine (1748), ed. A. Vartanian (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), chap. 3, esp. 165-166. More generally, Rousseau refers to a debate concerning speech and the difference between man and the other animals that was begun in the seventeenth century by Descartes (see Discourse on the Method, 1, 1640), and that included La Mettrie, Buffon, Condillac, and others.

21. Rousseau distinguishes needs from passions in the Second Discourse (Collected Writings, III, 27). "Voices" translates "sent" here and throughout this translation, except on two occasions indicated in the notes. Rousseau's use of the word has several different but related meanings. In general, "voice" refers to any uttered sound, but Rousseau means by "voice" especially the spontaneous accentuated and melodic utterance of the passions, and especially the moral passions. The opposition he draws between "voice" as the spontaneous utterance of the passions and "articulation" as the conventional sounds that require practice in order to be articulated leads him in chap. V to use the term "true" to mean "vocal" as opposed to (articulated) conventional. See also Smilie: "Man has three kinds of voice—the speaking or articulate voice, the singing or melodic voice, and the passionate or accentuated voice, which serves as language to the passions and which animates song and word." (II, Péladé, IV, 454-455, Bloom, 148).

22. In this sentence "language" translates "langage," while "languages" translates "langues." The two words are related in origin and meaning, and there are no sufficiently distinct yet related equivalents for them in English. "Langue" is closer to the root sense of "tongue," and refers foremost to a language spoken among a people or a linguistic community, while "language" is derivative and has a more specialized connotation of language as a linguistic system; in turn, "parole," which is translated as "speech" in the title to this chapter, refers to the act of using a language ("langage").

By objecting to the comparison between primitive languages and geometry Rousseau is probably adhering to Musaeus's Réflexions philosophiques sur l'origine des langues et la signification des mots (1748), as well as Condillac's État sur l'origine des connaissances humaines, II, i, 15, §121, where Condillac also opposed poets to geometers with regard to language. More generally, he is objecting to the notion that philosophic language could be reduced to geometric form, and to the related tradition of "original" or "Adamite" language. This theory holds that the initial word for an object, as spoken by Adam, directly exhibits the object's nature and truth, and was held in various forms by Leibniz and others in the Berlin Academy, including Maspéro, and in England by Thomas Sprat and others in a tradition opposed by Locke. For a discussion of the theories of language origin held by the Lockean tradition in comparison with the rival tradition of Adamic language, see Hans Aarsleff, From Locke to Saussure: Essays on the Study of Language and Intellectual History (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

23. See Rousseau, Confessions, I (Collected Writings, V, 75): "I felt before thinking; this is the common fate of humanity."

24. For example, by Didier in the article "Encyclopédie" in the Encyclopédie, and by Condillac in his Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines, II, i, §1 and 10, §20.

25. See Rousseau, Second Discourses (Collected Writings, III, 47, 75-76).

26. See chap. X below.

27. Rousseau draws on Bernard Lamy's discussion of tropes and figurative language in his La Rhetorique, ou Art de parler (14th ed., 1700), II, 17: "Tropes are names that are transferred from the thing of which they are the proper name, to apply them to things which they signify only indirectly: thus, all tropes are metaphors, for the word, which is Greek, means translation." Lamy discusses how the passions may enable a perceived object, as in the example of supposed giants used by Rousseau just below.

28. There are stories of giants in Scripture (e.g., Genesis 6:4) and numerous classical writings. See Rousseau's discussion of such legends in his Second Discourses, note 4 (Collected Writings, III, 46).

29. Lamy, La Rhetorique, ou Art de parler (14th ed., 1700), Parface and III, 1. In his Second Discourse, Rousseau explains that he is "convinced of the almost demonstrable impossibility that languages could have arisen and been established by purely human means." (Collected Writings, III, 32). However, just as he shows in the Second Discourse how agriculture and metallurgy might have arisen despite a similar quandary, so too in the present work he explains the origin of languages in purely natural terms, especially in chap. IX below.

