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ROUSSEAU AND MODERN FAMILY VALUES

By

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ABSTRACT

ROUSSEAU AND MODERN FAMILY VALUES

By

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This dissertation is a comprehensive analysis of the significance of family throughout Rousseau's oeuvre. It aims to make clear why, in spite of the wide-ranging scope of this controversial political philosopher, he devoted so much attention to what has come to be called "family values." After broadly outlining the transformation of the modern family over the last 500 years, the schools of thought that effected this change, and reasons for the inability of contemporary scholarship to adequately defend or critique family-related developments, in the introduction I explain why Rousseau is uniquely suited to help us.

In the first chapter, I present Rousseau's argument for why the individualism, equality, and freedom characteristic of modern life will not bring us the happiness it might seem to promise. His more famous prescriptions for our modern ills fall under two seemingly opposed categories: the fully 'denatured' patriotic life in a free and equal republic, or a more natural life which takes its bearings from human sentiments and maintains its healthiness through its withdrawal from corrupted political and civil life. Explaining how family life is a practical middle way between these two extremes that is still consistent with their essential characteristics helps us understand not only why he emphasizes family, but how he can point to such disparate alternatives as legitimately happy lives.

Chapter two begins with a detailed account of the state of nature that establishes the centrality of the family in it, despite the utter solitude many scholars take to be the core of Rousseau's version of our natural condition. After indicating the reasons why the family

meets many of our natural necessities, in the second half I present his treatment of why family values are necessary for the health of communities and polities. Particular focus is given here to the theme of sexual differentiation, whether it be for the well-being of a polity (Geneva in *Letter to d'Alembert*), or the rural homestead of *Julie*.

While in chapter two the intention is to defend the family on the larger scale as the socializing institution best suited to our natural needs, chapter three looks at the family from the perspective of a boy with a strong desire to find true happiness. I explore the path of love and marriage as not only good public policy, but as that which elevates and satisfies our deepest longings. Emile's teenage instruction is dominated by sexual education: Rousseau redirects his pubescent powers towards pity and piety before making sexual chastity and the desire for a virtuous wife the core of his character development.

The fleeting character of romantic love turns many supporters of family values against it, and against Rousseau for his seductive presentation. Rousseau was very much alive to these concerns. In chapter four I take up Rousseau's own critique of romantic love, and reconcile the tension between the great commitment required by marriage and the concern for freedom that Rousseau possessed as strongly as anyone today. By addressing the major critiques of the family using Rousseau's own arguments, I demonstrate not only that his analysis of the issue is extremely comprehensive, but that this sustained consideration of Rousseau's ideas on family sheds more light on the unity of his thought.

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My parents are the cause of this work in many ways. They strongly nurtured my passion for learning from a young age. My father in particular encouraged me to recognize the importance of history and politics and to appreciate the unique character of Western culture. Their success in marriage and family played no small part in not just my own well-being, but in my belief that this is a worthy topic of study. Their quality as parents and unflagging support of my higher education has enabled a young man of 'common' birth to enjoy a quality of life and learning better than most conventional aristocrats could wish for.

Professor Leon Craig, with help from Heidi Studer and Tom Pocklington, convinced me that political philosophy is not only the field I am best suited to, but the worthiest scholarly endeavour to devote oneself to. Professor Craig's diligent and insightful editing of my master's thesis provided me with valuable insights into the art of composition. Professors Melzer and Kautz have furthered this instruction; the weaknesses and errors remaining in this work reflect only my limitations, not their capacity to improve young scholars.

At Michigan State, I continued to have the good fortune to learn from excellent professors. It has been an honour and pleasure to take world-class courses from David Leibowitz, Werner Dannhauser, Jerry Weinberger, Steven Kautz, and Arthur Melzer. I

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

C: Confessions (Kelly translation)

D: Dialogues: Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques (Kelly translation)

E: Emile (Bloom Translation)

E&S: Emile and Sophie, or the Solitaries (Harvey translation)

EOL: Essay on the Origin of Language (Gourevitch translation)

FD: First Discourse (Masters translation)

J: Julie (Stewart and Vache translation)

LT: Letter to D'Alembert (Bloom translation)

OC: Oeuvres Completes (Pleiade edition)

PE: Political Economy (Masters translation)

R: Reveries of a Solitary Walker (Butterworth translation)

SC: Social Contract (Masters translation)

SD: Second Discourse (Masters translation)

Introduction

This study will present Jean-Jacques Rousseau's analysis and promotion of the family for modern man with the hope of illuminating what his work can teach us about our situation 250 years later. At the peak of his fame and intellectual powers, no issue concerned him more than establishing family bonds on a sentimental egalitarian basis which could endure the impending political upheavals he foresaw. With the force of his insights into the core problems of modernity and the love-based family solution he proposed – a solution being taken up with renewed vigour again in our day – I hope to clarify from Rousseau's perspective what a strengthening of the family means, how this might help us identify and address our social problems, and how revisiting his teaching can better inform our debates on the tensions between individual freedom and family values.

One distinguishing feature of Rousseau's work is that while he shares many of the scientific and materialistic premises of modern philosophers, he writes with more passion than one finds in most theorists and about less scientifically manageable issues such as honour, duty, souls, moral decay, and above all, love. In fact, Rousseau could sensibly be said to have caused more romantic love than anyone in history. The powerful influence of his depictions of love in *Emile, Julie,* and his own *Confessions* have earned him the title in many minds as the "Father of Romanticism" a movement which surely *affect*ed all of modernity. Allene Gregory declares in *The French Revolution and the English Novel*

that amongst French philosophers of the time, "Rousseau especially exerted an influence in England which it would be hard to overestimate...Julie, St. Preux, Emile, Sophie, and the Rousseau of the *Confessions* became living ideals in the minds of Englishmen" (41). His effect on major novelists such as Stendahl, Goethe, Tolstoy, Balzac, and others is evident and well documented, even if they were not exactly disciples, as was St. Pierre. More than any of these writers, however, Rousseau was not only interested in capturing readers by vividly depicting the power of love: he clearly wanted to turn it to public utility.

He saw that romantic love could be the foundation of a renewed, willing devotion on the part of both fathers and mothers to the family. This was needed more than ever, he thought, because the liberal, commercial, rationalistic, and individualistic society of modernity would tend not to provide its 'citizens' with the fulfillment it seemed to promise. For most people, Rousseau believed, there certainly was such a thing as too much freedom. With patriotism and piety becoming weak and always prone to corruption, Rousseau thought that the most viable basis for developing the genuine sense of community most humans long for was instilling a comprehensive respect for family. Emile, the subject of his greatest work, is first given the tools of self-sufficiency and practical wisdom, and then made to be a lover, but this is clearly with a life as a morally serious father and husband in sight.

In direct contrast to the popular feminism that seeks full access to the career-centered city life for women, Rousseau hoped to send families out to the country, where

men could escape the life of urban competition and superficiality and be more wholeheartedly devoted to their families. He denounced the rejection of maternalism in the strictest terms, and persuaded many of the well-educated and socially powerful aristocratic mothers of his day to breastfeed and take pride in fulfilling the role of nurturing their children, even in the earliest years. He witnessed with penetrating eyes what the results are when people place much more emphasis on artificial and divisive qualities like honour and wealth than on more natural and communal ones like love and fellowship. I hope to establish in this dissertation that our contemporary problems are not so utterly new or bewildering. Not only can we learn from Rousseau as a writer on the family, but as a political philosopher whose insights and exhortations helped shape diverse elements of our modern, liberal, democratic age.

Rousseau is also notable in that he transcends the ideological camps we see today. He is castigated on all sides because of powerful strands in his thought which point towards such disparate ideologies as communism, radical egalitarianism, pastoralism, nationalism, sexism, bohemianism, romanticism, and militarism. While many choose to dismiss Rousseau as a serious thinker because of these apparent contradictions, I intend to make plausible the claim that no writer on modern family issues is as alive to the deep tensions between the promptings of individual freedom and the requirements of an orderly society in our individual and collective quest for happiness and justice. I will show that not only does Rousseau have a great deal to teach us about family issues, but that a deeper understanding of his teaching on the family helps us to reconcile the apparent inconsistencies and see the unity in Rousseau's thought.

Why this Topic is Appropriate to Political Science

Political philosophy is the study of how human beings can live best, a critical reflection on our opinions, customs, and laws with an eye to improving them in terms of the quality of life they make possible or likely. While its practitioners seek a trans-historical understanding of humanity, one cannot help but begin with the world one is most directly in contact with. An alien observer comparing the political systems and public opinions in our Western world with those of the last few millennia would likely come to the conclusion that we have attained an unprecedented degree of political stability and general contentment. But while peace and prosperity have flourished in the West over the last sixty years, a look at the social and moral lives of these solidly liberal democratic people reveals that this period has seen a remarkable change with regard to sexuality and family norms. While the family has not yet been quite as transformed as sexual mores generally, they are inextricably linked, and it is not clear whether this fundamental and most intimate of institutions is only undergoing a notable shift in meaning, or losing its status as a foundation of society.

The government and the family have always been two major loci of both social change and stability. Though nobody seriously questions their interrelatedness, a number of factors contribute to them rarely being studied together, even in today's very diverse world of academic publishing. The first is that our liberal politics is premised in part on the reduction of the moral scope of the state or involvement in the "private lives" of

citizens; with the important and often controversial exception of public education, matters of child-rearing and especially sexuality are firmly within the private realm. A related phenomenon is the reluctance of many academics to involve themselves in controversial moral issues, whether attacking or defending traditional morals, out of a concern with scientific objectivity as well as a fear of persecution.

Another factor affecting academic scholarship is the division of the social sciences into fields such as political science and sociology; one examines the relationships between citizens and the government or between governments, while the other examines the vast panoply of social relations only one of which is the family. Political Science rarely descends to the study of the family unit, despite the fact that it is here where the future citizens of the polity are produced and their characters and opinions melded most directly. There have been some exceptions when laws run blatantly enough against accepted individual and group rights (as with the equal rights movement and again more recently over the issue of same-sex marriage), but for the most part political scientists have very little to do with family issues. Even when challenges to the law arise, one is more likely to find legal scholars addressing these debates.

Sociology is broken up into many subfields and ideologies, with the result that comprehensive authoritative accounts of the principles of our family structure are hard to find,[1] and as with anthropology are too often merely descriptive. Family sociologists also rarely attempt to connect the effects of our family structure to the political realm or

[1] Sociologist David Cheal: "Students of family and marriage are often puzzled by the conflicted images of family life that are presented in Sociology. Their confusion is not surprising, as family theorists are probably more divided now than they have been at any other time." (x).

vice versa.[2] There is, in fact, very little normative content in the social sciences, except from perspectives such as Marxism, queer theory, religious fundamentalism, and others who start from widely-questioned premises. The only field for which the relationship between the family and state is prominent is feminist theory.

Women's Studies or Gender Studies departments have been formed in many universities over the last few decades. While "women's equality" has become accepted as a basic liberal premise inside academia and out, the meaning of this notion is far from settled. Specifically, the character of innate differences between men and women and the cultural significance these variations should have is a topic that continues to be debated amongst feminists and is one that men and women in real life continue to grapple with as well. The core of the debate can be roughly distilled into two camps: if women are essentially the same as men, we need to consider how to reduce the barriers to their contributing more equally in the public space; or, if women are importantly different than men, we need to consider how their unique abilities can flourish in a way that contributes to the well being of both women and society.

Social science for the most part has thus far made only modest contributions to this debate. While cognitive studies and other psychologists have recently focused more on understanding differences between the sexes, for the most part there is little 'hard' evidence to assist us in resolving these issues. Political Philosophy has its drawbacks as well: in its long history, most of its best and influential contributors have had little to say

[2] We will discuss some exceptions, such as Popenoe, Blankenhorn, and Berger below.

about women, and what they have said is usually dismissive or otherwise unhelpful in our debates today. We will in this study analyze one of the most comprehensive attempts at uncovering the principles of family bonds and reformulating them for the benefit of modern society from Jean-Jacques Rousseau: a man who contributed to all of social science, but who is best considered a political philosopher.

Why this Topic is Important in Contemporary Politics

Despite the deficiencies in the academic approaches, family issues remain at the fore of our political debates. In the last twenty years the demand for recognition of alternative arrangements in the expansive government and corporate benefits systems, the desire to address the needs of those affected by the strains of single parenting, as well as the emboldened effort from the left to rid the political landscape of the discriminatory vestiges of the old society are chief among the developments that have brought sexual politics to the fore in a number of sectors of public policy. Besides the issue of same-sex marriage, other directly related contemporary public issues are sex education, public decency, spousal abuse, gender equality in the workplace, "deadbeat dads," teen pregnancy, home schooling, and whether the government should support parental or professional child care.

Many of these issues are hotly contested in our time, but it is clear that much of the debate is made up of polarizing tropes and mantras from the ideological left and right, without it being clear how well-rooted the understandings of their expositors are. When

one side speaks of equality, rights, and the family as an incorrigibly oppressive patriarchal institution while the other speaks of the degeneration of society and the need to inculcate virtue in the face of hedonistic nihilism, it can easily seem that there is no shared ground. Most of the discussion of these issues occurs with little attention given to the complex theoretical underpinnings of the 'traditional' family, especially with regard to how its supporters in the last few centuries saw its promotion as a necessary counterweight to the dangers that liberal democracy poses to the morals and happiness of its citizens. In taking this subject up from the vantages political philosophy affords, this study aims to help inform our family debates. In particular, this perspective takes a broader viewpoint from which we can better understand both liberal democracy and the modern family in light of the alternatives from which they have been consciously directed.

Regardless of whether one supports the de-stigmatization of the many alternative living arrangements we see today, few would argue that this unprecedented transformation of values regarding the family is not producing casualties (although, to be sure, some would argue there were more casualties before this change). Despite the near extinction in most quarters of taboos against non-marital sex, homosexuality, divorce, and having children outside of wedlock, various studies make clear that at least the latter two tend to cause psychic harm to some parents and many children. There is considerable evidence that more than any other factor, being raised by one's married parents improves a child's likelihood of maturing into a healthy responsible adult (e.g. Moynihan ed. 2004, Popenoe ed. 1994). One of the most indisputably negative

occurrences in civil society is crime. Based on an influential study authored by Elaine Kamark and William Galston, among others, Barbara Whitehead asserts that "controlling for family configuration erases the relationship between race and crime and between low income and crime. This conclusion shows up again and again in the literature."

Family values proponents criticize the push to embrace the acceptance of diversity in family arrangements because the negative outcomes associated with it are clear and quantifiable. Moynihan et.al., in *The Future of the Family*, surveys the social factors which have declined along with the family transformation; they conclude that having a single parent is by far the most robust predictor of poverty, poor education, crime, and teen pregnancy (which usually means disadvantaged single-parentage all over again). The authors cite Jonathan Rauch's work from 2001, where he suggests that "America's families and children may be splitting into two increasingly divergent and perpetuating streams – two social classes, in other words – with marriages as the dividing line," and note Isabel Sawhill's finding that "the proliferation of single-parent households accounts for virtually all the increase in child poverty since the early 1970's" (xxi).

Most attempts to explain this phenomenon point to the shortcomings of single parenthood. Single parents have difficulty fulfilling all the roles children require. Two parents are better able to both financially and emotionally support children. Popenoe and others also argue that the lack of an authoritative father figure (the vast majority of single parents are mothers) inhibits the proper development of a child's sense of right and wrong, especially a son's. In cases of divorce, while each parent might still be part of

their children's lives, there is often a loss of respect for trust, sacrifice, and honesty in the children no matter how loving the parents are towards them.[3]

Supporters of "family values" argue that promoting the acceptance of and support for alternatives to the conventional family contributes to a degradation of the moral bonds of society as well as the characters and happiness of individuals. They also assert that the corresponding demystification of life-long love and marriage (which cannot be praised too highly without blaming the alternatives) has affected the short- and long-term prospects for happiness for many: even those who spend their lives married with children, insofar as the many arguments against the institution makes them more deeply uncertain about their choices.

Supporters of the dismantling of these taboos argue that the stricter expectations of the past caused too many victims in and out of marriage, especially female victims given the patriarchal character of family relations. Increased divorce rates from this perspective are not something to bemoan, but rather a reflection of people exercising their

[3] The argument that strong families make better children is quite simple. Humans cannot rely on instinct to live. By nature they are forced to learn how to provide for themselves and as social beings must learn how to act in accordance with the prevailing norms to live agreeably alongside others. Learning to govern desires and emotions to a sufficient degree is a lengthy process, and requires instruction and the example of attentive adults. Although today we see this socialization taking place more and more in public settings like schools and daycares and through the influence of mass media, few would deny that a substantial degree of character development still takes place in the home. This learning occurs in large part as children observe their parents going about their lives, but more directly through the praise and blame their parents give to their conduct as well as that of others. There is an innate respect that virtually all children (at least pre-pubescent ones) display towards their parents, and a corresponding fear of displeasing them. It is also the case that parents usually care more than anyone about how their children turn out; their love and nurturing are argued by some to be the most important resources a child can have. While it is true that they can pass on bad habits as well as good ones, and that because parents are not formally educated in child development there is bound to be pernicious ignorance in some degree, traditionalists and Rousseau agree that the bonds of blood, gratitude, and natural affection make the parents the best candidates for the role of raising children.

right to leave unhappy relationships that in the past they would have had to miserably endure. Unplanned teen pregnancies are unfortunate, but the issue calls for better birth control and sex education, not a misguided religion-fuelled chastity campaign. As for adult women, single motherhood is considered a basic expression of women's freedom, and should be supported by the state so as to mitigate the effects of loss of income and other support a spouse can give. Non-marital sex and homosexuality are defended as natural and healthy in comparison to the repression and oppression seen in the strict regimes of old.

Wherever the truth lies between these two camps, it is clear that the ideal of two virgins entering into lifelong marriage is not only rarely seen, but only remains an *ideal* amongst the few remaining devoutly religious subgroups in the West. Stephanie Coontz perhaps goes too far in asserting that "relations between men and women have changed more in the past thirty years than they did in the previous three thousand" (4), but the fact that such a statement is even debatable supports the notion that no period in history has experienced such a rapid transformation in family values. There has been a radical rethinking of the norms concerning sex, marriage, and gender in the last half-century, and this demands more serious reflection than it has received.

