

Natural, Civilized, Citizen

Full Description

View Document

Title:

Natural, Civilized, Citizen: Dickens's Characters and Rousseau's Philosophy.

0 views

0 downloads

Name(s):

[Phares, Jane](#), author
[Fenstermaker, John](#), professor directing dissertation
[Jumonville, Neil](#), university representative
[Standley, Fred](#), committee member
[Walker, Eric](#), committee member
[Department of English](#), degree granting department
[Florida State University](#), degree granting institution



Download PDF

Type of Resource:

text

Genre:

Text

Issuance:

monographic

Date Issued:

2009

Publisher:

Florida State University
Florida State University

Place of Publication:

Tallahassee, Florida

Physical Form:

computer
online resource

Extent:

1 online resource

Language(s):

English

Abstract/Description:

This dissertation presents evidence, using the vehicle of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's philosophy, that Charles Dickens remained an optimist, contrary to critical opinion that claims he became a dark pessimist during the latter half of his life. Rousseau and Dickens shared a belief in the innate goodness of humankind and, if not in the perfectibility of humanity, at least in the redemption and possibility of betterment both of the individual, and through the individual, of society. Critical connections between the two writers are examined in Chapter 1: "A Review of the Literature." In one of his early discourses, *The Origins of Inequality*, Rousseau posits hypothetically that in the early stages of human development, the "natural man" existed in a state of peace and tranquillity; his identifying characteristics were self satisfaction (in Rousseau's terms, amour de soi), contentment with only the material goods necessary to sustain himself, genuineness, a self concept based on his own inner evaluative system, innocence (freedom from vice), and most notably,

compassion for other human beings. When humans began to gather in groups and form societies, they evolved from natural men into "civilized men," thus developing pride (amour propre), a competitive nature, greed, pretension, a self concept determined by others, immoral and/or illegal behaviors, a lack of compassion. In the more mature writings of Rousseau he acknowledges that a return to nature is impossible, and that the only hope for the redemption of society is individual transformation, by which the individual retains or regains natural characteristics and exhibits them within the confines of society. The person who achieves this type of life is the "citizen" as presented in Rousseau's *The Social Contract*. While these are the works of Rousseau in which he presents the typology, he also portrays the same characteristics in *Emile*, *Julie*, and his first discourse. Evidence and illustrations of these types are presented in Chapter 2: "Rousseau's Philosophy: The Relevant Principles." In this study, characters in Dickens are measured by the sets of characteristics set forth by Rousseau. In each of the novels under discussion (*Pickwick Papers*, *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, *A Christmas Carol*, *David Copperfield*, *Great Expectations*, and *Our Mutual Friend*), at least one character represents each of the three types, natural man, civilized man, and citizen. One character per novel is presented in each of three chapters here (Chapter 3: "Dickens's Natural Man"; Chapter 4: "Dickens's Civilized Man"; and Chapter 5: "Dickens's Citizen"), with references to relevant others. For each character, evidence is presented to show that he or she displays all the characteristics of the particular type. In addition, in Chapter 6: "Geographical Significance: The Country vs. the City" the role of geography in the natural/civilized dichotomy is discussed. Rousseau believed that rural life (i.e., life in the country, away from the city and large numbers of people) is more conducive to one's remaining natural; city life, on the other hand, leads to corruption and the development of civilized characteristics, due to one's proximity to others. Dickens's novels contain a similar sentiment, although as both Dickens and Rousseau concluded, life in the country (in "nature") becomes less and less possible with the advance of civilization, so one's only choice is to become citizens, living naturally within the city. Taking into consideration the survival of natural characters throughout Dickens's literary corpus, as well as an increase in the number of redeemed characters (albeit in a civilized setting), conclusions are drawn that Dickens did not lose his optimism toward the end of his life; in fact, he presents the survival of natural goodness as possible in spite of the corruptive forces of civilization. Like Rousseau, Dickens ultimately reinforces not only humankind's innate goodness, but also its resilience and adaptability.

Identifier:

FSU_migr_etd-1964 (IID)

Submitted Note:

A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English

Submitted Note:	A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.
Degree Awarded:	Fall Semester, 2009.
Date of Defense:	October 21, 2009.
Keywords:	Perfectibility, Natural Goodness, Natural Man, Rousseau, Dickens
Bibliography Note:	Includes bibliographical references.
Advisory committee:	John Fenstermaker, Professor Directing Dissertation; Neil Jumonville, University Representative; Fred Standley, Committee Member; Eric Walker, Committee Member.
Subject(s):	English literature
Persistent Link to This Record:	http://purl.flvc.org/fsu/fd/FSU_migr_etd-1964
Use and Reproduction:	This Item is protected by copyright and/or related rights. You are free to use this Item in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s). The copyright in theses and dissertations completed at Florida State University is held by the students who author them.
Host Institution:	FSU

Style

APA

Choose the citation style.

Phares, J. (2009). Natural, Civilized, Citizen: Dickens's Characters and Rousseau's Philosophy. Retrieved from http://purl.flvc.org/fsu/fd/FSU_migr_etd-1964



This service is a partnership between [Florida Virtual Campus](#), [Florida Academic Library Services Cooperative](#) and [The Florida State University Libraries](#).

[Privacy Statement](#). All Rights Reserved.

[Contact us with Questions or Comments](#) | [DigiNole Copyright & Legal Agreements](#)

Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau would say it requires a social contract. I would encourage you to read Jared Diamond's fantastic Guns, Germs, and Steel, specifically Chapter 14: From Egalitarianism to Kleptocracy. He discusses how we go from a ragged group of hunter-gatherers to a large multi-state nation. As for my own opinion, I believe the 'social contract' theory is an observation of a naturally occurring phenomenon, but one of which we are not consciously or actively aware. People team up and group together not because of some rational, thought-out plan, but because of a natura... Natural, Civilized, Citizen: Dickens's Characters and Rousseau's Philosophy. Article. Jane Elizabeth Phares. This dissertation presents evidence, using the vehicle of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's philosophy, that Charles Dickens remained an optimist, contrary to critical opinion that claims he became a dark pessimist during the latter half of his life. Rousseau and Dickens shared a belief in the innate goodness of humankind and, if not in the perfectibility of humanity, at least in the redemption and possibility of betterment both of the individual, and through the individual, of society. Dickens's later heroes and heroines are characterized by their movement toward self-actualization. In the early novels, Rose Maylie, Mr. Brownlow, Tom Pinch, Nicholas Nickleby, and even Pickwick represent compassionate but stereotyped models. Later, however, Dombey is thawed by his daughter Florence's love; Eugene Wrayburn, the blasé lawyer, is humanized by Lizzie Hexam; and Bella Wilfer gives up self-seeking for John Rokesmith. Rousseau first turns to historical evidence, arguing that what we learn from the study of the past is that moral decadence always accompanies cultural and intellectual progress. Since the Renaissance, our polite and cultivated society has lost its ancient virtues and strengths. Our social frenzy covers a profound depravity such as overtook Egypt, Greece, and Rome after their transitions from simpler societies to more cultivated and cultured ones. It contains the core of Rousseau's diagnosis of mankind's psychic ills. All our self-created miseries stem from our mixed.

condition, our half natural and half social state. A healthy man, the model for any system of education, would have to adhere consistently to a single mode of life. modern man at his worst. To the self-satisfied, to men proud of their civilized ways and confident of the future, it was a devastating challenge. Not the least striking aspect of Rousseau's classical model is that it is so overwhelmingly military in character. Through the First Discourse.