30. The distinction between "perception" and "conviction" explained here is central to Rousseau's discussion of the Legislator in his Social Contract (II, 7): "Since the legislator is therefore unable to use either force or reasoning to establish a people, he must necessarily have recourse to another order of authority, which can win over without violence and persuade without convincing." Rousseau returns to the persuasive character of the languages used by political and religious founders in chap. XI of the Essay. Rousseau reveals the characteristic difference between "perception" and "conviction" held by many of his predecessors, for example Diderot, who writes in his Letter on the Deaf and Dumb (1737): "The French language is made to teach, to enlighten, and to convince. Greek, Latin, Italian, and English, to persuade, to move, and to deceive. Speak Greek, Latin, and Italian to
the masses; but to the wise, speak French” (Selected Writings, ed. Lester G. Crocker, trans. Derek Collinman [New York: Macmillan, 1960], 19–20).

31. In Plato's Crito, Socrates claims that the meaning of names can be derived from the etymological origins in such a way that words are imitations of the realities named.

32. See Chardin, Voyages en Perse, 4 vols. (Amsterdam, 1745), III, 143.

33. The title, "De Martires," could also mean: "On Scripturists." Rousseau's discussion of the relationship between written and spoken language in this chapter and the following ones includes an implicit critique of claims of scriptural religions. See the second part of the "Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar" in Book IV of the Emile for a further consideration of the issue (Platon, IV, 569–595; Bloom, 306–318).

34. The "double convention" of which Rousseau speaks is also discussed by Diderot in the article "Encyclopédie" for the Encyclopédie, and is derived from the double convention thesis put forward more importantly by Locke (An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, op. II, 15; III, 2, § 4). Locke's thesis is opposed to the universalism championed by the adherents of "original" or "Adamite" language, in which the word is presumed to be a universal expression of the object.

35. Rousseau mentions the same classification into savage, barbarous, and civilized peoples in his Second Discourse (Collected Writings, III, 40–90), and employs it in the Social Contract (III, 8). The classification is derived from Montesquieu, On the Spirit of the Laws, XVII, 15–17; see also 1, 3, and XXI, 7–8.

36. Babylonia, or Chibî-Musî, is the ancient name of Persopolis, near the modern city of Shiraz in southern Iran. An "encyclo" is a wax impression or other sort of tracing of an original object such as a coin, medal, or inscription. For example, building on his theory of the mind as a tabula rasa or wax tablet, Locke writes: "The complex ideas of substances are Echymes, Copies too; but not perfect ones, nor adequate" (An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, II, 11, § 11).


38. Ibid. Rousseau's abbreviations of the passage are indicated by the ellipses in brackets. The discovery of the famous Rosetta stone, in 1799, allowed this writing to be deciphered.

39. For the story that Cadman introduced the alphabet to the Greeks, which was widely discussed in Rousseau's time, see Herodotus, Historia, V, 86, and Pliny the Elder, Naturalis Historia, VII, 192.

40. "Commerce" mandatae "uniforme," which can mean both social intercourse and trading and has been translated as "intercourse" elsewhere in the Collected Writings: See Second Discourse: "It is easy to understand that such intercourse is institutum non instituendi; it did not require a language much more refined than that of Crows or Monkeys, who group together in approximately the same way"; and: "they continued to enjoy among themselves the sweetness of independent intercourse ["uniforme"] (Collected Writings, III, 44, 49).

41. Proudhon, Amour, p. 6. The proposed etymology of "vowels" is not found in Marquis' Ars grammatica, but it is found in L'antique de Seville, Origine, IV, Livre. Rousseau proposed to reintroduce this manner of writing in music; see his Lettres à Burney, pp. 486–489 below.

44. The number of letters in the Greek alphabet is discussed in Pliny the Elder, Naturalis Historia, VII, 19; Tacitus, Annals, XI, 84; Marius Victorinus, Ars grammatica, IV, 99–107; Insel of Seville, Origine, I, 3–4.

45. The letters were the five-year periods separating the purification of the Roman people after each census. See Livy, History of Rome, 1, 68.