The superficiality of public debate is a barrier to this deeper reflection. While some cling unthinkingly to traditional ways of thought, others today rest their opinions on these controversial issues too easily on simplistic notions of freedom and equality. Rather than grapple with the murkier concepts of education, higher culture, virtue,

reverence, community, and duty, many choose to take the side which dismantles the reigning prejudices of old in favour of liberty from judgments about personal matters. That is, they are consciously or unconsciously guided by the opinion that freedom and equality mean a general freedom from moral expectations and an acceptance of all ways of life as fundamentally equal – at least so long as they do not directly involve harming others. When these avid promoters of tolerance look back at western history, they see above all different modes of institutionalized discrimination against groups of people: the very real injustices in many of the instances colours the entire picture for them in a negative way.

While I am sympathetic to most of the particular claims of these very progressive-minded individualists, I believe that in general they tend to place unwarranted hope in how much happiness greater freedom and equality can bring us, especially in regard to the lower expectations regarding social conduct that this barer notion of liberty entails. Put simply, fighting too hard for personal freedoms means eliminating what might be one of the most important conditions for human happiness: the freedom to be a member of a sovereign community that upholds substantive claims about how to live well. Too often liberal progressives dismiss the social and cultural traditions and institutions outright inasmuch as they tend to be inherently inegalitarian and impose expectations upon people in a way not obviously conducive of freedom. While the success observed in modernity in attacking patriarchal injustice and establishing related personal freedoms has created a more just society in many ways, it appears that respect for marriage and family bonds is unnecessarily falling victim to these developments, and in so doing threatens this success.

While radical feminists, Marxists, and other post-modernists applaud the decline of the marriage-based family model as a necessary step towards their notions of a just society, and reactionary conservatives apocalyptically lament that this is proof that all of the liberal advances of the last century have been so many steps towards our doom, I believe most of us are in a middle ground where we want families that emphasize and protect freedom and equality while providing a stable environment where parents and children can find a dynamic happiness. We recognize, however, that both getting married and deciding to have children are huge compromises of our individual freedom. However clear statistics might be about the declining birth rate in the West or the social advantages in widespread marriage, in an increasingly atomistic culture we need good arguments to convince us and powerful depictions to persuade us to willingly commit to what custom and the social order used to impel us to do.

As we will see in chapter one, Rousseau is very modern in that he supports a scientific, liberal, and egalitarian outlook towards politics. What sets him apart from other writers of early modern times is his thorough grasp of the classical notions of what keeps a community healthy and individuals happy. This compelled him to critique the direction modernity was taking, and to see the need to provide support to social institutions like education and marriage in the wake of retreating state and church influence. The comprehensiveness of his thought and the power of his writing have made him one of the first and most profoundly influential critics of modernity as we know it. However well-known he may be for his proposals for Spartan-style citizenship and

solitary communion with nature, no prescription for remedying the modern dilemma preoccupied him as much as devotion to a child-centered family founded on romantic love. No respected philosopher before or since has devoted so much attention to cultivating a respect for family bonds as the most important basis for a happy life and healthy society. I expect that presenting this analysis of the family in the context of Rousseau's startlingly insightful understanding of modernity will enable us to better understand the principles underlying the promotion of 'family values'. Before returning to an outline of his thought and its unique relevance to our understanding of family issues, a brief and general review of the development of the modern family and the debates surrounding it is in order.

The "Modern Family"

In the last fifty years there has been a radical shift in the institution of the family both legally and culturally in the West. Legally, we have seen divorce laws loosened, rights of unmarried couples strengthened, state support for single parents increased, provisions for gender equality in the workplace introduced, and most recently many jurisdictions have extended marriage rights to same-sex couples. These legal changes have variously encouraged and reflected changes in public attitudes towards marriage, gender, and family. Stigmas surrounding many of the family values with which traditional morality concerned itself have been drastically reduced: couples are more free than ever to decide whether or not to marry and divorce; women are freer than ever to choose whether to have children, a career, or both; people are freer than ever to choose to

engage in heterosexual or homosexual relationships; and, the dichotomy of gender expectations applies to fewer categories all the time. In this section we will review the characteristics which distinguish the early- and late-modern family structures.

The push for legal equality and protection of some basic "human rights" began, if not essentially then in earnest, in 17th Century England. Amidst a flourishing of respect for modern science over the ancient and medieval outlooks, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and others pushed for a scientific approach to politics that would similarly overthrow earlier ways of thinking. They argued that the feudal structure was deeply flawed, and that so long as political legitimacy was rooted in faith-based principles like Divine Right of Kings or Papal Infallibility it would be rife with abuses, corruption, and inefficiency. They believed that a demystification of political principles would place political authority on a more solid and rational basis, and that a greater respect for individual freedom would generate much more peace, prosperity, and happiness for future generations of citizens. They led a radical push against the religious and aristocratic authorities in favour of rationalism and egalitarianism. By shifting Europe's intellectual focus from a preoccupation with antiquity and aesthetics to a progressive concern with public utility and modern science, these writers turned the "Renaissance" into the "Enlightenment."

Although the social change is coming to its individualistic fulfillment a considerable time after the fundamental political change, it would be naïve to think that the principles sanctified in the latter are not fuelling the former, or that these political principles are not still being refined, for better and worse. There is a wealth of insight to

be obtained in the study of the best thinkers and humanists of the beginning of this era not only because of their transcendent genius but because they saw more of what was at stake to lose, or what the alternatives are to our way of life. When the role that the nobility and religious leaders had played in uniting nations and cultures was much more vivid, even if decaying, it was far easier to be concerned about the steady decline in their authority to uphold standards of conduct which bound their subjects together. Rousseau, like Montesquieu before him and Tocqueville after him (to name but two prominent examples) opposed these decaying authorities strongly, but worried about whether something better or worse would replace their influence, and if the unifying moral realm could be harmoniously distilled into the legalistic respect for rights and fundamental equality that Hobbes and Locke wrote in favour of.

While Rousseau was a strong advocate of individuals being treated as political equals, and had a powerful mistrust of established authorities, he does not agree with the opposition expressed by many progressivists to the family as a uniform institution. Rather, he sought to reform the family in a way that would coincide with modern principles but protect it from certain dangers. The most distasteful aspect of this bourgeois family model for contemporary sensibilities is the gendered roles in it. Progressives today insist that it is a systematic violation of women's rights to expect women to act on a more domestic and informal level and men to be more public. While this position has succeeded in becoming most people's idea of a basic egalitarian principle, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the gendered model was in fact a branch of a rather progressive women's movement (Berger 99-134). As the industrial

revolution urbanized agrarian Europe, a large proportion of families shifted from being cohesive units fulfilling a function in and around a village (farm, store, smith, livestock, etc.), to collections of wage-earners in the factories of growing cities. Women and children, who had a productive and cooperative role in the rural household, often went off to earn a wage working long gruelling hours in a factory, just as the man of the house (or small apartment) did. There was a struggle at the outset of the 19th Century involving various women's, religious, and other social activist groups across western countries to secure the 'rights' of women and children *not* to work (Berger 109-11).

Eventually the norm was established across much of Europe and especially in the English-speaking parts of the New World that there should be a substantial middle class where a mother could devote her labour to her home. Like Rousseau, and often directly following his lead, the male and female advocates of this position argued that women were not being 'subjected' in this model, but rather elevated to a cherished and respected position. Today adherents of this viewpoint insist that they treat husbands and wives as "different but equal." Rousseau is an extremely influential early proponent of this position: while we might refer to them today as conservative or traditional feminists, in his time this elevation of women to the role of 'domestic empress' was quite an egalitarian innovation.

Another common error in considerations of the history of the western family is to conclude that until the industrial revolution urbanized the population and forced greater mobility, the norm was to live in a larger household with a number of couples living

under the authority of the oldest male. While this was certainly more prevalent when rural life was the norm and in the days before seniors' homes were a part of every community, two-generational households have constituted the majority for as long as reliable records have been kept in Europe (Wall 217, 222; Berger 5). While among the aristocracy it was more common for their large manors and castles to house some extended family as well as servants, and there have certainly been many cases where elderly parents live with one of their adult children, in the West it has always been very unusual for grown adults to live with their siblings; rather, a married couple and their children have formed the nucleus of the household throughout the history of western civilization.

While there are some different norms regarding living with adult siblings and parents in certain Eastern cultures like India, this is not a peculiarity of the West. Anthropologists have uncovered a handful of alternatives where men did not live with women, or eras where the concept of fatherhood seems to have been unknown (such as upper Palaeolithic Europe), but these exceptions are fairly rare throughout history. As Blankenhorn argues, even if other forms have prevailed in certain times and places, it is notable that none of their cultures lasted or left a mark; rather, as he explains through analysis of the cradles of civilization in Egypt and Mesopotamia, the historical record suggests that it is only when marriage is taken seriously that a culture advances and endures (Blankenhorn 37-40, 41-68, 87). The two-generational household is repeatedly referred to in sociological and anthropological literature as the earliest and most universal social institution. Although elderly parents often lived with one of their children,

mortality rates and fertility rates in the past have meant that this has not been prevalent enough to be an institution. Sociologist Talcott Parsons and Bronislaw Malinowski – an early anthropologist who studied the Trobriander tribe, who were unaware of a father's biological role but still had him live with and care for his children – are among many who go so far as to say that the household of a married couple and their children is found in such a preponderance of societies across history that it can be considered a universal human norm (Parsons 102-4, Malinowski 62-63).

Although the two-generational aspect with some form of marriage holds up over time, the disposition of the members to each other and the society at large varies greatly between eras and cultures. In the strongest traditional cultures, people's lives are very much dominated by their ties to their extended families and classes, whether or not parents or other family elders shared the same roof. One of the clearest indicators of the power of family bonds is in how much choice young people have in who they marry. When marriage is arranged by parents and work is generally done with or in support of one's extended family, self-identity is largely bound up with familial ties and the concept of individual fulfillment is deeply buried if not foreign. Last names matter much more than first ones. These ties are still very prominent in many Eastern and African societies today and were the norm in Europe at the beginning of modernity. The proponents of the Enlightenment sought to break this predominance of ancestral or familial authority in addition to that of the Nobility and Church.

As with virtually every society besides advanced liberal democracy, throughout the early period of this transition in Europe social expectations often differed for the elites. While vestiges remain today (especially in parts of Europe – compare, among many examples, President Mitterrand of France's domestic arrangements or Silvio Berlusconi's exploits with President Clinton's near impeachment), before the decline of aristocracy it was widely accepted that the elites did not follow the same norms as did the commoners; this held for family life as well as it did for careers, manners, political power, and education. Besides having much more to do with ruling than being ruled, elites had larger estates and family titles. This provided opportunity and motive to keep parts of the extended family (most notably adult heirs) living under the same roof. A larger family did not equate to a closer family, however. Those of the upper class, even mothers, generally had little or no direct part in their children's lives. Child-care was considered menial labour; as with all such work, those with means hired people to do it for them. Rousseau thought it was essential that upper-class parents, especially mothers, spend much more time with their children, and he succeeded in shifting elite opinion in this direction.

The presence of young servants in the home not only relieved the owners of domestic and parental duties, but also presented an alternative to what could most unflatteringly be considered 'spousal' duties. Much more relevant to the chastity of spouses was that in much of Europe there was little or no expectation of fidelity or love between aristocratic parents. As is still the case in many parts of the Eastern world today, marriages were based on considerations of estate and title, and if the parents did not

entirely arrange the match, they held and usually exercised a veto power through their ability to disown children who decided for themselves who would enter into the family through marriage. Stephanie Coontz adds that assisting the parents in this role were "kin, neighbours, and other outsiders, such as priests, or government officials" (7). Rather than marriage being a celebration of love and commitment, the emphasis was in doing honour to one's ancestry by strengthening the extended family through advantageous marriages. Romance was still prized in some of these circles, whether it was among the medieval knights or the members of the great courts of Europe. Because of the propertied and honorific character of marriage, however, one could only rarely hope to find any romance there. Rather than providing an alternative to the practical realm of generating wealth and prestige, marriage was decidedly businesslike. This gave a superficial character to marriage, and generated an understanding that it was outside of it that one would find passionate attachments and more individual fulfillment.

In addition to the generation of disrespect because of the character of their marriages, the upper classes often spent much of their time in mixed company at leisure, affording them considerable opportunity to develop romances in adulthood. Much to his chagrin, in Rousseau's time it was quite widely expected that after producing an heir or two an aristocratic young woman would move on to pursue romantic affairs and remain joined to her husband in only an official capacity. While the widespread acceptance of this practice seems to have peaked in Rousseau's France amongst the highly educated elites he lived with in Paris, it is still observed in some contemporary elites or in those who claim to have "open" marriages and relationships; even with our entirely voluntary

marriages, the appeals to nature and freedom from those who oppose monogamy echo in many of the arguments against family values today.

While those of the lower classes did have property considerations of a sort to make – in terms of how productive a spouse could be – they also usually had the ability to marry those they had fallen in love with, or at least had affection for. It may still have been thought by many that this motive was dangerously impractical, but their parents were not the arbiters of their marital fate to nearly the same degree as in the propertied classes. The expectation of sexual fidelity was held more firmly among these people; their greater piety and lack of leisure and mixed company would have made this chaste ideal easier to realize. In addition to the greater chance that marriages of the lower classes would be contracted on the basis of emotional affinity, there was the more intimate daily interaction between the spouses and amidst their children to help secure the family bond. The distinguishing characteristics of these families were that there was little or no education or prospect of class mobility. While the lower classes were less directly bound to ancestry, they were indirectly bound to a meagre lot in life because of their lowly birth. Their goals in raising children rarely extended beyond training them to perform the same functions the parents carried out.

This changed with the Enlightenment's arguments for, and the economy's facilitation of, the emergence of a more fluid class structure. As modernity took hold, and a middle class came to prominence, there came to be more and more incentive to provide one's children with the tools to be more successful in life. Through the 19th

Century the older family patterns were replaced by a model of marrying for love and taking great pride in the rearing and educating of one's children.[4] Rousseau played an important part in this shift from the household being bound to the past to the family holding the hopes of future happiness for the parents and their children. He contributed to this transition not only by arguing for greater political freedom and equality as other modern theorists did, but by directly emphasizing the importance of children's upbringing in their spiritual or character development and by generating devotional respect for not just love but romantic marriage.

Though today there is still a notable expectation of direct involvement with one's children's development, especially in North America, it is clear that the hope for everyone to have a successful career combined with the permissibility and frequency of divorce has resulted in a situation that resembles the aristocratic society of Rousseau's time in the sense of a devaluation of commitment to marriage in favour of personal freedom and ambitions. It is, however, importantly different. To begin with, the expectation of fidelity within marriage is held across all strata in our society, but chastity before marriage now holds less regard than it did in perhaps any other civilization. Despite adultery being frowned upon, divorce has gained unprecedented acceptability in recent decades. While we have certainly done away with much of the hypocrisy of Rousseau's day, then, there is a similarity in that the power of marriage as an institution in adult life is unusually low by historical standards.

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[4] According to Brigitte Berger, the literature on the distinct character of modern family life stresses: "The centrality of children in the life of the modern nuclear family and an obsession with the methods to be used in their instruction" (118).

It is also the case that there are class differences in our time, but now – with the exception of the famous – the wealthier tend to be married for most of their adult lives, often only once. As indicated above, it is low income people today who are more likely not to remarry after a divorce or not marry at all, and accordingly their children grow up in a home disadvantaged further by not having two parents in it. Kay Hymowitz's *Marriage and Caste in America* is one account of how the acceptance of 'alternative' living arrangements and a turn away from the promotion of the traditional family only deepens the socioeconomic divide by reinforcing the status of lower-class children of single parentage and disincenting many from seeking out the marriage that, statistically speaking, would do the most to improve their children's fortunes.

Another pertinent difference between early modern families and ours is that rather than most marriages being entered into at a young age with little personal choice in the matter, people today are free or rather obliged to find their own spouse and are taking longer to do so. Contraception and acceptance of cohabitation has led to a pattern in which people have often had a few serious relationships, or trial marriages, not to mention less serious relations before getting married. Marriage itself is perhaps not directly undermined in this scenario, but as with Europe's aristocrats sex and marriage are not tied together. While some of the more progressive today think the institution to be irrational or outdated, others with considerable respect for marriage think they are not ready for it, or their prospective spouse is not, or they cannot afford it, and instead find their adult lives fully developing – even becoming parents – before they ever seriously contemplate undertaking this step. This greater amount of freedom, including that not to

marry, forces those of today to question the value of marriage more deeply than those who have only to think of how to behave in a marriage, taking the if, when, and whom as given.

Despite these important differences, then, there is a distinct similarity between our views towards marriage and those of Rousseau's aristocratic Europe. Both societies accept forms of extra-marital sexual relationships and many are of the opinion that sustaining a faithful and contented marriage is at best a common success, at worst a delusion or prison, and in any case not something we can reasonably expect of most people. An important and related similarity is that a considerable proportion of children in each society grow up without one or both parents. Besides a higher mortality rate for parents, Rousseau's Paris grappled with an increasing number of children in government-run and religious orphanages. Many of our children live with only one parent because of divorce or because their parents never married. Broadly speaking, our two societies grant men and women the freedom to put their personal interests and ambitions ahead of marriage and children in a way that is far from the norm throughout the rest of human history.

Far more than being a critic of a family situation with some resemblance to ours, however, Rousseau is worth studying as an early and powerful proponent of strong family bonds being compatible with natural freedom and the pursuit of happiness. He had many accurate concerns about the spiritual well-being of the emerging middle class, who he called the "bourgeois"; as a remedy to the dishonestly superficial lives he feared

they would lead, he made a thorough appeal to them to embrace freely the bonds of family not as a duty handed down from the past, but as the best way to secure their enduring happiness in the future. He sought to reinvent marriage in accordance with his discernment of both passion and consent as bedrock principles of human associations. To understand better the complexity of this appeal, in the next section we will unpack more fully the principles of modern political thought, because they and the "post-modern" reaction against them inform the ideologies at war in the family debates.

Modern Political Theory and Modern Family Debates

As mentioned above, feminists have produced most of the debate and theories about family issues within academia in contemporary times. There are certainly different feminist theories, and feminists who hold divergent views on all the salient issues, but for our purposes the generally accepted "three waves" of feminism will be used to outline the developments in feminist thought and the close parallels in social theory generally over the last century.

