

Name: _____ Period: _____ Date: _____

Philosophical Foundations: Touchstone Dialogue #2

From *Discourse on Inequality* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau

How societies began...

The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, bethought himself of saying "This is mine," and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society. **Humanity would have been spared infinite crimes, wars, homicides, murders, if only someone had ripped up the fences or filled in the ditches and said, "Do not listen to this pretender! You are eternally lost if you do not remember that the fruits of the earth are everyone's property and that the land is no-one's property!"** But by that point things had changed so drastically that there was no turning back, for this idea of "property," which develops out of prior ideas, did not form spontaneously in the human mind. Men had to progress, acquiring knowledge and arts, transmitting and increasing these from generation to generation, before they reached the last stage in the natural human state. I shall endeavor, then, to explain the progress of events and discoveries from the perspective of their natural order...

How societies changed "natural man"...

It now became the interest of men to appear what they really were not. To be and to seem became two totally different things; and from this distinction sprang insolent pomp and cheating trickery, with all the numerous vices that go in their train. ...

Insatiable ambition, the thirst of raising their respective fortunes, not so much from real want as from the desire to surpass others, inspired all men to a vile propensity to injure one another, and with a secret jealousy, which is the more dangerous, as it puts on the mask of benevolence, to carry its point with greatest security. **In a word, there arose rivalry and competition on the one hand, and conflicting interests on the other together with a secret desire on both of profiting at the expense of others. All these evils were the first effects of property, and the inseparable attendants of growing inequality.**

On the difference between "savage" and "civilized"

The savage and the civilised man differ so much in the bottom of their hearts and in their inclinations, that what constitutes the supreme happiness of one would reduce the other to despair. The former [**the savage**] breathes only peace and liberty; he desires only to live and be free from labour. **Civilised** man, on the other hand, is always moving, sweating, toiling and racking his brains to find still more laborious occupations: he goes on in drudgery to his last moment, and even seeks death to put himself in a position to live, or renounces life to acquire immortality. He pays his court to men in power, whom he hates, and to the wealthy, whom he despises; he stops at nothing to have the honour of serving them; he is not ashamed to value himself on his own meanness and their protection; and, proud of his slavery, he speaks with disdain of those, who have not the honour of sharing it.

Individual Work:

1. A passage that stands out to me is Rousseau's statement that
"_____."

It makes me think/wonder/believe_____.

2. Three questions related to this passage are:
 - a.)
 - b.)
 - c.)

Group Work:

3. Do you agree with Rousseau's assertion that "human nature" is good and ultimately ruined by the competitive demands of organized society or do you agree with Hobbes who believes that human nature was evil to begin with? Give examples from *current events and/ or* personal experiences.