46. "Vowels" translates "mäxii" which has otherwise been translated as "voices." Rousseau elsewhere uses "mäxii" to mean "vowels." See note 21 above.

47. The "Gentlemen of Port Royal" refer to Antoine Arnauld and Nicholas Lancelot, who wrote the Grammaire générale et raisonnée, commonly known as the Port-Royal Grammar. See Fr. 1, chap. 1.

48. Charles Pinot Duclos, Rousseau's friend, wrote a commentary on the Port-Royal Grammar (see previous note), the Rwandaux sur la Grammaire générale et raisonnée (1734), I, 3.

49. The "vowels were of the number seven in Greek, Rouxlsus counted six, but later usage mentioned only five, since they came to reject Φ as Greek," Martimus Capella (fl. fifth century a.d.), De Nuptiis Mercurii et Philologiae, Bk. III.

50. Words translate "voces" which has otherwise been translated as "voices" (see note 21 above), whereas "word" generally translates "veto".

51. Tha, the question "sacrament," "are you coming?" is readily distinguished from the statement "you come," "you are coming."
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54. The original title of the chapter, "On Modern French Prosody," shows the connection of the present work with Rousseau's Letter on French Music (1753), translated above.

55. See note 48 above.

56. "Accent" and "accent mark," i.e., written accents, both translate "asumum". As Rousseau notes in the entry ACCENT [Asumum] in his Dictionary of Music, translated below, the term "asumum" translates the Greek word for accent, and involves the study of the rhythm and accent of a language.

57. Rousseau refers to a book "Dictionary ofMusic, translated below, the

58. Cicero, De natura, III, div. 173–174:

After attention to this matter comes also the consideration of the rhythm and shape of the words, a point which I am afraid Camillus here may consider childish; for the Greek masters held the view that in this prose style it is proper for us to use something almost amounting to versification, that is, certain definite rhythms. For they thought that in speeches the close of the period ought to come not when we are tired out but where we may take breath, and to be marked not by the punctuation of the copying clerks but by the arrangement of the words and of the thought; and it is said that Socrates first introduced the practice of tightening up the irregular style of oratory which belongeth to the early days, so his pupil Naucrates wrote, by means of an element of rhythm, designed to give pleasure to the ear. For two contributions to give pleasure were devised by the musicians; the one in the old days were also the poets, verse and melody, with the intention of overcoming satiety in the hearers; by delighting the ear with the rhythm of the words and the cadence of the notes. These two things, therefore, I mean the modulation of the voice and the arrangement of words in periods, they thought proper to transfer from poetry to rhetoric, so far as was compatible with the severe character of oratory" [Trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, Loeb Classical Library, 1931)]

59. Index of Sevilla, Origins, XI, 1: In addition, there are certain signs found in the most celebrated writers, which the ancients introduced into verse and prose for distinction in writing. The sign is a specific mark, placed in the manner of a letter to indicate the phrase pattern on each word. The number of signs introduced in verse is 26, which are annexed below.

60. Following the Phileade edition, the translation here follows Rousseau's manuscript, which is almost illegible at this point, against the copyist, Fissinius. See note 50 above.

61. That is, oh, "where" is distinguished from aw, "oe", ã, "to" is distinguished from ã, "this".

62. Duclos, Rapport sur la Grammaire générale et raionnante, I, 4. Dionysius of Halicarnassus says (Synthesis, 11) that all the variations of the spoken voice take place within the space of a fifth. For Rousseau's remarks on Dionysius of Halicarnassus' understanding of accent and music, see the entry ACCENT [Asumum] in the Dictionary of Music, p. 371 below.

63. That is, ã, "is" is distinguished from ã, "and". Berazelmo Buonnunnti or

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Rouheturre (1580–1657) was an Italian grammarian whose Della lingua tosana (1643) was influential in forming what is now modern Italian. See Della lingua tosana (1744), VI, 9.