From the outset of the Enlightenment there have been advocates who sought to reduce gender differences and extend the burgeoning notions of freedom and equality for all men to include women. Botting provides a sample of such authors of the era (5), and it is well known how much sway the women who ran Paris' *salons* held in the intellectual circles of the Enlightenment in Paris. Mary Wollstonecraft is the best known of the early feminists; in the late 18th Century she argued that if women simply had an education as

good as men's they would not only be better wives and mothers, but prove to be quite capable of equalling men in most respects, including political judgment. While she did think that men and women tend to excel in different ways, in that she considered the expectation that women would aspire above all to being a good wife and homemaker to be grossly unjust in theory and in practice, she is an early theorist of a more strictly egalitarian, 'degendered' feminism. The "first wave" fought for basic legal equality of women with regard to property and politics, and peaked with the suffrage victories obtained a century ago. It coexisted with related struggles on behalf of the poor and racial minorities to achieve fundamental equality before the law and at the ballot box.

The "second wave" arose in the 1960's as a reaction to the fact that despite decades of essential equality from a legal standpoint, culturally speaking the gender roles were as strong as ever. A new generation of feminists began to take aim at cultural norms, using media as well as legislation to go beyond de jure equality and reduce the barriers that continued to keep women from matching men in the public sphere. As Rosemary Tong explains in *Feminist Thought, w*hile there were certainly theorists of difference who were either more radical or more conservative than the mainstream feminists of this era, the movement was largely directed at making it possible for women to have similar opportunities and similar lives to men (25-7, 204); that is, their goal was to expand the fruits of 'enlightened' modernity fully to women by reforming, but not overthrowing, Western social norms. This liberal movement found a unified voice through groups like the "National Organization for Women," and achieved considerable success through the 1970's with the passage of various supporting legislation (such as

Title IX of the education amendments in 1972). A general consensus was established in politics and the judiciary that rooting out discrimination against women was a worthy objective and that as with racial discrimination some proactive steps would be required to overcome cultural barriers.

The "third wave," or post-modern feminism, opposed mainstream liberal feminism for its uniformity, or perceived bias in favour of educated, white, heterosexual women desiring careers. Rather than seek to make an equal place for women in the modern world, they reject the Enlightenment ideals of rationalism, scientific conquest, capitalism, etc. as incorrigibly patriarchal, and reject any institutions that seek to provide norms of behaviour and identity: especially marriage (Banaszak, 45-69). Race and sexuality take a newfound prominence in this movement. Tong asserts that diversity is cherished above all by third-wave feminists, who believe that "difference is the way things are. Moreover, contradiction, including self-contradiction, is expected and even willingly welcomed by third-wave feminists" (285). Marrying together the insights of Marxists, Freudians, and existentialists, these and other post-modern theorists have made a radical and pervasive attack on the family, liberalism, and capitalism, overturning the terms and concepts of modern thought and self-understanding.

An example of this is Linda Nicholson's contribution to *Feminism and Families*, titled "The Myth of the Traditional Family," where she bemoans the various stigmas attached to households with a single parent, "alternating households," husbands taking on the role of homemaker, and homosexual couples, arguing that

> Such family types are no more 'alternative' to what preceded them than had been the 1950's type to its historical predecessors . . . the specific type of privileging we today give to the 'traditional' family – in either its 1950s or 1990s form – has morally dubious origins, being strongly associated with the post WWII period's racism and tendencies to marginalize poverty.(28)

While post-modern thought is for the most part directly influential only in academic and literary circles, the prominence of the desire to respect diversity in public debate about social issues, and an increased suspicion of institutions and long-established norms are indications of the extent to which post-modernism is much more than a scholarly fad. It has succeeded in undermining all kinds of institutions and norms, especially those related to the family and traditional moral judgments.

However successful this more extreme feminism has been, in most Western nations there is a widespread expectation of the promotion of tolerance for and equality of diverse family arrangements. In light of the opinion shared by the promoters of this position that the continuing advancement of individual freedoms over institutions and social prejudices is inherently good, this group is appropriately termed "progressivist." They have succeeded in removing from public discourse virtually any acknowledgment of any 'double-standards' for men and women, establishing the legal and for the most part social acceptance of women pursuing any career they wish and not being expected to set it aside to care for their family. Similar acceptance has been garnered for women's freedom to have sex and children outside of wedlock, or not have children at all, and divorce is easier to obtain now than at any time in history.

The relatively rapid achievement of these aims has met with a backlash from social conservatives and communitarians. Over the last three decades, there has been a prominent movement to encourage what are often called "Family Values" as the remedy to many of our social ills. Its proponents believe that the family plays an essential role in educating the young to be good people and in influencing adults to make responsible choices in life. Like Rousseau, supporters of family values believe in the institutional role of the family as a teacher of morals for children and a preserver of morals among adults, arguing that the wellbeing of children and society relies on the prevalence of, and indeed the prejudice in favour of, couples marrying and raising their children in a stable loving home. They believe that in order to maximize the health and happiness of the community and the individuals in it, a high esteem of marriage needs to be socially promoted and even legally protected. They would have men and women encouraged to marry and have children, and then to order their lives around commonly defined norms derived from their roles as spouses, parents, and citizens. Rousseau's advocacy of treating children's education seriously as an end in itself and his influential celebration of marriage as a romantically spiritual bond that can enhance our virtue and goodness directly contributed to the origin of this pro-family position in the wake of the more businesslike feudal model (Botting 5).

In contrast to the thrust of second wave, or mainstream liberal feminism, some of these traditionalists think it important to preserve differences in the spousal role of men and women. Historically, the husband's role is to be the chief breadwinner and protector of the house and community, while the wife's is to embrace the role of chief nurturer of

the children and manager of the household. She might work for a wage, just as he would contribute effort to the home when not at work, but she would do so only insofar as it is necessary to make ends meet, or if it is convenient because children have not come yet or are now grown. Ideally, however, in addition to giving parental care, women would be involved with community-building activities that enhance the moral character of society, and other activities worth doing for their own sake, as opposed to that which is done for a wage.

I will often refer to this perspective in the contemporary terms of "conservative" or "traditionalist", but it is crucial to recall that it was a substantial departure from the feudal model it replaced. Above all, the freedom of men and women to choose their spouse and the priority given to raising children make this "bourgeois family" very modern; despite the gender roles, one cannot fairly say that it is merely a continuation of the patriarchal oppression of pre-modern Europe. However liberal or progressive its origins may have been, however, its supporters today tend to have a more communitarian outlook than those who argue against this family model. They fear the advance of thoroughgoing individualism because it diminishes the bonding and ennobling powers of community and culture which they consider essential to giving people better lives. They believe that to make people healthy and happy they need more than freedom from barriers; rather, they need a certain amount of moulding through education and other social guidance. For all of his love of nature, freedom, and self-legislation, Rousseau agreed that people should be guided toward a certain model of family life.

Without question, traditional orders are often unfairly exploitative of groups like the poor, foreigners, and (but to much more varying degrees) women. Insofar as they are *traditional,* however, they are not only less chafed at, but categorically less offensive than in cases where one is merely exploited for a specific mortal's ease and aggrandizement. Traditions achieve what law strives for – they are followed not because of fear of punishment, or even of embarrassment, but because acting in accordance with them is simply who one is. To the extent that they rely on the enforcement of opinion, one cherishes the opinion holders as like oneself, as those who look on you as you would like to look at yourself when you get above your passions to judge your conduct 'objectively'. The cumulative character of it takes the sting off of the frowning glance of any individual – it is the common wisdom working through a fellow, and not some pretentious other's reaction. Besides the fact that the source of the wisdom is usually taken to be God, its mere existence through generations makes its subjects more disposed to feel themselves part of an order, one where their personal perspective is neither the center nor the ultimate standard. It is *humbling*, and the capacity to subject oneself to a law outside of oneself is the core of virtue. The inability to do so is a sign of vanity and while in some geniuses it leads to noble things, in most it merely engenders vice.

There are certainly reasons for a conservative like Burke vehemently to oppose Rousseau, but in many ways, and especially from a contemporary perspective, Rousseau holds some very conservative political principles. As a complement to his scepticism about rationality ruling people or cities, Rousseau thought we would increasingly become subject to the inconstant wills of individuals and the collective in the vacuum left by the

death of custom. Not only are we social creatures but political: in any shared enterprises there needs to be order, and because of our individuality (which features not just vanity but laziness) there needs to be an authority both to plan the order and enforce it. When the authority fell to men and institutions in a seemingly pre-ordained way, as a kind of toned down version of divine right, resignation is reasonable and one can peaceably get on with the non-political aspects of life. But when tradition is overthrown in the name of 'reason' and 'empowerment of the people' (which need not go together), everyone's opinion matters, and we are expected to know best how to do everything in our lives, both individually and collectively. There are bound to be disagreements, but besides the barest 'don't harm others' notions, we are left with nothing from which to appeal effectively in order to solve them. Not only do the old ways lose the power to command, but as the ideals of progressivism take hold, the old ways lose the power even to recommend. In this overturning of customs, individuals are left on their own to determine how to live. While this may seem quite promising in some respects, Rousseau believed that the institution of the family needed to be refounded in a stable way, preserving some of the traditional grounds which were conducive to its effectiveness.

To put the issue more broadly, under the contemporary influence of the enlightened progressives, in domestic or public relationships between people new patterns are not just allowed but *expected*, and we are each supposed to chart our path according to our own lights. Anything which looks too much like the old ways is viewed sceptically, and suspected of being just a result of unimaginative, cowardly prejudice; unique modes are praised because they are a sign of progress, regardless of the kinds of

motivations behind them or their likelihood of success. The criteria by which we are to guide ourselves in choosing a path, though, inevitably – and even intentionally – get lowered and more narrowly self serving. This is *inevitable* inasmuch as asking the majority of people to follow their inclination without much outside guidance is bound to reduce things in large part to pleasure and security, and *intentional* inasmuch as the leading prophets of the new age want to lower our collective sights in the name of security and prosperity, both for theoretical and practical reasons.

Why Rousseau is the Political Philosopher We Most Need to Study Further to Improve our Understanding of Modern Family Values

Having considered the history and interrelatedness of modern theory, politics, and the family, we will close out the introduction by establishing why this particular study of this particular writer is important and necessary. We will elaborate upon Rousseau's unique perspective on the modern family and consider the reasons his contributions have been neglected in academic and popular literature on modern family values.

From Machiavelli, Bacon, Hobbes, and Locke until today, 'practical' commentators have sought to end the rule of those who believed in the higher things because they inevitably clash with other idealists and all are argued to lose out when rational, material progress is dismantled in the superstitious wars that follow. Instead, these influential early modern writers felt that only a politics based on 'low, but solid' foundations and which elevates the rational over the traditional could succeed. Rousseau is a unique critic because he accepts the basic materialistic and democratic premises of

the modern social science which emerged in 17th Century England. Echoing Montesquieu, however, Rousseau laments that instead of political ends and debate being about virtue, politics in 'our' age is all about money (the notion that things have not changed is supported by the mantra for a winning Presidential campaign three centuries later: "It's the economy, stupid"). In a time of materialism, individualism, and progressivism, people are radically freed in terms of how they conduct their lives, and have many roles they can choose to move through along the way; this is directly opposed to 'traditional' times and places, where you get yourself used to your role as it is handed down, because it is your calling, your place.

In addition to the lack of reliable guides, Rousseau warns us that even when traditional ways are improved upon, change itself can be corrupting because there is a power in the reverence for old things that is useful for generating respect for law in general. In attacking the learned progressives who would like to constantly tinker with laws and mores to gain improvements he declares that

> The slightest change in customs, even if it is sometimes for the better, invariably proves prejudicial to morals. For customs are the morality of the people; and as soon as the people ceases to respect them, it is left with no rule but its passions, and no curb but the laws, which can sometimes keep the wicked in check, but can never make them good. Besides, once philosophy has taught the people to despise its customs, it soon learns the secret of eluding its laws. (*Preface to Narcissus*, 102-3)

This is Rousseau the 'revolutionary' at his most conservative, but helps us understand a key strain in his thought. He himself wishes to make reforms, especially regarding the

family, but for all his radicalism and polemics, we will see that most of his reforms are traditionally-minded ones which, while finding their root in our somewhat distant natures and natural relationships, also try to accommodate existing prejudices (at least when they are not too baleful, tangential, or decrepit). This will be perhaps most evident in *Julie*, where most of the second half consists of praise for a marriage she consented to strictly out of duty to her father, despite the vivid, enthralling depiction of romance which said respect supplants (both literally and literarily). While there is no question but that Rousseau wants romantic sentiment and future-oriented concerns to take on a much larger role than it did in this time of decaying notions of aristocratic privilege, by no means does he counsel open revolt against paternal influence.

Yet, as has been said, there is a reason why Rousseau has been attacked as a revolutionary. For all his recognition of its benefits, he does not simply support traditions as such; he is willing cast some aside and utterly transform others to bring about more harmony in the liberal age he saw dawning. As we will elaborate in the next chapter, Rousseau presents some radical challenges to the existing and emerging orders, and from seemingly very different perspectives.

Unlike Rousseau, many of the commentators arguing for family values (most are outside of academia) base themselves in a theologically-rooted perspective. They are often compelled to retreat to mystical dogmas such as "two in one flesh" or references to explicit commandments of God. Alternatively, they use the language of natural laws, which laws are usually insufficiently grounded in that at some deeper level they rely on

some mysterious divine sanction. Insofar as this is the case they flounder in their attempts to persuade nonbelievers, even if it is here that they best persuade those who share the same faith. Like them, Rousseau is greatly concerned with the loss of shared morals and he enhances his justification for the family in a context of deism as well as natural law. Unlike many of them, though, he also celebrates the individualist impulse, refuses to accept biblical revelation as a standard, and believes that we do not have a fixed nature. We will attempt throughout this work to establish that Rousseau's teaching on the value of a strong attachment to family is effective, reasonable, comprehensive, and attractive on an individual level in ways many of our commentators would profit from imitating.

This examination of Rousseau's teaching about 'family values' will touch upon the effects of stable, caring relationships on the children, but will focus primarily on its effects on adults. Not only do broken homes correlate with more crime, drug use, and unwanted pregnancy in teens, but not being married correlates with similar phenomena in adults, especially the more naturally unruly men. Unattached younger men are far more likely to be involved in crime than any other adults, and divorced men are more prone to suicide. Without strong family bonds, mass, liberal, commercial society makes it quite easy for people to become anonymous, socially detached, and underdeveloped in terms of morality and responsibility. Not only does this point away from law-abidingness, it reduces the likelihood of people being happy in their social relationships. The virtues one must develop to function well in a household are many of the same virtues that lead one to be a responsible member of society. We will see that these themes are all

addressed by Rousseau much more thoroughly than we have the opportunity to hear in the polarized and fragmented discussions of these issues today.

Despite this claim, in the scholarly attention that *is* given to forestalling the perceived decline of the family (Kass, Himmelfarb, Elshtain, Popenoe, Gairdner, etc.) there is scarce mention of Rousseau, despite the great influence his argument for the legitimacy of and need for strong family bonds in the modern age had, especially in the 19th Century. Widely recognized for his impact on the Romantic movement, few commentators investigate the passionate and powerful effort Rousseau mounted to use the power of romantic love to solidify a stable, child-centered family, which he thought could in turn preserve virtue and authenticity in the face of the pressures of individualistic, relativistic, 'bourgeois' society. This is in part because Rousseau champions controversial views across and outside the spectrum of what today we consider bounded by the "right" and "left." In addition to the contributions to the 'family values' camp being outlined here, anarchist, communist, fascist, unionist, religious, atheist, and conservationist groups comprise a disparate sample of those who could claim inspiration from Rousseau. Accordingly, even when his thought is not misunderstood a writer with any partisanship is reluctant to rely upon him.

More often, however, he is dismissed from consideration because too much emphasis is placed on one of these diverse aspects of his thought. One otherwise very lucid commentator, for example, lumps Rousseau into an 'anti-family' group of thinkers with Plato and Marx based on his elevation of citizenship over family in the just regime

of the *Social Contract* (Gairdner). In stark contrast, Brigitte Berger condemns the "Rousseauian vision of human freedom which underlies all the demands of the current women's liberation movement" (quoted in Schwartz, 2). Despite these proto-Marxist and radically individualistic strains in his thought, he manages to still be an enemy of progressive feminists because he turns differences between men and women into the foundation of very different roles for husbands and wives (Susan Okin and Penny Weiss are two of the more objective representatives of this position).

The lack of reliance upon Rousseau in the family literature is certainly attributable in part to his fame for writing 'paradoxically'. He makes dramatic and enigmatic statements such as "man is born free, but is everywhere in chains" and that people need to be "forced to be free." But more than that, and as the references just mentioned indicate, across his oeuvre he praises seemingly irreconcilable notions such as his defence of primitive humans on the one hand and promotion of radically "denatured" Spartan-like citizenship on the other. Added complexity arises when comparing his public writing with his autobiographies and personal life. He vehemently argues against books, cosmopolitanism, and contemplation in favour of a life kept busy with practical work, devotion to family and country, and engagement with one's community. Yet he tells us in his extensive autobiographical writings that he was devoted above all to solitary contemplation, interrupted only occasionally by attempts to write books that could shape mankind for the better. He sought out a life of the mind with such determination that he withdrew from society, and refused to have any family beyond the

companionship of the illiterate laundress he cohabitated with for twenty-three years before marrying.[5]

While mainstream authors neglect to use Rousseau, there has been work done in academia on Rousseau's family teachings. Most recently, Eileen Hunt Botting's *Family Feuds* provides a thoughtful account of Rousseau's promotion of the rural family as the essential foundation of a healthy republic. Going beyond the similarly themed work by Nicole Fermon, *Domesticating Passions: Rousseau, Woman, and Nation*, she interestingly weaves together the *Social Contract* and *Constitutional Project for Corsica* with *Julie* and *Emile*. She also draws out interesting parallels between Rousseau and Burke, especially with the fundamental role Burke saw for the family as the "little platoon" in which one's character and sociability are formed. Wollstonecraft is the heroine of her book, however; accordingly, her presentations of Rousseau and Burke are geared towards contrasting them – and also finding a surprising degree of similarity – with Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Man* and *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. While she capably outlines the features of Rousseau's model of the domestic empress, she sides with Wollstonecraft's equality of sameness from the outset and accordingly fails to treat Rousseau's gendered version seriously. Similarly, Penny Weiss critiques Rousseau on the basis of not granting wives the same equality as he gives the husband as a citizen. Throughout our work we will elaborate upon the case Rousseau makes for refusing to treat the domestic partnership as equivalent to a political one.

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[5] Rousseau weakly suggests that the laws of France disqualified him from marrying on religious grounds, but never refutes his statement in the *Confessions* that he informed her at the beginning of their relationship that he would never marry her. Readers disposed to discredit Rousseau as an authority due to his personal example should skip ahead to the section on Rousseau's personal life in chapter four.

An author who takes Rousseau's considerations regarding the differences between men and women very seriously is Joel Schwartz, author of *The Sexual Politics of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*. Schwartz comprehensively details the interdependence in Rousseau's conception of marital relations, cataloguing the strengths and weaknesses of social men and women and explaining how the needs and desires of each make this a political relationship. Schwartz puts a great deal of weight on the individualistic impulse guiding part one of the *Second Discourse*, the autobiographical works, and others, to emphasize the equivocal character of marriage in Rousseau's larger system of thought. His observations are valuable for rounding out Rousseau's understanding of the tensions between individualism, family, and community, but his focus on these tensions and related equivocations fails to do justice to the potential utility and rhetorical intention of Rousseau's family teaching.

One difference my analysis has with the vast majority of scholars who promote the family is that I do not begin from any scripturally-based or even teleological conception of how humans should live. As with Rousseau, my sole criterion is human happiness, and I assume that in different times and places much different ways of life may be most conducive to it. Most specifically, I am open to the possibility that the family may not always be a core institution required for the well-being of society. That said, I have a great deal of trouble imagining any future society that can successfully leave it behind. Rather, it seems clear to me that today, as in Rousseau's time, there are misguided ideologies and a thoughtless political drift that are undermining the family

without a conception of how the 'freedom' of the future individuals will concretely contribute to their happiness. Though the conservative commentators seem to be having some successes, at least in America, where there is an enduring conservative presence in government, it is clear that the religious, 'old-fashioned', and acerbic tone of their discussion limits its effectiveness.

Though I will be discussing some 'old-fashioned' topics (like devotion, chastity, responsibility, and virtue) I hope to address more effectively the concerns of my contemporaries, who, like myself, agree that families are a good thing for society, but are unsure if a life committed to one is the best thing for them. I also hope to contribute to a better understanding of the principles which underlie the importance of family so as to improve our debates and decisions about the character of family in our generation. Regardless of how far I get in these aims, I am confident that returning to the analysis provided by the first major theoretical supporter of the modern family will help shed valuable light on our situation and the paths ahead.

Summary of the Work

Chapter One

In chapter one, I show the remarkable astuteness with which Rousseau predicted many of today's problems, especially those related to materialism and the breakdown of community. Much of the chapter explains why Rousseau opposes the Enlightenment, especially the principles of rationality and individuality that still reign today. I then

describe his theory of the sentiment of existence and how it sets a framework for a return to lives made happier and more meaningful either because they are more moral or more psychically healthy. His prescriptions can be seen to fall under two opposed categories: the fully 'denatured' patriotic life in a free and equal republic, or a more natural life which takes its bearings from human sentiments and maintains its healthiness through its withdrawal from corrupted political and civil life. In the non-political category, Rousseau variously proposes the adoption of a Christian-influenced natural religion or a life of contemplation (shared with friends if possible), but most of all he exhorts bourgeois man to dedicate his heart to his home, and fully indulge himself in his love for his spouse and children.

Chapter Two

Given that modern man cannot look upon his interdependent fellow citizens as brothers, most of all Rousseau supported the idea that he devote himself to the group that he cannot help but think of as family: his family. In chapter two I explain why the family is so conducive to happiness according to Rousseau's understanding of our natures, including his conception of it as facilitating the non-alienating extension of one's sentiment of existence.

I begin by examining Rousseau's account of the naturalness of the family in the *Second Discourse* and *Essay on the Origin of Languages*. Although he is famous for his depiction of the solitary savage in the former, we are struck by the fact that the latter

begins with roaming nuclear families and no mention is made of any previous condition. I analyze some of the complexities of Rousseau's treatment of this issue, but the main conclusion is that while men and women do not strictly speaking *need* each other, it is by no means against their natures to live in a family; rather they are inclined to it, and it generally serves them well. This inclination is supported both by the natural affection they quickly develop for each other, and that which they instantly develop for children – especially, but not only, in the case of the mother. These affections, as well as the more advanced form of love that emerges, are the basis from which all our subsequent socialization can be understood. The full development of the family augments our happiness, as does the growth of primitive society: all this is part of the state of nature.

By clarifying these natural developments, we are well prepared to turn to an analysis of why Rousseau thinks family-based community life is most in accordance with our nature, and why people should be encouraged to place their family at the center of their lives in light of the socializing effects and psychological benefits it can provide. A helpful application of Rousseau's thoughts on the importance of family values for society is in his *Letter to d'Alembert on the Theatre*, written between the *Second Discourse* and *Julie*. Our analysis of this work sheds light on Rousseau's understanding of how reinforcing gender expectations and sexual modesty is legitimate and can counteract the moral dangers in the advance of modernity.

We will also outline some of the important advantages and possibilities of married life presented in the remarkable picture Rousseau presents of Clarens, the small Swiss

estate where Julie lives with her husband Wolmar. Though the fact that the marriage was arranged forms a cloud that turns out never to have quite dispersed, it also brings into starker relief the benefits of marriage apart from romantic love. The effect that marriage to Julie has on the passionless, atheistic, rationalistic husband is meant to charm the most 'enlightened' of moderns. Despite his belief in virtue simply for what it provides, he fully devotes himself to his estate and life with his wife and children there becomes the source of all his happiness. Rousseau, in his second preface, or "Conversation about Novels," makes clear the effect he intends this depiction to have:

> I like to picture a husband and wife reading this collection together, finding in it a source of renewed courage for their common labors, and perhaps new perspectives to make them useful. How could they behold this tableau of a happy couple without wanting to imitate such an attractive model? How will they be stirred by the charm of conjugal union, even in the absence of love's charm, without their own union being reconfirmed and strengthened? (J 15)

These letters are also replete with references to the effect of marriage on virtue. Drawing on the experience of the very passionate Julie, who from the moment she is married finds an unexpected mastery over the forbidden but undying love she has for St. Preux, we will begin to see why Rousseau believes that "the attraction of domestic life is the best counter-poison for bad morals" (E 46).

Chapter Three

While in chapter two the intention is to defend the family on the larger scale as the socializing institution best suited to our natural needs, this chapter looks at the family

from the perspective of a boy with ordinary faculties but a strong desire to find true happiness. We explore the path of love and marriage as not only good public policy, but as that which elevates and satisfies our deepest longings. Whereas the last chapter looked to the many benefits of committed domestic partnership for men and women and their community, this chapter is about the satisfactions of love for human beings with imaginations and wonder. We will engage in a detailed analysis of how Rousseau educates Emile to be very independent but at the same time convinced that his happiness lies in a life dedicated to his wife and children. This is achieved not by the kind of abstracted meta-analysis of what is good for society presented in the previous chapter, but by an education that makes one care for virtue, respect the spirituality in sexuality, and see an order to the universe which links that which has public utility to that which is individually fulfilling.

Rousseau thought the character of romantic love could be an even more solid basis than mere affection and interest in order to make us committed to and fulfilled by family bonds. Charming as Wolmar and Julie's lives are, Julie's deathbed confession of love for St. Preux shows that despite all the harmony and charm in her marriage she felt the lack of something important. In the education of Emile, however much he might be suited to married life and it to him, he is clearly led into it by the means of a lofty, romantic love. It is no accident that Rousseau is thought by many to have founded 'romanticism': these books and the *Confessions* contain a remarkably thorough account of even the smallest of feathers on the wings of Eros. Few theorists put as much emphasis on the power of our imaginations and the need for humans to satisfy deeper

longings than simply security, prosperity, and a sense of freedom. In this chapter I argue that as an alternative to the corrupting channel of commercial ambition, Rousseau thought that the realm of love was a healthier avenue for the natural longings of modern man. While he was well aware of the dangers of its extremes, he also powerfully demonstrates the dangers that the erotic deadening of increasingly atheistic, hedonistic, individualistic people would have for the broader prospects of democratic society.

This chapter analyzes almost exclusively the material from books four and five of *Emile*. Rousseau's teaching on love entails a discussion of the link between moral education and sex education, as well as the significance of puberty for religion and the need for religion to help direct sexuality without distorting it. We also take up his case for the necessity of marriages being chosen by the spouses, and elaborate upon his defence of differentiating the roles and behaviours of men and women.

Chapter Four

Despite Rousseau's powerful style, no doubt many of today's youth (and tomorrow's parents), even after shedding a tear at Julie's deathbed, would still be profoundly sceptical about the chances and even the desirability of a life-long partnership. One reason is that the ethos of personal freedom we have proudly developed is considered to be at odds with the bondage and expectations of entering into marriage. Romantic love is still widely cherished, but many also consider it too transient to be relied upon for long-term happiness. Its fleeting character actually turns many supporters

of family values against it, and against Rousseau for his seductive presentation of it. Rousseau himself, however, was very much alive to these concerns. In this chapter I take up Rousseau's own critique of romantic love, and his attempt to reconcile the tension between the great commitment required by marriage and the desire for individual freedom that he possessed as strongly as anyone today.

Certainly Rousseau is no straightforward polemicist for love at all costs, or even for the necessity of committing oneself to family life. His personal life stands out in this regard: he 'cohabitated' with a sweet but illiterate and simple woman for decades before marrying her in old age, and also put all the children they had into orphanages. This kind of inability to live up to one's ideals would hardly be the first example among public moralizers, but what makes Rousseau unique is the extent to which he engages with this tension, and overcomes it inasmuch as he presents an understanding of human nature and society in which both paths are legitimated. By addressing the major critiques of the family using Rousseau's own arguments, we will demonstrate not only that his analysis of the issue is extremely comprehensive, but that it sheds more light on the unity of his thought.

Chapter One
Rousseau's Analysis of Modernity and Happiness

To take seriously the assertion that Rousseau's teaching on family life can make us happier, it is sensible to begin with an analysis of what he thinks happiness is and what the barriers are to our attainment of it. For if we are not persuaded by his conception of the problem or the goal it would hardly seem urgent to read his account of the importance of family as the solution. In this chapter, I will lay the groundwork for an understanding of the importance of the family in Rousseau's teaching by elaborating what he thinks a flourishing human is, the tensions that must be overcome in civil society generally, and the peculiar barriers we face in modern, liberal, commercial – or *bourgeois* – society. Above all, I hope to show that his penetrating insights into the threat that egalitarian individualism poses to our well-being are for the most part as relevant as ever, if not more so, and that his prescription for wholehearted devotion to one's family bonds not only has not expired, but has a couple of centuries of clinical trials to support it.

We will begin with a brief outline of Rousseau's unique analysis of what constitutes happiness, showing that a flexible but coherent notion of freedom and inner unity is shared by all the different lives Rousseau considers happy. To help prepare the reader to grasp his teaching properly, though, we will elaborate upon Rousseau's attacks on our modern outlook before filling out his alternative understanding later in the chapter. We will first consider the more conservative and communitarian side of Rousseau's critique of the rationalism and individualism of the Enlightenment, to understand better

the prominence he insists that sentiment has in our existence and that community has in our well-being and capacity for virtue. We will then turn to the more radically 'left-wing' anti-bourgeois attack and his belief in the natural goodness of man to understand his critique of Lockean commercialism and the peculiarly insidious character of the modern 'pursuit of happiness'. Having made more clear what the flaws in the general modern outlook are, we will be in a better position to elaborate upon the concepts of the sentiment of existence and independence as the fundamental elements of happiness. We will close by outlining how all the themes in this chapter are reconciled in Rousseau's depiction of a true citizen.

Unity and Freedom: The Consistent Core in Rousseau's "Radicalism"

Rousseau writes in praise of ways of life that might easily appear to be utterly incompatible. The paradigmatic opposition is that between the citizen and the solitary. The first feels so utterly subsumed under the duties and laws (or general will) of his sovereign state that his existence, identity, and happiness are entwined to the utmost with that of his fellow citizens; the solitary's life is utterly independent of all human things but those which lie within him. Rousseau defends these radically different lives as happy because each is unified and free. The true polity unites our social, religious, and erotic longings within a stable and genuine community within which we feel whole. It is stable because of the sacredly trenchant character of custom and law which govern it, and genuine because of the sincerity and depth of the shared existence of the members. These citizens are entirely free insofar as they align their wills with the law; unlike most modern

theorists, who sought merely to make conflict manageable, Rousseau believed that good laws with good education could virtually eliminate conflict. As a solitary, one is more obviously unified and free. Rather than finding a common basis upon which to unite with others, however, the solitary finds unity by divorcing himself from all social ties, and finding wholeness within, or in his unique relationship with the world.

These alternative models are presented as a contrast to the *bourgeois*: the small-minded, self-centered, dependent yet anonymous product of the 'modern' age. The bourgeois is neither free nor unified. Rousseau argues that we have had our natural freedom and self-concern mostly replaced by a very artificial, unhealthy vanity, or *amour-propre*, rendering us:

> double men, always appearing to relate everything to others and never relating anything except to (our)selves alone....Swept along in contrary routes by nature and by men, forced to divide ourselves between these different impulses, we follow a composite impulse which leads us to neither one goal nor another. Thus, in conflict and floating during the whole course of our life, we end it without having been able to put ourselves in harmony with ourselves and without having been good either for ourselves or for others. (E 41)

Fuelled by imagination, *amour-propre* typically creates a fictional world that corresponds more to what people would like us to be, and what we would like to be in their eyes, than what is natural to us. For perspectives which take nature to be flawed, this creation of culture or civilization beneficially, even redemptively alters our world. We will see that in the example of the citizen, and to a considerable extent in all civilized lives including the dedicated spouse, Rousseau agrees that the artificial addition of civilized concerns

can be a notable improvement. Far too often, however, when we go beyond nature we do worse: Rousseau has a unique mistrust of society and "progress." Led chiefly by our unsocial ambitions, we generate conditions where we shrink or split our existence around those we are dependent on but still regard as enemies. Insincerity eats away at us tainting any of the satisfactions we obtain. It will still be the case that the family – and indeed any human life – will involve illusion, or creation, but as we will see with the example of the citizen, and then next chapter in the family, there are ways Rousseau wants to teach us to make this power act in accordance with nature, or more specifically the nature of human happiness and society.

Rousseau believes in the goodness of nature. This does not mean that we are morally impressive by nature, but that there is not in our origins much strife or misery: our natural condition was not a war, but it was beastly. Rousseau admits that selfishness is natural, but by nature our love of ourselves is benign to others and good for us because we are independent and have little trouble tending to the few desires and needs we have. Our independence in nature makes us strong. Strength, according to Rousseau, is relative, and determined by the degree to which our powers exceed our needs. While on the one hand modern society seems to provide its members with life's essentials far more reliably than in other times, we have long since lost the ability to provide for ourselves, and in so doing we are weaker – at least as individuals. Becoming rich is not the same as being strong, for rather than making you self-sufficient, it creates dependence on guards as well as servants (which goes a considerable way towards describing our dependence on the political order). One need only consider the effects of a one-day, or one-week,

"power outage" on our lives to see how powerless we can easily become – which is to say how powerless we have become. In his description of how wealth and property have made slaves and enemies of us all, he charges:

> having formerly been free and independent, behold man, due to a multitude of new needs, subjected so to speak to all of nature and especially his fellow men, whose slave he becomes in a sense even in becoming their master; rich, he needs their services, poor, he needs their help; and mediocrity cannot enable him to do without them...in a word, competition and rivalry on the one hand, opposition of interest on the other, and always the hidden desire to profit at the expense of others. (SD 156)

Rousseau uses two terms which can both translate into self-love to describe this difference: *amour de soi* is the healthy, original form of it and *amour-propre* is the civilized form. *Amour-propre* is appropriately a reflexive formulation: it is informed by the image we believe we project in society. This kind of vanity is highly dependent upon the way our appearance is judged by others, and inasmuch as our society does not judge soundly, it is necessarily tainted.

By tracing all our vices to vanity, and describing our natural state as that which existed before vanity arose, Rousseau is able to redeem us without turning to the church, schools, or state for large-scale help, as most alternative understandings do. In fact, the remedies proposed by Christianity, Plato, or Hobbes all turn out to be closer to the crux of the problem: each relies on a mix of abstract thinking and instituted authority[6] – the main developments which brought our corruption upon us. By making vanity a

[6] The latter is arguably not the case with Plato inasmuch as his ideal rulers are natural and not 'instituted'.

modification of otherwise praiseworthy self-love, instead of a separate element within us (*thumos*, or sinfulness) Rousseau can also maintain that we are by nature not only good but unified, and that it is the distortion of our self-love caused by the 'progress' of civilization that renders us miserably torn, not some inevitable element of our individual or even collective natures.

In certain respects, the extreme models of the true citizen and the solitary coincide with the warring camps in our family debates discussed in the Introduction. Communitarians and traditionalists, like the citizen, cherish their bonds to the broader community. They believe that the maintenance of various and wide-ranging standards of conduct is an important educative role that any civilization worth the name must embrace. Individualists are obviously attracted to the more radical notion of freedom embraced in Rousseau's defence of solitariness, and his attack on the hypocrisy and oppression in most social and political authority from which it emerges. Rousseau presents these alternatives in their extreme forms to properly contrast them with the unhappy bourgeois, who is set apart above all because he lacks the unity of either the citizen or solitary. He is told he is free to pursue his happiness selfishly, but finds himself in need of the assistance and good opinion of a multitude who have been encouraged to be just as selfish as he. His economic and social dependence is devoid of the sweet bonds of love or sincere commitment to an ennobling community that can make freedom worth giving up. He is constantly forced to care about the respect of people he neither respects nor otherwise cares about. The citizen genuinely cares for and respects those in his community; the solitary is freed from any such cares.

Acknowledging the rarity of either the noble citizen or happy solitary, in most of his writings Rousseau encourages us to cultivate and embrace a position that combines the two: devoted parent and spouse. The family, unlike the city, has strong natural bonds which impel us to embrace responsibilities towards each other, and these bonds in turn reduce the (also natural) pull of individualism that detracts from any true feeling of community. In families, most notably in the relationship between parents and children, we see repeated throughout history the phenomenon of people freely sacrificing for a common good, which phenomenon all legislators have endeavoured to instil across whole societies. While there is a kind of parallel between the family member and the citizen, then, the family is also so small that insofar as it is capable of being self-sufficient it can achieve a substantial degree of solitariness in the sense of healthy isolation for its members as well. When we are happy in our family setting, we can ignore the pressures of vanity, profit, and dependence in the outside world that the solitary shuns and which threaten the bourgeois. Rousseau's justification for commitment to the family lies in his contention that happiness is found in the unified extension of the sentiment of our existence, and in the argument developed throughout his works that our natures are constituted such that the best hope most of us have to achieve the delicate blend of independence, sincerity, and sociality is to be dedicated to family life, preferably located in a rural or other small community. In this chapter I will explain the basic features of Rousseau's penetrating and influential account of what the typical modern barriers to attaining happiness are (such as rationalism, alienating interdependence, and vanity), and then return to his account of what happiness requires. I will close by outlining how his

conception of family values emerges from a profound analysis of the tensions between our natures and modern society and why it is the practical alternative to true citizenship.