64. Rousseau suggests a similar experiment in his Letter on French Music, p. 310 above.

65. See the fragment by Rousseau entitled "Pronunciation," translated below. Also consider Rousseau's discussion of the relationship between languages and government in chap. XX of the Essay in connection with his ironic praise in the First Discourse of princes' support for the arts and sciences and the establishment of academies (Collected Writings, II, 3, and n. 12).


67. "Points" ("points") and "accents" were only later added to Hebrew script. By these "points" Rousseau could also be referring to punctuation, which Hebrew also originally lacked. Spinoza explains in chap. 7 of his Theologico-Political Treatise: "Finally, there are in Hebrew no vowels; secondly, the sentences are not separated by any marks elucidating the meaning or separating the clauses. Though the want of these two has generally been supplied by points and accents, such substitus cannot be accepted by us, insomuch as they were invented and designed by men of an after age whose authority should carry no weight. The accent wrote without points (that is, without vowels and accents), as is abundantly testified, their descendants added what was lacking, according to their own ideas of Scriptural interpretation" (ed. and trans. B. H. M. Elbow [New York: Dover, 1957], 150–151).

68. Rousseau first discusses the characteristic differences between the peoples of the north and south in his Second Discourse, just before his long digression there on the origin of language (Collected Writings, III, 27). The juxtaposition of the north and south is also found foremost in Montesquieu. See Spirit of the Laws, XIV–XVII, esp. bb. XIV, 1–3, XVII, 8–9, XVIII, 4; see also XIX, 9, 22, XXI, 1–4.

69. See Rousseau, Second Discourse, note 8 (Collected Writings, III, 64–66), Letter to Phileade (ibid., 135).

70. In Rousseau's draft this chapter was originally entitled Chapter VIII, but was later changed.

71. The account of the origin of society and languages in this chapter generally parallels the account offered by Rousseau in the Second Part of the Second Discourse (see Collected Writings, III, 46–47; 50–27–54). In the Second Discourse, Rousseau establishes the "epoch of the first revolution" of the establishment of families as the point where true languages began to develop (ibid., 48). The "first times" spoken of in the Essay therefore refers not to Rousseau's description of our original condition as solitary animals, or the "pure state of nature" depicted in the First Part of the Second Discourse, but to the "state of nature" described in the Second Part of the work, where nascent families develop and become established.

72. See Rousseau, Genese Mammifer, I, 3 (Collected Writings, IV, 11): "The words foreigners and enemies were long synonymous for several ancient peoples. . . . Hobbes' mistake, therefore, is not that he established the state of war among men who are independent and have become societal, but that he supposed this state natural to the species and gave it as the cause of the voices of which the effect." See also Etat de guerre (Phileade, III, 603–603).
73. Rousseau's evasive statement is clearly directed toward the possible objections of those who accept the account of human origins and language found in Scripture. Rousseau makes his intentions in this chapter clearer a few pages later, when he twice refers back to what he says here about "the first time" when speaking of the events recounted in Genesis. Rousseau continues to play on the Scriptural account of our origins and of the origin of language in this chapter. However, instead of locating the origin of language with the first man, Adam, or his children or immediate descendants, Rousseau finds it in the story of Esau, Rebecca, and the encounter at the well (Gen. 24), or at the first moment of the young of opposite sexes of dispersed families such as he describes near the end of this chapter.

74. In the Second Discourse, Rousseau cites approvingly the researches that Condillac made on the origin of languages, "which all fully confirm my sentiment, and which perhaps give me the first idea of it;" but objects that Condillac assumes what he himself questions, "namely, a kind of society already established among the inventors of language." (Collected Writings, III, 29-30). For Condillac's discussion of families and the origin of languages, with reference to the Scriptural account, see Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines, II, 1, preambule.

75. For the supposed contradiction between Rousseau's statement here about pity and his disavowal in the Second Discourse, see Introduction, pp. xvi-xviii above.

76. See the similar account in the Émile, esp. Books III (Plaiday, IV, 480-488; Bloom, 500-538) and IV (Plaiday, IV, 547-548; Bloom, 537-538).

77. As in the Second Discourse, Rousseau is arguing against Hobbes' view that the state of nature is a condition of war: "Hobbes claims that man is naturally inclined and seeks only to attack and fight. An illusionist Philosopher thinks, on the contrary, and Cambray and Pufendorf also affirm, that nothing is so timid as man in the state of Nature." (Collected Writings, III, 20). See also the État de guerre (Plaiday, III, 662-663). For Hobbes, see Leviathan, chap. xi, 15, and De vno, chap. ix.

78. Rousseau draws on Montesquieu, Spirit of the Laws, I, 3, for the distinction among shepherds, hunters, and plowmen. In the Second Discourse, Rousseau argues that the institution of agriculture and discovery of metallurgy together work to take men out of the state of nature (Collected Writings, III, 48-51).

79. The story of the Cyclops Polyphemus is found in Homer, Odyssey, IX, 356-366. Augustine takes up the story with regard to property and safety in his City of God, XIX, 12. See also Rousseau, Social Contract, I, 4.

80. See Genesis 4:1, 9-10.

81. Rousseau discusses the natural diet of mankind at length in the Second Discourse and conjectures that we may have been originally herbivores (see esp. Collected Writings, III, n."a", 75). See also Émile, II (Plaiday, IV, 408-415; Bloom, 515-518). Pufendorf was said to have taught the Greeks to eat oysters (Pausanias, Amandus, VIII, 1, 6), while Zoroaster was said to have taught agriculture to them and prohibited the eating of meat (ibid., VIII, 1, 6). Plato, Laws, III, 728b, Xenophon, Helian in, VI, 5). Rousseau mentions Iligitorcum again just below and seems to assume that Herodotus includes the legend about him in his Histories, which is incorrect.

82. For Abraham, see Genesis 17, 7, for Eramus, see Homer, Odyssey, XIV, 79-80; for Rebecca, see Genesis 27, 9.

83. In the Émile, where he is speaking of the possible unnaturalness of meat-eating, Rousseau remarks that "English barbarism is known" to this respect (IV, Plaiday IV, 411 and note).

84. Job 1:1, 14, 15.


86. For Adam being taught to speak by God, see Genesis 2:19-20, 5:20, 14; for Noah, see ibid, 9:20-27; for the Tower of Babel, see ibid., 11:5-9.

87. In the Social Comment, Rousseau writes that according to Grotius and Hobbes, who both praised conquest as a source of authority, "the human species is divided into hordes of hordes, each with its leader, who tends to it in order to devour it" (I, 2; see also I, 4). See also Second Discourse (Collected Writings, III, 26-33). Compare Aristotle, Politics, I, 8:1730a-s.


89. Note that Rousseau inverts the chronicle of Genesis, which is reputed to have been written by Moses. In the Scriptural account, Adam and Eve eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, then make clothes, and are then expelled from the Garden of Eden. Only with Cain, their son, does agriculture arise and are its fruits scorned by God in favor of those of the pastoral life led by Abel. After Cain kills his brother, Abel, God puts a mark on him (Gen. 4:14, 16). Rousseau also appeals to the Scriptural story of the origin of our knowledge of good and evil in the Second Discourse, where he writes that after the meeting of dispersed families and the beginnings of society, mortality was introduced into human actions (Collected Writings, III, 48). Compare Grotius, Droit de la Guerre et de la Paix, II, 2, 31 (vivam Barbares).

90. See note 78 above.

91. For the "perpetual spring," see Ovid, Metamorphoses, I, 107 ff., and Pufendorf, Droit de la nature et de gens, I, ii, 3, who cites Ovid when he speaks of the pagan poet's ignorance of the earthly paradise of the Garden of Eden.

92. On man's natural laziness, see Second Discourse (Collected Writings, III, 23).

93. In his 1756 letter to Voltaire on providence, Rousseau explains the natural goodness of life, claiming he has proved it in his description of natural man in the Second Discourse: "I dare to state that there is in the upper Valais not a single Mountainier discontented with his almost automatic life, and who would not willingly accept, even in place of Paradise, the bargain of being born one-eyed in order to vegetate thus in perpetuity." (Collected Writings, III, 111). See also Rousseau of the Solitary Walker, Fifth Walk (Plaiday, I, 1942).