The Reasoning Behind Rousseau's "Right-Wing" Rhetoric and Attack on Rationalistic Individualism

Rousseau is by no means a typical political theorist. He writes with a more passionately polemical style than one normally finds, and in addition to a few more formal treatises he composed plays, novels, and autobiographical work that not only succeeded as entertainment but served to educate readers and elaborate his teaching. In this section we will show how Rousseau's opposition to the Enlightenment was not only political, but epistemological and pedagogical. Understanding this prepares the path not only to grasping his conception of happiness and support of the family, but his manner of persuading his audience to pursue family bonds as the best means to happiness.

Rousseau's teaching is directed against the prevailing unhappiness he felt was sweeping across Europe. This mood arose out of a loss of a sense of community, and the attendant focus on individuality without sufficient grounds for fulfillment or direction. Under the reign of the church, Christianity had supplanted classical citizenship, and the existence of clerical authorities continued to be a practical and theoretical barrier to national self-government. Rousseau criticizes in various ways the effects of this hegemony, especially regarding the shortcomings of its emphasis on otherworldliness and the inherent practical tendency towards corruption in any system where the elites hold authority over the fate of people's eternal souls. Insofar as religion contributes to the

morals and spirituality of a people, however, he praises it. He makes clear in the "Profession of Faith" in *Emile* and elsewhere that he thought irreligiosity had a pernicious effect on morals and character. As has been more or less the case since then, religion in his time was in decline, as were the monarchies that had for the most part entwined themselves with it in one way or another. He saw that the logical consequence of these related phenomenon was that very little would hold modernized communities together but economics and laws which did little more than preserve property rights.

Accordingly, the period he found himself in was by almost any measure a turning point from the life of inherited duty prescribed by the hegemonies of Monarchy and Church to one where people were expected to decide for themselves what was moral and good in life and determine how to pursue it. Whereas most celebrate the remarkable advancement of individual freedom in modernity, even in concepts shaped by Rousseau himself, he often wrote of the dangers he foresaw in the coming centuries. As will be elaborated below, he diagnoses vanity as the central cause of our unhappiness; individualism is accordingly especially invidious inasmuch as it does not generate independence, but unleashes vanity from the constraints of tradition and community-mindedness. As discussed in the last chapter, traditions not only place all individuals under their shadow so that none can shine too brightly, but in their cumulative effect they prescribe and codify a way of life, habits or mores that give guidance and boundaries for us in choosing among the seemingly infinite variety of lifestyles one could partake of in a single lifetime. We are naturally excited by the prospect of shaking off the duties – indeed all expectations – placed upon us by authorities we do not feel close to or trust.

Rousseau saw plainly, however, that popular opinion would continue to buffet us so long as we were attached to anything public; moreover, this opinion would not necessarily become better guided by being unhinged from tradition. Family values are a case in point: Rousseau attacks many of the traditional norms around marriage and children, but also demonstrates that as practices were coming to be determined by the innovations of fashionable and self-centered opinion, they were in important ways getting even worse. He is often progressive and conservative; a task of this chapter will be to persuade that it is less Rousseau's inconsistencies than ours which makes him appear to many to be overly paradoxical. We will begin by unpacking his teaching on the tendency of reason and individualism to promote vanity and degrade happiness by undermining community, healthy sentiments, and virtue.

The hope which characterized the Enlightenment is that reason will rule for the common good once it is unshackled and supplants the superstitions of the past. Rousseau in all his books emphasizes the need to be wary of the necessary shortcomings of reason in matters political as well as moral, metaphysical, academic, literary, pedagogic, etc. He rose to fame with his attack on the intellectual class in his *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences*, where he made an award-winning argument that not only is science likely to undermine the virtue and character that keeps societies good, but science requires leisure, which in turn requires luxury, and luxury necessarily corrupts. Having chastened the men of letters as well as their patrons, he then made them his enemies when he showed them how serious he was by filling out the principles of his largely anti-civilization

perspective in the *Discourse on Inequality* ... and summarily moving out of Paris to the woods![7] After fleeing urban life, he wrote works that, among other things: explained the origin of language, or *logos*, in love and music; praised romantic love and domestic bliss as the antidote to the illnesses inherent in aristocratic *and* bourgeois life; and, in his masterpiece *Emile*, argued that the key to a successful education was to keep a child isolated from society, especially its books. It is necessary to explore the foundations of this great thinker's hostility to reason and the rule of rationality, for it is crucial to being able to grasp his praise of love and family as well as his conceptions of virtue and happiness.

Rousseau teaches that we are passionate creatures more than rational ones, that our love of self has primacy over our love of truth, and that love of virtue is almost always worth far more than knowledge of it. He also questions (in his own voice but perhaps most movingly through the Savoyard Vicar) whether there even are any authoritative moral truths that can be found solely by reason; that is, without the heart or conscience – fuelled by *some* supra-rational element within us – being the ultimate judge. Alongside these pious notions sit observations regarding the similarity between man and the other animals, and an emphasis on the impact of sensations on us and the manner in which these combine with experience and instinct: a materialistic analysis which makes us humbly question in a radically different way our notions of reason-based morality.

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[7] To be more accurate, he first moved to an old groundskeeper's lodgings on a large estate owned by an acquaintance who became one of his first patrons, Mme. D'Epinay. He regularly joined her evening company, which included many leading Enlightenment figures, but not without mixed feelings, according to his *Confessions*.

We will consider more fully in the next chapter his famous reconsideration of what in fact natural man would look like and the implications that his more pacific and inherently contented version have for any who seek to use human nature as guiding principle for political theory. What is pertinent here is that in his characterization of our natures, our unique intelligence is a late addition. While its emergence certainly has a profound effect on us, our natures were largely fashioned before our rational capacities evolved. While Rousseau is hardly the first thinker to suggest that the average person is guided by passions which are not produced or adequately directed by their reason, he goes much farther than most in defending the non-rational aspects of human life; specifically, he presents a model of human happiness which is threatened – often fatally – by too much reasoning.

Like Hobbes, Rousseau thinks reason is ultimately a tool for the aid of feeling (though with conscience it would seem to be a divine one); also like Hobbes – but perhaps more than any great thinker, and from his *First Discourse* onward – he is severely sceptical of the tool's usage in the hands of mortals, proclaiming that its chief beneficial use is in undoing all that millennia of its misuse has done to our internal and social constitutions. He repeatedly condemns books and their authors for their corrosive effects on the souls of their readers, who write to shine in literary circles as opposed to improving the lives of their fellow citizens. "Virtue" is the "sublime science of simple souls," he declared in his first writing, avidly maintaining that 'knowledge' – i.e. 'Enlightenment' – does not equal happiness: on the contrary it is for the vast, vast majority the chief obstacle. He devoted his last days to elaborating in *The Reveries of the*

Solitary Walker how daydreams and an absence of constraint let him immerse himself in his sentiment of existence, and how this alone – not the pursuit or attainment of wisdom – made him as happy as he had ever been. Reason is not the bright sunlight that will lead us out of our lowly condition but the torch which has burned our beards after leading us down into ugly, dark, holes. It has left us despairingly lost much more than it has given us helpful light.

Whereas for theologians and some leading philosophers the unruly passions in us are usually seen as proof of original sin or desire at war with reason – i.e. constitutional flaws in us that can only be overcome through the most extreme piety or wisdom (if at all), Rousseau instead attributes the cause to developments forced upon us by the unnatural effects of society. In this he resembles Hobbes, in that both consider selfishness natural and not evil – but unlike Hobbes he does not consider this selfishness across the species (unaided by the rule of reason) to result in an evil condition. Whereas Hobbes saw life as characterized above all by desire, Rousseau sees wholeness at the core – natural desires are extremely few since "the only goods he knows in the universe are nourishment, a female, and repose" (SD 116). Human adaptability, to speak simply, means that there is not a general condition of scarcity but plenty.

Rousseau acknowledges that there will be occasions where one might take the food or shelter of a weaker fellow rather than do the work himself, but posits that this does not result in war because without vanity the weaker will simply find more elsewhere, and not plot the prideful revenges and diffident pre-emptive strikes that define

Hobbes' natural condition. There is no lust for glory or resentment in Rousseau's original condition. The loser sees nothing but a random act – as if the wind had blown his food over a cliff (SD note (o)). There is no maliciousness in the transaction because before the conception of reputation, which is the object of vanity, the only thing that affects our actions aimed at self-preservation is 'natural' pity, which is a repugnance to see or hear suffering in others. The self-love which propels us to forestall our own suffering is also originally tempered by a lack of foresight, or a general ignorance, reflected and protected by an extremely crude, essentially domestic language. We might add Rousseau's assertion that humans are incredibly lazy to round out his drastic revision of Hobbes' desiring, fearful, plotting natural man. And solitariness – Rousseau's most radical (but as we will see perhaps also his most tentative) feature of our natural condition – ensures that we have no dependence on another often-scarce commodity: the positive goodwill of others. We will explore in detail how the family remains natural so long as it remains 'solitary' in chapter two.

Rousseau de-emphasizing the significance of reason in our natural constitution has various implications upon his political outlook and rhetorical style. Instead of widespread knowledge combined with the freedom to make one's own opinions and publicly challenge prevailing beliefs being the means to public felicity, Rousseau argues that it is the general character of the passions that are produced by a way of thinking – judged in terms of happiness, or sentiment – that decides the worth of the way of thinking, and not the 'truthfulness' of it.[8] To illustrate this point, consider the following

[8] After the hostile 'Frenchman' of his *Dialogues* overcomes his prejudices, he says:

defence of love's irrationality in *Emile*: "In love everything is only illusion. I admit it. But what is real are the sentiments for the truly beautiful with which love animates us...Does the lover any the less sacrifice all of his low sentiments to this imaginary model?" (391). While this is an extreme example that Rousseau later qualifies, he believes that things like taste and ideals are essential guides to good conduct, and can never be reduced to the level of rationality without their power being compromised. Reason has limited authority in our imagination and the spiritual elements which guide our will, which means that it cannot be the standard we rely on.

The fallibility of reason is also problematic because it means that we will come to many different opinions if left to make them on our own. From a political perspective, it is often more important that opinions be held in common than that they be close to the truth, or open to improvement. The *First Discourse* critiqued the 'advancement of arts and letters' because this advancement necessarily brought with it a decline in the unity of a community and the respect for the simple virtues upon which a harmonious society relies. The flaws in the principles upon which the authority of most if not all political structures are based are covered over by pieties of one sort or another, and so the widespread celebration of rational enquiry into the legitimacy of social opinions degrades social cohesion. Only in the most oppressive cases – those calling for a revolution – does Rousseau think the advancement of rational scepticism can be beneficial.

In order to judge the true goal of these books, I didn't apply myself to picking apart a few scattered sentences here and there; but rather consulting myself both during these readings and as I finished them, I examined as you desired the dispositions of soul into which they placed and left me, judging as you do that it was the best means to penetrate through to that of the Author when he wrote them and the effect he proposed to produce. I don't need to tell you that in place of all the bad intentions that had been attributed to him, I found only a doctrine that was as healthy as it was simple, which without Epicureanism and cant was directed only to the happiness of the human race. (O.C. 1.929-30; D 209)

Clifford Orwin helpfully encapsulates the challenge to public enlightenment in this position when he concludes that:

> If in every society not reason but opinion will reign, it follows that we must not judge the reigning opinions in terms of their reasonableness in the primary sense – i.e., their correspondence to the conclusions of reason. The indicated standard is rather their reasonableness *as opinions* – i.e., their adequacy to the social task of opinion. Not truth but health is the test of opinion – and Enlightenment, as Rousseau will contend in the *Discourse*, promotes a climate of opinion as harmful as it is bogus. He thus implies the necessity of contriving a viable alternative to it. (Orwin, 176)

Reason certainly aids us in understanding the order of things, and even in sensing that there might be one, but it is the passionate *love* of order that makes us not only act in accordance with it, but seek to know it as best we can. Virtually all political philosophers are aware that the moral and political elites always have substantial influence in dictating what is publicly acceptable; Rousseau, like no other besides perhaps Plato, emphasizes that those in positions of authority (whether in government, society, or the family) also need to recognize that they have a great influence in determining whether the citizenry willingly does what is 'acceptable', whatever it is. That is, beyond setting the appropriate limits, or promoting the correct model of just behaviour, there is an even more fundamental role in disposing the members of the community to respect limits and models, or to love contributing to the general order. Both writers saw this as a far superior method for influencing behaviour than a strong police. This explains why Rousseau calls the *Republic* an educational treatise and why he says that education is

"certainly the State's most important business" (*PE* 223). It also helps explain why he suggests that censorship is an important part of education – and not only for children. More than Plato or any other thinker before him, however, Rousseau believes that this disposition towards respecting order and caring for others must be instilled from infancy by loving parents.[9]

Marriage resembles patriotism in that both are threatened by the Enlightenment's push to promote reason-based individuality. Despite its even greater natural basis than particular civil societies, marriage as an institution is artificial (at least in the pledge for life-long exclusivity and support); accordingly, and this is what is so fundamentally offensive to libertarians and egalitarians, Rousseau believes that there must be prejudices built into social opinions and law according it an exclusively privileged status. Moreover, just as patriotism requires the directing of inchoate longings for a meaningful order, taking advantage of the potential in sexuality to romanticize marriage is a crucial step in strengthening it, especially in the face of the declining power of traditional and social opinions. Rousseau 'romantic' side, which so many traditionalists see as a direct affront to their idea of the institution, emerges out of a connected understanding: he believes our imaginations inevitably play a central role in all of our lives, but could play a

[9] This emphasis on patriotic education, censorship, and following a general consensus whether it is in accordance with the 'truth' or not, has engendered a vocal field of criticism from both the left and the right. As indicated in the introduction, Rousseau is often accused of counselling totalitarianism and cited as a major precursor to both the fascism and communism of the last century. While this is not altogether unfair, it goes considerably beyond the scope of this work to consider it, and fortunately others have addressed the charge adequately (see Chapman, *Rousseau: Totalitarian or Liberal* or Melzer (95-111)). It is nonetheless true that, because political society is fundamentally artificial, he does believe that a successful polity requires a certain degree of nationalistic impression-making on the youth if they are to be happily dedicated members. We will explore the issues surrounding sex education and romantic love in chapter three; Bloom provides the best overall treatment of the subject.

bigger and healthier one if we were in a patriotic environment, and/or in one which held up a model of romantic marriage as a worthy goal.

This brief overview of the importance he places on what one could call "erotic education" in the light of his critique of rationalism helps us see why Rousseau is very sceptical of a strategy like declaring some universal rights of man to be self-evident and leaving people free to recognize them as such with the aid of an 'objective' education (whatever that might be). Also, despite his own scientific approach to some of these issues, he fears the consequences of a move to make science and individualistic free thought utterly dominant in society over religion, traditional morality, or any other form of shared ideals. Instead, in the very scientific *Social Contract* he declares the need for a "Civil Religion," which strongly affirms the rather vague notion that a providential God reinforces morality, and approves of (all) the laws of the state. He insists that the magistrates are responsible for administering a fairly comprehensive form of censorship, especially from foreign influences. He also suggests that a founding Legislator would have to persuade the vulgar of his surpassing wisdom with the use of miracles.

These dangerously subjective and illiberal notions are the source of considerable opposition to Rousseau's political thought; however, many fail to recognize that like Plato's *Republic*, the regime of the *Social Contract* is his presentation of the elements that would make up the most legitimate state possible: it is an ideal. In illustrating how far Enlightenment politics is from what Rousseau thinks the ideal community could achieve, the effect is less to inspire radicalism than to moderate one's enthusiasm for the

possibilities of citizenship. Instead, it is the prominent place of the family and its humanizing role which is the biggest source and safeguard of whatever hopefulness Rousseau might have for restoring or preserving virtuous communities in the scientific future. In the following chapters, we will see that he has a thoroughgoing pessimism about the possibility of a true polity; rather than the home being a subordinate breeding ground for nationalistic citizens, he raises the family unit up to the status of being at least a rival community to the polity in order to combat the power of unjust regimes and their unhealthy educations.

Recognizing these two related features of his thought, his suspicion of reason and his politic style, brings to the fore two elements in Rousseau's thought that make it difficult to grasp his teaching confidently. The first is the belief he shares with Plato, that the true knowledge needed for properly ordering human affairs[10] is at best extremely difficult to acquire, and even harder to communicate; thus we should not expect these truths, if present, to be easily understood in his writing. The second emanates from his explicit charge against the proponents of the Enlightenment regarding their lack of concern for the potential effects of their 'project' on the health of opinions in their polity. While he shared most of their animus against existing institutions, he saw the practical embodiment of their new Enlightened and denuded regime in the weak, fashion-minded aristocrats of his day along with the flat bourgeois money lovers. Faced with this bleak future he dedicated the bulk of his efforts to replacing the debunked pieties with higher ideals more firmly based in reason and nature but not simply reducible to these modern

[10] Especially the affairs of others – i.e., as required of a Legislator; conversely, Rousseau contends that the essence of personal virtue is accessible to the commonest among us if we are not too disfigured.

standards. This should make us wary in reading Rousseau himself: that is, aware that he might be less than forthright – if not intentionally misleading – regarding knowledge that may be harmful to the healthy opinions of members of his audience.