94. The inclination of the axis of the earth to the angle of that of the universe is the cause of the seasons. Rousseau uses the same image in a fragment from his projected Political Institutions in a treatment of the effect of climates on civilization, a discussion relevant to the present discussion: "To tilt the axis of the world with a finger or to say to man, 'Cover the earth and be safe'; was the same thing for He who needs neither hand to set nor voice to speak" (Collected Writings, IV, 53).

95. Compare Montesquieu, Spirit of the Laws, XVII, 3: "It is natural for a people to leave a bad country in search of a better and not for them to leave a good country in search of a worse one." Compare Machiavelli, Discourses on Livy, I, 1.

96. Rousseau also speaks of these natural disasters as the cause that unites men and begins to make them speak in the Second Discourse (Collected Writings, III, 67-47). See also Political Engagements, X (Collected Writings, IV, 6). For the ancient traditions of natural disasters, aside from the flood and destruction of the Tower of Babel recounted in Genesis (7:10-8:14; 11:9-19), see, among others, Parco, Laws, III. 9078-9026, Zirkwitz, 123-145, and Crepin, 222-229, et passim; Lucretius, De rerum natura, I, 1107-1204, V, 335-347, 365-385.

97. Lucretius also describes the Swiss in his Constitutional Project for Carthage (Pleiade, III, 104).

98. See note 8 above.

99. On the use of fire among men and animals, see Second Discourse, note 8 (Collected Writings, III, 82-83). The term "ferocious society" (sociët développée) makes it appear that Rousseau is referring here to Helvetius, who used the term in his De l'homme (1758, Discours premier, chap. 1). The word translated as "stupid" here also means "besotted." See Rousseau's letter to Voltaire of September 10, 1755 (Collected Writings, III, 102 and ed. n. 3).

100. See Genesis 21:25-33.

101. For the chaos figured by the poets, see, e.g., Ovid, Metamorphoses, I, 1-31; Lucretius, De rerum natura, II, 118-122. As Gersauvich notes in his edition of the Essay, Descartes uses the same phrase as Rousseau (Discourse on Method, § 2, second paragraph).

102. Rousseau appears to refer to Buffon's theory elaborated in his Animali carnisius (1783, vol. 7), where Buffon critiques Rousseau's theory of man's original diet as expressed in the Second Discourse.

103. See the parallel account in the Second Discourse (Collected Writings, III, 46). Rousseau appears in both accounts to draw on Lucretius, De rerum natura, V, 390-1412. For the relationship of dancing and singing in connection with the opposition of north and south, see Condillac, Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines, I, 1, 8.

104. The necessary intermarriage within families in primitive times was a common subject in Rousseau's writings. See, for example, Génées, Droit de la Guerre et de Paix, I, 521 (trans. Barbevay); Pufendorf, Droit de la nature et des gens, I, 2, 56 (trans. Barbevay); Montesquieu, Persian Letters, Letter LXVII.

105. See note 40 above.

106. In Rousseau's draft this chapter was originally entitled Chapter IX, but was later changed.

107. "Similar" translates "semblable" which has otherwise been translated "fellow-men."

108. See Rousseau, Emile, II (Péladé, IV, 174); Bloom, 128.


110. The first word among them was not "s-même," but "îdiô-mai." As Szirmai remarks in his edition of the Essay, Rousseau takes advantage here of the contrast between the hard "d" and the nasal "m" in the two phrases in order to make the opposition between these evident to the ear in French.

111. Rousseau discusses Mohammed, among others, as a persuasive political and religious founder in the Social Contract (II, 7; see also IV, 8). As in the Social Con-
122. The comparison between painting and music, with design representing the melody and coloration the harmony, was a common trope in this period. See also Plato, Republic, 5, 600–601. "Couleur" translates "tint" in this passage and in the remainder of this chapter.