This is what in large part makes an author 'political' – keeping the impact on the reader's opinions (and not just mood or knowledge) in mind while writing – and in this sense Rousseau's books are outstandingly 'political'. Rousseau speaks regularly of who his intended audience is for a given work and occasionally of how that affects what he says– he even signs his works differently for different audiences. As an added complexity, for both prudential and pedagogic reasons he says some of his most intriguing things through characters, such as the "Savoyard Vicar" in *Emile*, "Rousseau" in the *Dialogues*, and the letter-writers in the novel *Julie*. His second-last major work, *Dialogues: Rousseau Judge de Jean-Jacques* is a conversation between a sympathetic Genevan (named "Rousseau") and a hostile "Frenchman" trying to reconcile the virtue and goodness the former sees in "Jean-Jacques"' books with the monstrous opinion people have of him in France. It is of little wonder that so many commentators consider Rousseau not just paradoxical but schizophrenic; with the help of some of his best commentators, however, we will see in this chapter why Rousseau's claims to have a consistent system of thought are legitimate; through elaborating in the rest of the work the complex case he makes for the family in modern life we will make this coherence even more manifest. In this vein, we will now turn to aspects of Rousseau's critique that would be considered from the other extreme of the political spectrum.

Natural Goodness and Modern Slavery: Rousseau's Critique from the Left

While Rousseau is not generally considered to be conservative, we outlined in the introduction and the last section many of the reasons he supports religion, censorship, public standards of conduct, authorities embracing a role of community bonding, as well as his distrust of too much individual freedom.[11] There is, however, cause for less careful commentators to overlook this side of his thought because he is even more profoundly a critic of authority, wealth, inequality, and the marketplace. While Rousseau has deep concerns about people's ability to be guided by reason and the breakdown of community traditions, he also attacks the Enlightenment from the left in opposition to its emphasis on reducing freedom to the freedom to make money, or the tendency to reduce equality to equality in pursuing financial success. In this section we will focus on the more peculiarly modern problems caused by the success of these principles and the (sometimes) subtle but pervasive dependence and vanity in our overly developed societies. We will begin by describing his unique presentation of natural goodness, for it is the foundation of his critique of modern dysfunctionality.

His belief in natural goodness informs all his works, especially the *Second Discourse* and *Emile*. In the latter, for example, the epigraph (a quote from Seneca) is "we are sick with evils that can be cured; and nature, having brought us forth sound, itself helps us if we wish to improve," and his opening sentence declares that "Everything is

[11] I again ask the reader's forgiveness for the crudeness of my generalizations with regard to the tenets I attribute to conservatives, liberals, etc.

good as it leaves the hands of the Author of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man." After outlining his case for our natural goodness in the first section of the book he intones: "Let us set down as an incontestable maxim that the first movements of nature are always right. There is no original perversity in the human heart. There is not a single vice to be found in it of which it cannot be said how and whence it entered" (E 92). Most of his works consist of an elaboration on this central theme – the genealogy of the heart and soul of human beings, from our original goodness to our degeneration "in the hands of man."

Our natural goodness does not mean that originally and deep down we are little angels. Rather, we are simply not disposed to cause trouble for others and in the primitive condition are not compelled to by social competition. In his preface he explains that there are two pre-rational principles that guide the natural man of the *Second Discourse*: self-preservation and natural pity. While there was not a general condition of scarcity that forced us regularly to choose between these two impulses, he acknowledges that when forced to do so we would act for our own well-being before another's. This original pity is simply an aversion to the suffering of others,[12] and with quiet imaginations and full stomachs, there is plenty to guard against a condition of war. Natural man, he explicitly states, is *amoral* – but good. To a considerable extent, this goodness is essentially that of a bear, or other animal that is essentially solitary but very able to take care of himself and a few offspring.

[12] In a recent Jules Masserman study, monkeys soon quit inflicting electrical shocks on their fellows even for food rewards.

Our corruption is caused above all by *dependence*, a phenomenon much broader than not 'owning the means of production'. In fact, Rousseau suggests that the rich are even more enslaved than the poor: not only do they have more business going on with more people, including employees, but they have more at stake in maintaining the social order. "Your freedom and your power extend only as far as your natural strength, and not beyond. All the rest is only slavery, illusion, and deception" (E 83). The rich rely on the goodwill of so many, and get so much of their happiness from things relying on – and envied by – so many that they are the most vulnerable. Rousseau compels the reader to imagine a kind of Machiavellian, if not simply modern 'success':

> Take everything, usurp everything; and then pour out handfuls of money, set up batteries of cannon, erect gallows and wheels, give laws and edicts, multiply spies, soldiers, hangmen, prisons, chains. Poor little men, what does all that do for you? You will be neither better served, nor less robbed, nor less deceived, nor more absolute. You will always say, "We want," and you will always do what the others want.
>
> The only one who does his own will is he who, in order to do it, has no need to put another's arms at the end of his own; from which it follows that the first of all goods is not authority but freedom. The truly free man wants only what he can do and does what he pleases. That is my fundamental maxim. (E 84)

One may indeed balk at the apparent extremity of this depiction, but Rousseau adds a psychological account to help persuade us of its plausibility.

Excellent work has been done in recent decades on Rousseau's influential analysis of the crisis of modern civilized life (e.g. Bloom, Melzer, Cooper). As has been indicated, individualism in a dependent and competitive social setting is the core of the problem. Our dependence makes us weak, and given the character of our society it forces

us to take on roles we would not choose to adopt otherwise: we are compelled to be insincere with others and ourselves. When we need the goodwill of others, the positive regard of strangers, or near-strangers, we are inevitably forced to alter our conduct to meet their expectations. We cannot and do not expect them positively to like us simply for 'who we are' (an admittedly fuzzy concept, but one which includes our peculiar lusts for tyranny and other outright defects, our more neutral but blameworthy characteristics like laziness and gluttony, and whatever positive traits we possess that threaten them); accordingly, to gain and maintain approval we become actors, disengaging ourselves from our natures, as "Incessantly politeness requires, propriety demands; incessantly usage is followed, never one's inclinations" (FD 38). As society becomes more complex, more abstract qualities than singing or strength become sought after, qualities which rely on opinion: "And these qualities being the only ones which could attract attention, it was soon necessary to have them or affect them; for one's own advantage, it was necessary to appear to be other than in fact one was. To be and to seem to be became two altogether different things..." (SD 155). We are constantly, and for better or worse mostly subconsciously, melded into a character society demands in order to survive in its midst.[13]

Rousseau argues that bourgeois interactions are generally characterized by widespread slavery and the worst parts of mastery. Our version is even more dangerous than the classical notions of tyranny or slavery because it is much more subtle, and even

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[13] To be sure, husbands and wives have some expectations put upon them, not all of which they might embrace from a Rawlsian original position; as we will see below, though, Rousseau argues that in addition to affection and permanency there is usually a natural basis to the classification of the sexes which does not exist in the other, artificial, realms.

exists under the guise of freedom. Most today try to bring about equality by ensuring that women can enter the workplace just as easily as men. Rousseau's perspective enables us to radically reconsider whether any healthy person would pursue this path if not misled by prejudice. This is a direct attack on the Lockean/American idea of promoting capitalistic individualism as the road to take in 'the pursuit of happiness'; while many have famously followed strands of Rousseau's thought in communist, bohemian, agrarian and other directions, in his writings Rousseau himself tries to steer people back into the direction of the family as a refuge from the soul-destroying tyranny of careerism. Most do not consider their modern, sanitized dependence as anything like slavery, but Rousseau argues vehemently that deep down we all feel our servitude; inasmuch as we do not, it is due to our shrunken souls – not our labour laws ensuring reasonable work hours and statutory holidays. As for our freedom to choose where we work and for whom, in Rousseau's estimation this is little more than the freedom to be enslaved by your choice of masters. Because the 'equality of sameness' theory of the family that prevails today relies so much on assumptions about the positive value of women having the 'freedom' to pursue a career, and because his critique combines so many relevant aspects of his thoughts concerning human relations, the rest of this section will detail his argument concerning the ills of careerism and why he considered it to be at the core of modern problems.

To the notion that there is a zero-sum environment in which someone's profits are inevitably at the expense of another, pro-market supporters since the era of Locke have replied that this does not apply when a nation's wealth is growing; theoretically, an

expanding economy can make everyone richer. Even in cases of overall growth (i.e. a growing GDP or even a successful partnership), however, there are countless individual examples of bigger groups squeezing out smaller ones, bankruptcy, insider trading, monopolization, and in general a fear of getting cheated combined with a "desire to profit at the expense of others." Rousseau presents a psychological analysis that could very easily be applied not only to the marketplace, but to the modern office,[14] where you are competing with all your 'co-workers' for raises and promotions. This means that the people you spend most of your day with, and whose goodwill you rely on not only to bear your day contentedly, but to succeed at work because of your interdependence, are people you have to outshine. Not only in the more typically observed tensions between the boss and those he pays wages to, then, but within the 'brotherhood' of employees there is plenty of cause for simmering battle beneath a veneer of camaraderie.

From this perspective, most careerists intentionally dedicate their energy and existence to the place where they are surrounded by their enemies. The result is powerfully depicted by Rousseau, when in response to the argument that all this interdependence forces us to cooperate and thereby forges a common good he counters:

> What a wonderful thing, then, to have put men in a position where they can only live together by obstructing, supplanting, deceiving, betraying, destroying one another! From now on we must take care never to let ourselves be seen as we are: because for every

[14] This is less the case within most trades, since the work often speaks for itself and there is less disparity in rewards; competition also obviously goes down where seniority is the sole criterion for advancement, though this tends to give rise to different kinds of resentment. There are also obviously careers which are to some degree intrinsically rewarding. It is also worth noting that even the ancient city had many within clamouring for individual regard, which is not itself really shareable even if it is in terms of courageous devotion or justice. Still, insofar as the general character of ambition is in the sense of "who can contribute the most to the reputation of the city," they are quite different than monetary concerns, where nobody really takes a prominent degree of satisfaction for his corresponding "contribution to GDP."

> two men whose interests coincide, perhaps a hundred thousand oppose them, and the only way to succeed is either to deceive or ruin all those people. This is the fatal source of the violence, the betrayals, the treacheries and all the horrors necessarily required by a state of affairs in which everyone pretends to be working for the profit or reputation of the rest, while only seeking to raise his own above theirs and at their expense. (*Preface to Narcissus* 100)

Accordingly, an honest, independent life is not only out of reach for the rich – who need their servants and forts – but virtually all modern people. Without the cooperation of our fellows, i.e. cast out of society, few of us would expect to survive a week, to say nothing of living out the rest of our lives happily. In turn, we are compelled to make ourselves useful to an ultimately faceless, heartless entity. Within it we form friendships and pleasant acquaintances we take solace in, but the fact remains that we are not free either in our minute to minute relations or generally. We might look at the alternative of a hermit and say we freely choose this civil life with its pros and cons, but Rousseau would counter that we have been so indoctrinated since birth that we cannot get to any kind of objective standpoint from which to make this judgment – we are too weak and blind to see our bonds for the chains they really are. Not only have we borne them for as long as we remember, but they are covered enough that we almost never notice them. Deep down, however – and often not so deep – we know they are there, that we never really put them on ourselves, and that we will not have enough of a say in how they are used in the future.

Moreover, Rousseau says that our indoctrination has not been done very well: we claim to preserve the essence of our natural sentiments and character but in such a tepid way that we end up with not much of anything at all, given the unnaturalness of our

environment. As opposed to the true citizen, whose model we will return to close the chapter, we are told that we are free individuals, and believe we pursue our own path and activities in accordance with our free desires, or 'the natural rights of man'. For the most part, we are encouraged to think of society as a means to this individual pursuit, and not the end to which we dedicate ourselves and from which we take our bearings. As a result, we spend our public lives pursuing our self-interest among others doing the same, all in a broader context we mutually regard as a means.

Melzer helpfully categorizes these modern ills under two chief camps: "the twin evils of *injustice towards others*, and especially *disunity of soul*" (Melzer 59). He also elaborates on how their twinning provides an answer to a major question that faces any conception of justice: why should I not strive merely to seem just, as opposed to really practicing it? Rousseau, like Plato and Aristotle, argues that gains to be had from exploitation are poisoned, that the exploitative life is one of feverish insecurity and worry. Whereas for the ancients this is condemned for making wisdom and justice impossible, for Rousseau, it makes unhappiness inevitable above all because it divides us, it breaks the unity of our existence.[15] Bourgeois man is raised to look out only for himself and live by his own standards. Yet his soul is split, because he depends on the esteem of others in order to prosper. This tension runs so deep in him that, as said above, his natural love of himself, or '*amour de soi*' is transformed into vanity, or unhealthy '*amour-propre*' with the pernicious result that when he interacts with others he thinks

[15] A fair description of this difference would be that Rousseau sees contemplation as only one form of unified and extended existence: by no means is it the only legitimate expression, even if it is the 'purest'.

only of himself – and yet he cannot conceive of that 'self' except through the eyes of others.

Rousseau, at the close of the *Second Discourse,* summarizes the difference between the 'savage' (who is guided by healthy self-love) and a civilized European:

> Such is, in fact, the true cause of all these differences: the savage lives within himself; the sociable man, always outside of himself, knows how to live only in the opinion of others; and it is, so to speak, from their judgment alone that he draws the sentiment of his own existence. (SD 179)

This kind of existence is really none at all in our individualistic age, as he polemically declares in the opening of *Emile*:

> He who in the civil order wants to preserve the primacy of the sentiments of nature does not know what he wants. Always in contradiction with himself, always floating between his inclinations and his duties, he will never be either man or citizen. He will be good neither for himself nor others. He will be one of the men of our days: a Frenchman, an Englishman, a bourgeois. He will be nothing. (E 40)

There is a lot that can and will be said about these passages. To summarize how they pertain to the terrain we have covered thus far, the liberal principles of modernity have engendered a social and economic climate that has uprooted us from the primitive and even the premodern society which people thought of as an organic whole of which they were connected parts: we are no longer 'Athenians', 'Frenchmen', or 'Englishmen', but

simply 'bourgeois' individuals. We have secured our natural rights and have been encouraged to develop our natural potential (much more now than in Rousseau's time), but not only is it a tremendously difficult responsibility to chart our individual path, we still need the approval of many in order to move along it, with it being increasingly unclear what will be approved of. Forced to interact with others more than ever, but sincerely caring about them less than ever, it is little wonder that individuals should be unhappy and the moral fabric tenuous.

Independence and the Sentiment of Existence: Rousseau's Understanding of the Good Life

There is somewhat more involved, however, in Rousseau's calling the bourgeois "nothing." How is it, we might wonder, that just because someone is torn about how to act and whom to impress they become a *nullity*, and not simply confused, or weakened, or even... more interesting? Rousseau teaches that the feeling of the sentiment of existence is the core of happiness and thereby the goal in life. He argues that when one is not unified, one cannot feel existence in a positive way: "To be something, to be oneself and always one, a man must act as he speaks; he must always be decisive in making his choice, make it in a lofty style, and always stick to it" (40). In other words, being constantly torn between conflicting impulses is to be *nothing*, whereas wholehearted devotion to an action engenders greater existence, which brings about greater happiness. We saw in the last section why the socially-dependent selfishness that characterizes modern life makes us "double-men" who are forced to care about the opinions of so many people we do not care about, judges who in fact are our competitors. The answer

to this dilemma is either to remove the competition from society (as in the ideal polity we will close the chapter with), or become independent from the opinions of these social competitors. This desire for independence finds its basis in our natural condition, and its modern extreme in the solitary wanderer of Rousseau's autobiographies; in the practical recommendation for the majority of us it points to the 'solitary' family, where we can extend our existence and satisfy social longings while remaining unified because we genuinely care about and respect those we share dependency with.

Unity of soul, which can also be understood in terms of sincerity or honesty, is a prerequisite for any kind of happiness. This was present in the primitive human, but he lacked the development of valuable faculties that Rousseau believes can increase our happiness so long as they do not divide us. Unlike classical philosophers, upon whose terms only the greatest thinkers and (perhaps) statesmen lived lives worth commending, Rousseau broadens his conception of happiness through his theory of the sentiment of existence to include various others. So long as a human being is unified, he is happy; to the extent his existence is enlarged while preserving this unity, his happiness is increased.

His theory is first put forward in the *Second Discourse* and elaborated upon chiefly in *Emile*. The Discourse will be our focus in the first half of the next chapter, and *Emile* will be analyzed in chapter three, so this description will hopefully be excusably introductory. As opposed to the dualistic or tripartite conceptions of the soul in Christian doctrine and Plato, Rousseau posits that man is by nature one. We are indeed sensual, passionate, and psychological beings, but Rousseau denies the possibility of

fundamentally separating these aspects in us except as intellectualized concepts.[16] Rousseau rejects the attempt to isolate piety or rationality as the 'essence' of human. Rather it is the *enjoyment* of the sentiment of our existence, uplifting our heart and mind by its extension into things and people that we live for – and in line with our discussion at the outset, this is a unified state of *feeling* much more than it is one of thinking.

Savage man and Emile are perfectly free because they do everything they want. They can accomplish this while remaining good because their desires are few, true, unified, and in accordance with nature. Rousseau's stoic side is shown in his constant attempts to teach the reader to reduce his desires in order to be happier, declaring for example that, "It is by dint of agitating ourselves to increase our happiness that we convert it into unhappiness" and that "a being endowed with senses whose faculties equalled his desires would be an absolutely happy being." Unlike the contented primitive, we create for ourselves needs and desires which are unattainable and thereby pernicious. He points his finger at what seems like the chief culprit, saying:

> It is imagination which extends for us the measure of the possible, whether for good or bad, and which consequently nourishes the desires by the hope of satisfying them....The real world has its limits; the imaginary world is infinite. Unable to enlarge the one, let us restrict the other, for it is in the difference between the two alone that are born all the pains which make us truly unhappy. Take away strength,

[16] Although the Savoyard Vicar insists man cannot be one, there is little else in the rest of Rousseau's oeuvre to support the contention. Cf., however, Lawrence Cooper, who does an admirable job of insisting on the importance of conscience. We will return to that subject in chapter three, but suffice it to say Rousseau offers little evidence of any religion beyond the 'natural' one of the Vicar having any effect on his thought. He does, however, refer to the 'Author of things' in enough ways and enough places to make it difficult to consider him an atheist; granting this is not, however, the same as saying that our spirit and body are divisible.

> health, and good witness of oneself, all the goods of this life are in opinion. (E 80-1)

Rousseau returns repeatedly to the argument that our imaginations create desires that we either cannot achieve, or which are not healthy, and that this is where most of our unhappiness comes from. The vain pursuit of reputation is the foremost manifestation of this creative capacity and it has many modifications (thus the need for Rousseau to write various very different works to try and regulate it). While in the decent citizen as well as the husband and wife Rousseau encourages the salutary directing, or education, of the imagination as a source of strength, merely encouraging ambition or gainfulness or other desires that are perpetual or unlikely to be attained can be crippling. This is why Rousseau can assert rather bluntly that "all wickedness comes from weakness" (E 67), and yet can still maintain that it is *amour-propre* which causes our vicious actions (SD note 'o', 222) as well as our unhappiness. The need to be approved of is a dependence, which when based on anything but a solid and reliable basis – such as friendship or virtue – is a dangerous vulnerability.

Emile, unlike the savage, has *amour-propre*, which involves imagination and prejudice transforming desire and perception, but as the natural man made for society, it works in accordance with his nature. Because he only really needs the approval of his wife and a few decent friends – people he has chosen to depend upon because of their goodness and judgment – it is safeguarded.[17] Rousseau's solution to the dangers of imagination is not to stifle it; nor is it simply to reduce desire to ease unhappiness, for

[17] Though this chapter attempts to set out the framework for understanding how this might be so, this necessarily cursory statement will be elaborated throughout the dissertation.

were we to kill desires for things in our power "a part of our faculties would remain idle, and we would not enjoy our whole being" (E 80). Accordingly, the primitive savages are not an actual model for us, because their brutishness does not allow our unique imaginations the chance to grow in a way that complements our existence – the possibility Rousseau wants above all to engender. The importance of sincere affection in making dependence healthy will be a theme of the next chapter, and the presentation he makes in support of channelling the imagination into a commitment to marriage through romantic love will be the subject of chapter three.

We have seen that Rousseau uses a blend of ancient wisdom and modern principles to generate a whole new attack on the bourgeois model emerging from the Enlightenment movement. He rejected the shift from morals to business in the public realm as enervating of community due to the necessary vanity and insincerity that attends commerce. Happiness is found in the pure feeling of the sentiment of existence, and as we have said the bourgeois man cannot enjoy this because he is never really himself. For Rousseau, one must be whole, or unified, if one is to be happy at all. One can then increase one's happiness by extending it, something fully developed humans are naturally inclined to do. But according to Rousseau, we can only extend our existence over others as far as we can care for them for their own sake. In modern society, we are taught to care about wealth, honour, and power, and these are not shareable goods.[18] Insofar as

[18] These have been approved of by other regimes throughout history, but usually in the service of, and not to the exclusion of 'higher' ends like God and country. One could quibble with this contention by citing Aristotle's description of Carthage, or, conversely, President Bush's exhortation to American patriots to just keep shopping after 9/11, but there is a great deal to be said of the radical shift in rhetoric about 'the economy': where it may often have been the truly most important political factor in various time and places,

this is 'doing well', we cannot sincerely wish it for all our fellows since we want it instead for ourselves.

Among friends and family, Rousseau points out, this is rarely a fundamental problem: besides some issues concerning dependency, and even with sometimes ugly sibling rivalries, we sincerely care about the happiness of those we love and vice versa. Indeed, the extent to which their good becomes part of ours renders any strictly individualist account of social interactions limited and necessarily hypothetical. The cold environment we face in the city is radically transformed by the warmth of the hearth. We freely make sacrifices and compromises for those whose happiness is part of ours, in stark contrast with the more anonymous situations where we struggle to put on a smile while we act for others (unless we are confident of a greater repayment). Although dependency can exist without resentment and insincerity in the close-knit group, modern society is not close-knit. In contrast to claims that the co-dependency in any city can be a bond for the citizenry (most notably Plato's use of the division of labour in the city in speech), Rousseau does not see this working out psychologically except in rare cases like Sparta and the Roman republic. His theory of happiness being based in a sentiment of existence premised on inner unity enables him to push the Lockean 'captain of industry' / congressman model – a debased form of what Aristotle calls the "active life" (*Politics* Book 7) – right off the stage of possible paths to happiness, and makes room for various new models like the patriot, the priest, the poet, the romantic lover, the pastoral family (and even an ape!) to compete with the philosopher as happy lives worth emulating.

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only recently has it become permissible to give money-making political priority without dressing it up in more civilized and virtuous robes.

To close out this introduction to Rousseau's thought, I will go over the account he gives of citizenship – the paradigmatic case by which people overcome their narrow selfishness and immerse themselves in something larger. Exploring Rousseau's penetrating and somewhat revolutionary depiction of civic virtue and the way it engenders happiness is not only useful as a template for virtue, but as a way of illuminating in their extreme the features of virtue, or social goodness, which Rousseau believes are nurtured and more likely to be found in the family. We will see in chapters two and three the ways in which his account of the family incorporates crucial elements of both patriotism and piety.

The Political Solution

To understand Rousseau's argument for marriage and to help put these themes into context, it is helpful to examine the depiction he gives of the true citizen, since this is the extreme case of subsuming one's will under that of an institution aimed at a collective good. Like Hobbes, Rousseau bases sovereignty in consenting to give up one's natural 'right' to everything on the condition that everyone else around you does the same. While Hobbes does not seem too eager for the government to be democratic, Rousseau is adamant that this is the only legitimate form of government, since this allows us to give up our personal will in exchange for a general will we can truly be a part of. Looked at from a somewhat more practical viewpoint, in the 'Dedicatory Letter' to the *Second Discourse* he speaks of the need for the sovereign and people to "have only one and the

same interest, so that all movements of the machine always tended to the common happiness" (SD 79). Also, whereas Hobbes limits obedience to the point where your life is at stake (since his politics are above all about safety) Rousseau insists in the *Social Contract* that the alienation of rights must be total (since his politics are about love of the community utterly supplanting self-concern): "If the prince deems it expedient for the state that you should die, you should die." If we are merely hiring someone to keep us safe, it is unlikely we will sincerely be loyal, even if we respect contracts; yet, this is the thrust of Hobbes' (largely successful) argument for what politics should be based on. Rousseau insists that citizenship be the foremost aspect of one's self-identity if we are to happily live in a regime where citizenship places notable demands upon us.

To avoid becoming the "double men" mentioned above, or "nothing," – i.e. to restore our unity and thereby enjoy our existence – Rousseau's stated preference is to make citizens love their fatherlands such that their interdependence does not have this psychically maiming effect. Whereas the savage is unified because his unimaginative desires are limited and within his power, the citizen is unified because his desires are essentially those prescribed to him by the customs of his polity and the general will: he desires above all to be a patriot, and accordingly takes on freely the duties prescribed to one. As opposed to limiting himself to his unimaginative inclinations, the citizen silences his inclinations in favour of habituating himself to that which is prescribed for him and his fellows.

This strikes us as most unnatural, which Rousseau entirely affirms: as indicated, the artificiality of political life requires great art to manage, and citizens' imaginations need to be educated to aspire above all to live in a glorious nation in harmony with their fellow citizens. Rousseau famously asserts that the citizen is "denatured," he "believes himself no longer one but part of the unity and no longer feels except within the whole. A citizen of Rome was neither Caius nor a Lucius; he was a Roman. He even loved the country exclusive of himself" (E 40). The citizen's sense of self is so enmeshed in his country that he cannot think of his good apart from his community – like the team player who is sad after a loss despite playing the best game of his life, or ecstatic after winning a championship despite sitting on the bench. In the context of the above quote, Rousseau describes the citizen as one who, after running for office and losing, is pleased that there are men more capable than him to serve the fatherland. Not only is he devoid of jealousy for the winners, he does not doubt for a moment the wisdom of the people's choice.

This mindset – placing one's sense of happiness in the community, and trusting the votes of your fellows to be enlightened and selfless enough to come more or less to the best solutions – is not easily arrived at, but nor is it entirely fanciful. While Rousseau is as sensitive as anyone to the internal factions that compete for dominance in society under the guise of justice and the common good, the waves of nationalism over the last four centuries and of democracy in the last two attest to the potential for us to become communitarian democrats. The fact remains, however, that Lockean liberal and commercial – or 'bourgeois' – democracy has been even more successful in spreading itself, in part because the strictest communitarian models have degenerated into abusive

dictatorships whose ideology became a mere facade. Rousseau is aware of this potential (even inevitability); accordingly in his most political works he focuses more on ways to restrain the magistrates than to unify the populace. That said, the capacity to subsume oneself under a greater good is crucial to acknowledge and nourish in the face of radical individualism, for as we will see, a milder, more natural version of it – perhaps the original version of it – is what holds the family together, and provides the grounds for the kind of dedication Rousseau would have us non-Spartans embrace.

His understanding of the true principles of politics and citizenship are elaborated upon most thoroughly in the *Social Contract* and applied practically in his writings for Corsica and Poland. We get the best encapsulation of the psychological principle behind his reasoning, however, in an illuminating passage from *Emile*, where he explains that

> There are two sorts of dependence: dependence on things, which is from nature; and dependence on men, which is from society. Dependence on things, since it has no morality, is in no way detrimental to freedom and engenders no vices; dependence on men, since it is without order, engenders all the vices, and by it master and slave are mutually corrupted. If there is any means of remedying this ill in society, it is to substitute law for man and to arm the general wills with a real strength superior to the action of every particular will. If the laws of nations could, like those of nature, have an inflexibility that no human force could ever conquer, dependence on men would become dependence on things again; in the republic all the advantages of the natural state would be united with those of the civil state, and freedom which keeps man exempt from vices would be joined to morality which raises him to virtue. (E 85)

In short, he sees that the Enlightenment attempts to reduce social duties can only go so far in practice. His attempt to balance desire and duty looks more at how public-

spiritedness can be cultivated in wise legislation, thus enabling the citizens to willingly and sincerely work for the common good as they rule themselves in an ideal democracy. The citizen has chains (like all of us), but his are covered in garlands. In the "Dedicatory Letter to Geneva" attached to the *Second Discourse*, he speaks of the "honorable yoke" of the laws that is proudly worn by citizens, especially when they see the same one borne by all their fellows: this is what it is "to live and die free" (SD 79).

The husband and wife too will bear "honorable yokes" insofar as all marriages entail duties, cares, and privations which would not be chosen for their own sake but are willingly, even cheerfully, consented to as part of an identity or a role one has freely embraced. In a society where marriage is a durable institution, the actions it prescribes hold the character of longstanding laws, and are honoured as something to live up to more than they are chafed at. Rousseau's analysis provides a coherent standpoint from which one could argue that liberating marriage from the bulk of traditional expectations, or deinstitutionalizing it, would not necessarily make it easier for people to enjoy, or a more desirable commitment. Disputing over who fulfills the duties it necessarily entails could chafe much more than if the expectations were clearly defined at the outset, even if gender roles risk pushing some square pegs through round holes. Besides the practicalities surrounding the division of labour, growing up impressed by widespread social esteem for fulfilling the role of husband or wife also makes it easier to decide to commit to a family in the first place.

What many of his pro-family critics fail to see is that Rousseau saw the achievement of his just regime of true citizens as a monumental task unlikely of success. His political teaching seems to be aimed at persuading that only this ideal democracy is a legitimate government, but for the many who are not lucky enough to live in it, find something less corrupt than politics to devote yourselves to. To help in this, he writes about solitude, arts, religion, and of course family. Having described the general picture of what Rousseau thinks happiness is, and having outlined the barriers to it he saw in modern life, we will now chart the progressive importance family bonds, marriage, and love had on his thought. We will begin chapter two by exploring the centrality of family in his depiction of human nature and the progress of society in the *Second Discourse*.

Chapter Two
Family: The Bridge Between Nature and Society

In the last chapter, we surveyed the pertinent aspects of Rousseau's thought concerning the human condition and the specific problems we face in mass, commercial society. In this chapter, we will outline Rousseau's understanding of the social value of strong families as a corrective to these dangers. We will begin with an examination of the unique place the family unit occupies in his historical account of human development, and argue that a close reading of the *Second Discourse*, considered alongside the related statements in other works, compels us to re-evaluate the presentation of the solitary wanderer he presents in part one as the original condition of man. In particular, we will challenge the claim that this presentation is a refutation of the natural character of the family. We will then turn to a consideration of the vital place he imagined the family occupying in modern society, analyzing the *Letter on the Theatre* as well as relevant aspects of the particular household depicted in *Julie*. While *Emile* is his most famous treatment of the issue, we will see here that the principles that support a pro-family teaching were well developed in the works leading up to it. With the exception of an interlude on sexual modesty later in the chapter, we will reserve most of our analysis of *Emile* for the next chapter, where we will – as Rousseau did – turn to a detailed analysis of the choiceworthiness of family for individuals seeking profound happiness, the connection between one's views concerning sexuality and morals, and the kind of education that can encourage esteem for family values. There we will explore the psychological, pedagogical, and erotic considerations upon which Rousseau bases his elevation of *romantic* marriage for modern man. This chapter will be more historical and

sociological: here we will lay out the macro-level observations upon which Rousseau premises his call for the promotion of family bonds for a healthy society, with the emphasis initially on human nature and later on the demands of society.

The focus of the first half of this chapter will be on the argument in the *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality*, often referred to (as it is here) as the *Second Discourse*. By tracing out the developments that bring us from a beastly condition to a corrupted, all-too-human one, we will see the pivotal character of the family: both as a natural end in itself and as a bridge to the fuller human existence found in primitive society, or "the veritable prime of the world." This account will also help fill out the picture of unhappiness we outlined above; by locating our happiest epochs in eras where family was the chief association, Rousseau lays the groundwork for the argument in later writings that a retreat to the family is prudent for most of us because it provides virtually all of what human nature requires with virtually none of what threatens our unity.

The *Second Discourse* presents the bulk of the theoretical foundation of all his works; while we will demonstrate the importance of the family association in it, it cannot adequately be described as a book about family values. His next major writing,[19] however, emphatically is. The *Letter to d'Alembert on the Theatre* is written in response to d'Alembert's *Encyclopaedia* article about Geneva, where Rousseau takes issue with its suggestion that Geneva revoke its law prohibiting theatres; in outlining the fatal effect luxury and the arts has on republicanism, the predominant aspect of his analysis turns out

[19] One could certainly suggest that the unpublished *Essay on the Origin of Language* is his "next major writing"; our pending discussion of it will show that it is much more overtly family-centric as well.

to be the character of relations between men and women. By focusing on the conservative practical application of his principles for his native Geneva, we will be able to get more concretely into the argument Rousseau makes against the alienating life in commercial society and why he thought the remedy for this is for society to emphasize the essential status of the family, including sexual modesty and the preservation of gender differences.

In describing the virtues of men and women keeping separate company, Rousseau places a footnote in the Letter to d'Alembert explaining that the idea is elaborated and clarified in a forthcoming publication. This principle, like so many others, is expanded upon in Rousseau's first attempt to reconcile many of his ideas about republicanism, families, and independence in an almost realistic setting: the extremely popular novel *Julie, or the New Heloise: Letters of Two Lovers who Live in a Small Town at the Foot of the Alps*. Rousseau makes clear in his later, or "second" preface that this is meant to be a work which would inspire deeper family bonds in the face of the countervailing temptations of Enlightenment, or Bourgeois, society. He meant to provide a model for modern people by which they could reorganize their values in accordance with his conception of our natural capacities and needs. By focusing on the second half of the novel (as opposed to the romantic first half), we will see how he thought a very well-ordered family would look, how it can make its members more virtuous and durably happy, and how it functions as a small fatherland within which well-adjusted people capable of more moral and public spirited lives are bred. It is notable that the novel contains passionate and persuasive arguments against arranged marriage, but in his plot

the heroine breaks with her beloved and goes on to make a model family with a husband chosen by her father.[20] This device in the novel allows us to separate neatly – more neatly than is practicable as it turns out – the romantic element from the rest of what goes into a marriage and family. At the end of the chapter, in discussing the barrier to the fullest happiness for Julie, we will begin a reconsideration of the kinds of love people in families feel, and this will set the stage for a new discussion centering on Rousseau's teaching on love and the romanticization of marriage in the next chapter.

Natural Man

Both sides of the family debate seek to found parts of their arguments upon claims about what is natural for men, women, and children. For proof that marriage is ordained not only by virtually all successful religions and societies, but by nature itself, pro-marriage supporters usually cite phenomena such as the requirements of the reproductive process, the historical predominance of marriage, the benefits accruing to children raised by biological parents, and, more recently, even studies of the biochemical processes that incline people to love and nurture. Opponents tend to note the lack of uniformity in the family arrangements of mammals, the varying types of human sexuality, or the barbarous reinforcement of monogamy used by many societies, to argue that the institution of marriage is a blunt artificial instrument used to create conformism and the oppression of women in opposition to the flexibility or diversity natural to human sexuality and

[20] Although the practice of arranged marriage has been substantially put behind us in the western world, it is still instructive to return to the arguments in favour of each side of that issue, both for the sake of appreciating elective attachment itself, and because even in this increasingly 'globalized' world a substantial number of people still think this is not a prudent way to arrange such a fundamental aspect of social ordering.

freedom. Few authors cite nature as a guide more broadly than Rousseau. As we will see in the remainder of the work, while in most of his works Rousseau argues that nature speaks in a strong and unmistakable voice in favour of family values, in his groundbreaking initial account of human nature this is not at all clear: in fact, the truly natural man is presented as a solitary devoid of even family associations.

The *Second Discourse* is usually referred to as a basis for interpretation of Rousseau's teachings on any subject, including the family. The biggest puzzle it presents (at least for our purposes) is his assertion that there were no families at the outset of human existence. Not only does anthropological evidence fail to substantiate this postulate, Rousseau himself never clearly reiterates the notion in any of the subsequent works we are analyzing. The statement near the beginning of the *Social Contract*: "The most ancient of all societies, and the only natural one, is that of the family" (SC 47)[21] seems to fit better with the picture drawn shortly after the *Second Discourse* in the *Essay on the Origin of Language* (hereafter referred to as the *Essay on Language* or EOL), where the pre-social, grunting, independent stage of original man is assumed to feature families as a norm. It is necessary to take some time to establish why he proposes such a radical notion of asociality in his most famous account of human nature and show that even here the family is still a natural association that serves a vital function in enhancing our existence without causing alienation.

[21] It must be acknowledged that this statement does not actually contradict the story of the *Second Discourse* since "most ancient" does not mean eternal. What is more important is that it is still emphatically natural, and we will demonstrate this to be true for the *Second Discourse* as well.