123. For Burette, see note 118 above.

124. The analogy between the reduction of colors in the print and the notes of the musical scale was made most importantly by Newton in his Opticks (Pt. 1, qu. 16). Newton's proportion was discussed in the article "Couleur" in the Encyclopédie, and was taken up more importantly by Canet, whose "ocular clivishond" Rousseau lampoons in chap. XVI below.

125. "Relationships" translates "rappels," which can also be translated "rétains" and has been translated as such when it clearly has this sense.

126. This definition of music Rousseau gives at the outset of the article Musique [Music] in the Dictionnaire de Musique, below.

127. Rousseau here opposes Rameau's supposed experiment as reported, among other places, in his Traité de l'Harmonie, Bk. 3, chap. 40 (Gousseau, 531–543). He explains the basis of his criticism at the outset of his Examen de Rameau's Principles, translated above.

128. See Flacq, Poësie, 84–85.

129. Rousseau appears to refer to Rameau's Pratique (1745), which includes a chorus of croaking frogs.

130. In Rousseau's draft this chapter was originally entitled: "How our liveliest sensations often act through moral impressions."

131. For Rousseau's similar discussion of indications that animals as well as humans seem to show signs of natural play, see Second Discours [Collected Writings, III, 16]. In the Émile, Rousseau remarks that it is "important to observe that something moral enters into everything concerned with imitation" and then writes in a note to the statement: "This is proved by an essay on the Principles of Melody, which will be found in the collection of my writings" (IV, Œuvres, IV, 692; Bloom, 340).

132. In his own copy of the Émile, Rousseau changed the reference to the Essay on the Origin of Languages (Piéride, 1688).

133. Rousseau refers to the supposed care for tarantula bites by dancing, from which comes the dance called a "tarantella."

134. Nicolas Bernier (1666–1734) was the director of music of the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris and the chapel at Versailles. Rousseau relates the story of the musician cared for by a concert in the article Musique [Music] in his Dictionary of Music, p. 443 below. In his Confessions, Rousseau relates learning careseux by heart while he himself was ill (V, Collected Writings, 1, 122).

135. Rousseau distinguishes the "systematizing spirit" from the "spirit of observation," upon which he says his own "system" is founded, in his Lettres morales [Letter 1], Œuvres IV, 1090–1093.

136. "The "ocular clivishond" was constructed by the Abbé Louis Bernard Castel (1668–1727), whom Rousseau had met soon after arriving in Paris with his new system of musical notations (see Confessions, VII, Collected Writings, V, 518, 242–243, 743). Castel first proposed his clivishond in 1716 in the Mercure de France and elaborated on it in later works, most importantly his Optique des couleurs (1740). A separate article on the "Clavoir oculaire" was included in the Encyclopédie.

137. Rousseau refers to the famous sneezing fistulae constructed by Vanasson (1705–1742), who published his Mécanisme d'un fistule antérieur in 1718.

138. Rousseau refers to the ancient teaching, dating back to the Pythagoreans and Plato and popular in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, that the revelation of the spheres containing the celestial bodies produced a harmonious music.

139. "Similar" translates "invariable," which is translated as "fiddles" in the previous sentence. See note 8 above.

140. This paragraph in the Essay is repeated almost verbatim in the articles Imitation [Imitation] and Opéra [Opera] in the Dictionnaire de Musique, both of which are translated below.

141. Rousseau refers foremost to Rameau, who claimed Greek music was a defective version of the harmonic theory he developed in his works. However, in his earlier works, notably the Traité de l'Harmonie (1722), Rousseau claimed that the music of the Greeks was founded on melody and not harmony. In his later writings, Rameau changed his mind and insisted that Greek music was based on a defective notion of harmony. The debate between Rousseau and Rameau over the related issues of the primacy of melody and harmony and the nature of Greek music can be found in Rousseau's article Enharmonique [Enharmonique] in the Encyclopédie (later included in revised form in the Dictionary of Music) and Rameau's critical examination of that article in his Continuation of Errors on Music in the Encyclopédie, both translated above.

142. Rousseau elaborates on the difference among the musical systems of various peoples and includes examples of the music of the Greeks, American Indians, and others, in the article Musique [Music] in the Dictionary of Music, translated below.

143. This paragraph was adapted with minor changes from the Principe de Melody, p. 103 above, and was also used in the Examen des Principes de Principe de Melody, pp. 103 above.

144. Rousseau's formulation in the version of this sentence in the Principe de Melody (see p. 103 above) brings out the point: "they would have to so speak understood them underneath (connaître sous des connaissances) their songs."

145. See the entry Pathétique [Pathétique] in the Dictionary of Music: "The true pathétique gives it a passionate accent, which is not in all determined by rules, but is what genius discovers and the heart feels, without art being able in any way to give it form."

146. This whole chapter was adapted with changes from the Principe de Melody, pp. 261–268 above.

147. Pintarch, De Musica, XXX, 3140–3144. The dialogue, falsely attributed to
Plutarch, contains a synopsis of Pherecrates' play Chiron (c. 440–420 B.C.), in which Music, dressed as a woman, complains that, instead of commanding poetry as of old, now she is stripped of her rightful place and accustomed power. Melinippides (fifth century B.C.) and Philoxenus (fourth century B.C.) were innovators in Greek music.

148. See Rousseau, First Discourse (Collected Writings, II, 7–8).

149. See Plato, Republic, X.599c–e; Diogenes Laertius, Lives of the Philosophers, "Plato."

150. Nero is the "flute player" Rousseau has Fabricius denounce in the important prosopoeia in the First Discourse (Collected Writings, II, 11).

151. Flavius Claudius Julianus ("Julian the Apostate"), Misopogon, 337c. Julian actually compares the Gaul's speech to the cawing of hoarse birds.

152. See Rousseau's article Plain-song (Plain-Chant) in his Dictionary of Music (Pléiade, V, 983), where he appears to allude to this discussion in the Essay: "The time when the Christians began to have Churches . . . was that in which Music had already lost almost all its ancient energy by a progress of which I have elsewhere set forth the causes."

153. Jehan des Murs (c.1300–c.1350), a widely influential musical theorist of the later Middle Ages best known for his treatment of musical proportions and mensural notation. Rousseau refers to the Speculum musicae, long attributed to Jehan des Murs, but actually written by Jacques de Liège (c.1260–c.1350). Giovanni Andrea Angelini-Bontempi or Buontempi (c. 1630–c.1704), published his Istoria musica in 1696. Rousseau read the work attentively while living at Charmettes, and credits it with sparking his interest in musical theory (see Confessions, VII; Collected Writings, V, 206).

154. Giuseppe Tartini (1692–1770) was a well-known violinist, composer, and theorician. His most influential work was the Trattato di musica secondo alla vera scienza dell'armonia (1754). For Rousseau's discussion of Rameau's vibrating string, see Examination of Two Principles, end, p. 281 above.

155. In the Emile Rousseau writes: "I observe that in the modern age men no longer hold a bold one another except by force or by self-interest; the ancients, by contrast, acted much more by persuasion and by the affections of the soul because they did not neglect the language of signs" (IV; Pléiade, IV, 645; Bloom, 231). See also Social Contract, III, 15: "your indistinct languages cannot be heard outdoors" (see more generally III, 13–15). Compare Aristotle, Politics, VII.4.1326b5–6.

156. See Rousseau's similar description of the public reading of the poetry of Homer and the great Athenian tragedians in his Considerations on the Government of Poland, chap. 2 (Pléiade, III, 938).

157. D'Alembert, De la liberté de la musique (1778), XXIII: "If French recitative were as well composed as it could be, it ought to be able to be recited in Italian."

158. Duclos, Remarques sur la Grammaire générale et raisonnée, I, 1.

EDITOR'S NOTES TO
Pronunciation

This translation is based on the text found in Pléiade, II, 1248–1252. The Pléiade edition is based on Rousseau's manuscript (Neuchâtel R. 19, folios 13–15), which