In addition to the general consensus in his other works, Rousseau makes a number of statements in the *Second Discourse* directly attesting to the conjectural character of his depiction and the utility of the notion of the state of nature as a theoretical construct more than an anthropological tool. In the preface, he warns that the reader should not take him to be claiming to have seen our true history, "for it is no light undertaking to separate what is original from what is artificial in the present state of man, and to know correctly a state which no longer exists, which perhaps never existed, which probably never will exist" (SD 92-93). He also adds, just before the beginning of part one, that "the researches which can be undertaken concerning this subject must not be taken for historical truths, but only hypothetical and conditional reasonings better suited to clarify the nature of things than to show their true origin" (SD 103). There has been scholarly debate over these and related passages concerning the rhetorical intention in light of the prevailing philosophic doctrines of the day (Pufendorf, Grotius, Hobbes) and the obvious clash with religious sensibilities (since Genesis provides an account of the origin of humans). These debates are adequately summarized in Victor Gourevitch's "Rousseau's Pure State of Nature," where he puts forth a generally persuasive case that "The quest for the putative state of nature is a thought-experiment, a systematic "bracketing" of all artifice and of all moral needs and relations" (37).[22] In focusing on the description of the family in this state of nature, we will see that stripping natural man of family relations is a problematic but illustrative example of this, and that while there is an important

[22] Heinrich Meier is among the worthiest who think that there is more veracity than rhetoric in Rousseau's depiction. Among other things, he notes that Rousseau goes so far as to suggest that the quite solitary orang-utan could be a human in the original condition. I fully confess that I have not discovered nature itself, nor fully grasped its meaning for Rousseau. As we go through the first half of the chapter, however, I believe that I build an adequate case for the claim that sex differences and family are importantly natural for Rousseau, even if they never entirely overcome our individuality.

rhetorical effect in depicting us as utterly alone, a closer reading of the text confirms that the family is very natural. Rather than diminishing the importance of family, by trying to strip natural man of this connection and then see how it might develop, we in fact see what is natural about the family and the fundamental role it plays in the development of our humanity.

In the 'first part' of the *Second Discourse*, Rousseau makes the case for human solitariness, which features not only independence, but durable contentment as our original condition. Taking aim at Hobbes as well as others, he argues that the unruly passions which cause so much disorder today and throughout recorded history are not as innate as is claimed; rather, they are the product of the unnatural progress of social dependence and imagination. We saw in the last chapter how he conceives of our unhappiness as a result of our unnatural dependence, or weakness, and how in public life this weakness compels us to be insincere, which is essentially an annihilation of ourselves. He starts his speculations about what our beginnings tell us about who we are by examining our natural needs. He finds that they are essentially only those needs pertaining directly to our self-preservation, and ones which humans would usually have little trouble satisfying. In primitive man he sees

> An animal less strong than some, less agile than others, but all things considered, the most advantageously organized of all. I see him satisfying his hunger under an oak, quenching his thirst at the first stream, finding his bed at the foot of the same tree that furnished his meal; and therewith his needs are satisfied. (SD 105)

The foremost element of this, nutrition, is easily obtained: as opposed to the other animals, firmly ruled by their instinct and limited physiology in selecting foods, man "appropriates them all to himself, feeds himself equally well with most of the diverse foods which the other animals share, and consequently finds his subsistence more easily than any of them can" (SD 106). He adds that our bodily constitutions would be far stronger than the civilized versions we see today, noting that not only do we live a much softer life, but that diseases are almost unheard of outside of cities or other overpopulated areas (except when transported from them).

In addition to being internally robust, Rousseau argues that savage men would not (and in his time did not) fear much in the way of external threats. As for the beasts, he takes the reluctance of all animals to fight us as proof we are not the desired prey of anything. In addition to our agility with trees and all terrain, our free hands can easily use stones and sticks, or knuckles and 'nails' for defence even before the invention of more lethal instruments (SD 107-8). Their few needs and versatility also offer women the freedom to live without male partners.

Women are originally the same as men: naturally, in this account, we begin with thorough equality of the sexes. Tough, independent ladies, Rousseau posits, would enjoy casual encounters at least as much as men; also, because of being omnivorous bipeds, they would manage quite fine with a child or two on their own. Besides our adaptability in finding food and making weapons, our unique ability to move around well with babes

in arms puts solitary mothers at a significant advantage.[23] Put simply, in the presocial condition women do not need males either for protection or for assistance in rearing: independence in this sense is natural for both sexes. Whereas Rousseau places great emphasis on the physical differences between men and women in the civil condition, before they become dependent upon each other in a social situation these differences are without notable consequence.

Children would be much hardier in the state of nature than we allow them to be today, and the weak would soon perish as they do in every other species. Children would be capable runners and climbers before their mother filled her arms again with her sporadic offspring; they would shift off at eight or ten to enjoy a wandering existence on their own. Pointing out that the science of procreation would be lost on these people (as it remained in certain tribes like the Trobrianders of anthropological fame until at least very recently) – he observes that there would be no reason for the father still to be around nine months after conception even if he were needed, at least without fixed domiciles. Natural gregariousness would be the most commonly raised cause of continued contact, but as we have noted, Rousseau is taking some pains in the description of "physical" man to paint a solitary picture where social ties are unnecessary and in fact would hamper our independence; this helps establish the plausibility of the idea that we remained for a long time chiefly satisfied with the sentiment of our existence alone and that by nature we have what we need to live contentedly.

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[23] Breastfeeding serves as a birth control, and their solitariness means they are not in the continual presence of a man, making the likelihood of only one non-running child more likely. These mothers would also likely abandon a child at birth if they judged the strain of the addition too much. Rousseau claims at one point that we were frugivores, but elsewhere acknowledges our omnivorousness. See Masters (1968) 122-5.

Rousseau emphasizes the somewhat counter-intuitive notion that sex would not be a cause of war nor dependence. In most mating species, much more violence, especially within the species, occurs because of sex than food. At the outset, Rousseau says of the savage male that his "desires do not exceed his physical needs," after which he lists three original goods: "nourishment, a female, and repose," but only two evils: "pain and hunger" (SD 116). Hunger and nourishment obviously correspond to each other, as do repose and pain. One might say that being deprived of sex is like being hungry, or even psychically painful, but it is not strictly speaking either of these, especially for civilized humans – for whom sex is usually much more complex, but sometimes even less significant. Rousseau explains at some length in this early section why the physical aspect of sex is rather tame when imagination and reputation are not involved, and accordingly how reproduction and sex did not originally cause the problems we imagine it causing when we consider the disputes of various animals as well as humans.

This is essentially because: first, females are not in short supply, either by nature (as he argues they effectively are when their sexual availability is limited to specific seasons or when many females mate with a single dominant male) or by convention (as when modesty prevails); and, second, men have little cause to fight for a certain woman since not only is there no narrow, tumultuous season for mating, but more importantly they do not bring their sense of worth into the act. In this solitary condition there is *no* reputation or status, as there is with all hierarchical social groups (including many, but not all, primates). The psychic emptiness of the act for these forebears, according to

Rousseau, not only gives them no reason to fight over a woman (just as we saw last chapter in the case of a meal), but renders them less inclined to engage in the act in the first place. With high supply and low demand, then, it becomes more plausible to assert that "Everyone peaceably awaits the impulsion of nature, yields to it with more pleasure than frenzy; and the need satisfied, all desire is extinguished" (SD 136).

Schwartz, whose analysis of Rousseau's presentation of natural sexuality offers many useful insights, points out that Rousseau ranks needs, and that sex begins as a secondary need and becomes a "third-order" need when imagination begins to take hold of us (Schwartz 15, 35). To illustrate his point he cites (and translates) a useful fragment:

> Other needs tend less to our preservation than to our well-being, and are properly only appetites, but sometimes so violent, that they torment us more than do true needs; however, there is never an absolute necessity to satisfy them, and all know only too well that to live is not to live well.
>
> The needs of this second class have as their object the luxury of sensuality, of softness, the union of the sexes and everything that flatters our senses. (Fragments OC vol. 3, 530, from Schwartz 15)

As a sensual pleasure, sex is not a need but is still a good natural humans would desire. With the same lack of taste with which they find a meal almost anywhere, though, there would be even less cause to fight for women; it is not an urgent need as food is, and so none would do almost as well as any. As he asserts in note (l), in opposition to Locke (who uses the pattern of parents raising their children as proof of natural companionship), monogamy of any sort requires "more progress or corruption in human understanding

than can be supposed in man in the state of animality in question here" (SD 219). "Here," in the original, animalistic condition of 'mankind' in the *Second Discourse*, he provides an argument for natural promiscuity which – like the argument for utter asociality it is so bound up with – one finds nowhere else in his corpus. We will attempt to explain this curiosity in the sections that follow, for it is of obvious importance to our theme.

After explaining the significance of our anatomy, Rousseau says "I have to this point considered only physical man; let us now try to look at him from the metaphysical and moral side." All animals are, in his estimation, "ingenious machines" given senses and instincts by nature with which they preserve themselves. But the other animals are entirely guided by their instinct, while "man contributes to his operations by being a free agent." Whereas the animals cannot deviate from their programming, even when it would be beneficial to do so, for reasons which we touched on last chapter, "man deviates from it" even though it is "often to his detriment" (SD 113). Pre-social man finds himself in a happy middle ground, with an innate adaptability that diminishes natural suffering, and a limited imagination that diminishes unnatural suffering. Because he deviates from nature categorically less often and profoundly than civilized man, he thereby has a more durable happiness: "his soul, agitated by nothing, is given over to the sole sentiment of its present existence" (SD 117). This includes agitations of conscience, since his reasoning has not developed enough to conceive of a love of order or creator, to say nothing of caring for the rules which a prophet or philosopher might derive from them. More generally, though, this solitary is content because he does not feel deprived

of the plenitude of imaginary goods. As opposed to social men, who are full of complaints and even take their own lives, Rousseau challenges the reader to conceive "what type of misery there can be for a free being whose heart is at peace and whose body is healthy?" (SD 127).

Freedom, in the most important sense for Rousseau, consists in not being dependent on things beyond our control, like desire and especially opinion (Cooper 58), and this independence is obviously remarkably secure for the early, solitary, human. In another important sense, though, it consists in the capacity to overrule instinct purposefully – in this way we differ from the other animals and "it is above all in the consciousness of this freedom that the spirituality of (our) soul is shown" (SD 114). The early man is not very spiritual (as we have seen, he is not really distinguishable from an animal) and so he is free in the first sense, but not the second. Rousseau acknowledges that the notion of freedom of the will has a host of "difficulties surrounding" it rendering it questionable; whether because of the two opposing audiences he is trying to persuade (philosophers and Christians) or for more profound reasons, the degree of Rousseau's materialism is not entirely clear.[24]

This radical depiction of us as naturally free of all bonds has a double purpose: it undermines the ancient premise that we are innately political as well as the modern

[24] Even commentators who agree on much of Rousseau's thought (e.g. Melzer and Cooper) fail to find common ground here. The interpretive problem centers on the fact that Rousseau's strongest statements in favour of dualism occur in the "Profession," which is attributed to another, and the "Lettres Morales," edifying epistles for his beloved intended to strengthen her virtue. At the same time, and as will be discussed further in the next chapter, conscience, or the love of order, seems to be a central principle for him which is beyond both materialism and rhetoric.

version of this that we are naturally in a condition of war. Instead, Rousseau's model of independence, peace, and lack of any type of vanity is one that allows him to emphasize the unity and self-sufficiency he considers so crucial to our attainment of happiness. In the next section we will see that it does not mean that the family is not natural, but it does establish that our individualism is even more fundamental. By showing how the family can coexist with this individualism, we will understand both concepts better.

Naturally Solitary, Natural Families, or Both?

As indicated, the most dubious element of this influential recasting of our origins is Rousseau's claim that we have not generally been in couples throughout our history. Anthropologists have come up with a history that matches Rousseau's speculations in many respects, with the notable exception of the presumption against the family's historical pervasiveness. As we will see in the next few pages, it is not so clear Rousseau himself really believed it was true; more importantly, his characterization of our nature is rhetorically enhanced by the extreme independence but does not really rely on it. Instead I will argue that it is a theoretical construct which, in addition to sidelining the ancient and modern perspectives, illuminates two important truths about us: individualism is a fundamental physical fact in that our existence and feelings occur within discrete bodies, and our political freedom is premised on our ability not only to choose to live in a different society, but to drop out of all of them and live as a solitary. It is not intended to undermine the family as a fundamentally natural unit, as our analysis will show.

One piece of evidence suggesting the dubiousness of his attachment to extended universal solitariness as our first age is the almost off-hand explanation of how the period of radical solitude came to an end. In a few sentences near the beginning of part two he describes the invention of hatchets making huts easy to build as the cause of "a first revolution" featuring the differentiation of families (SD 146). Cohabitation begins out of the easy comfort of sharing a sexual partner's shelter, and suddenly these humans begin experiencing "the sweetest sentiments known to men: conjugal love and paternal love. Each family became a little society all the better united because reciprocal affection and freedom were its only bonds" (SD 147). This explanation is obviously inadequate: for one thing it is hard to imagine that people could not have put a shelter together without hatchets. Making family an accidental byproduct of an invention serves a theoretical purpose, however, in that it supports the fundamental independence he wants to establish and which is even emphasized in the quote above: "reciprocal affection and freedom were its only bonds." Our inherent natures do not *compel* us to couple up, which might suggest natural duties that accord with such a necessary relationship. Rather, many chose to make families for the free pursuit of pleasing affections; affections which importantly add to, but do not make up, our happiness. These sentiments are, however, not only more vivid than anything else the possessor of mere existence is depicted as enjoying, but the "sweetest" of *all* human sentiments: it is hard to imagine their charm would not have made itself felt before someone had invented whatever tools were needed for a hut.

In the very sentence where he introduces this revolutionary hut, he undermines its novelty. He says that it replaces the practice not only of sleeping "under the first tree"

(which presumably a couple might get in the habit of doing together) but of "withdraw(ing) into caves" (SD 146). This is the second mention he makes of this very fixed domicile. Rousseau was well aware of the Cyclops race mythologized in Homer's *Odyssey*, who were shepherds that lived in caves (anthropologists also tell us that many of our forebears and their humanoid rivals used them). While some lived together in small families, the one Odysseus meets is alone. These uncivilized creatures, like Rousseau's pre-civilized humans, lived either in couples or alone, according to chance – and, presumably – choice. Even in the case of those who did form a bond, they would likely live alone before getting a mate, and after he passes away. Moreover, an essential feature of caves is that their size, location, and number are entirely fixed. Accordingly, only some people can live in them and extra offspring have to shift off and find somewhere else to sleep; also important is that while some clusters of caves are found together, cave-dwellers cannot choose to form a village.

By referring to caves, Rousseau seems to be hinting that these first humans did not live alone all the time, but he still establishes that it is not so unnatural to subsist solitarily: providential nature gives us enough to be happy regardless of whether other humans contribute to it. Because of Rousseau's theory of the sentiment of existence, he can say that – by nature at least – humans living alone could be content. Additionally, we are not by nature bound to our mate except by inclination. Women can, as they often do now, raise a child alone, and men can make their contribution to the perpetuation of the species without spending more than a few minutes with the mother. A key description of

our natural freedom (contrasting with the Hobbesian state of war) is made at the earlier place caves are mentioned in the discourse:

> A man might well seize the fruits another has gathered, the game he has killed, the cave that served as his shelter; but how will he ever succeed in making himself obeyed? And what can be the chains of dependence among men who possess nothing?...if someone torments me in one place, who will prevent me from going to another? (SD 139)

This point is made in reference to slavery or servitude of any kind, but obviously applies to any domestic bondage as well. Women do not need to stay with men they do not wish to, just as no human has any duty to any other. Whether in caves, or roaming from tree to tree, a man and woman might still have elected to live together "with affection and freedom as their only bonds."

This 'new' living situation, Rousseau claims, brought about the "first developments of the heart" by causing sustained interaction between spouses and generations. Using mere 'domestic' languages referring only to their few needs, however, these initial developments of the heart did not coincide with similar intellectual or political advances. In fact, and this is crucial to the interpretation offered here, Rousseau immediately refers to this affectionate family as living a "simple and *solitary* life" (emphasis mine). The seeds of language, arts, and division of labour lie in this family dwelling, but neither these questionable fruits nor the pride they grow with exist here originally – even with some sociability activated. Pity is made more active as the heart develops, but the only bonds are "affection and freedom," not *amour-propre* and dependence.

Accordingly, in the fundamental respect, coupling up in a cave or hut does not alter the condition of natural man: he is still free and solitary, but happier because his sentiment of existence is extended over his spouse and children without becoming weaker. All the key features of the bare abstraction of 'Part One' endure, because the participants remain solitary and untouched by cultural as well as economic dependence. Masters also makes this argument (132), presenting similar observations about the statements about the hypothetical character of part one, the fact that he never repeats the solitary claim elsewhere, and the fact that nothing essential about the condition changes if he happens to share his solitary wandering with a mate. He adds evidence put together through a consideration of clues in the text and footnotes[25] as well as indications from Rousseau's correspondence, and emphasizes how much more fundamental the lack of language (logos) is (133-5), than the lack of minimal companionship. He points out how significant it is that we cannot make obligations to a spouse or any other without advanced reason and well-developed language; so long as men are mute, any gregariousness will not alter the essential individuality and especially animality (amorality) of their condition. Opening up the heart, however, means that other important changes are now possible. While the early changes are positive ones which bring us to our happiest epoch in primitive society, those which follow the first family are all mixed in such a way that before long they lead in too many cases to a kind of slavery that Rousseau bemoans.

[25] As he notes, in making this point Rousseau says it is unimaginable why men would have any more need for each other than monkeys or wolves: two species that usually live in families or small packs, but do not "need" to. He also considers the comparison to pongos and other sociable apes as further evidence that this is not decisive for Rousseau in the way that language is.

The main difference between the hut and the cave is that huts are easily made almost anywhere (with or without hatchets). This means on the one hand that there is virtually no reason to fight over them, and that a habit of moving around – whether in pursuit of food, or away from people – is still relatively easy; thus, the independent, peaceful, solitary condition is not directly threatened by the art of hutbuilding itself. On the other hand, these domiciles can also be moved together, and small villages can now be created. It is this development that will prove to be the real "revolution of the hut": the hut itself only provides the environment for sweet human affections to grow in accordance with solitary happiness. Huts are liberating in that they are accessible to everyone; caves are exclusive enough that they would be something to fight over: besides independence, peace is the other aspect of nature Rousseau is intent on establishing.

So long as they remain mute and self-sufficient it seems that, in terms of *freedom*, or the lack of barriers to enjoying the sentiment of existence, it does not matter much whether natural humans live alone or with a mate. It is surely the case, however, that this freedom and existence is understood much better after its presentation in part one. That is to say, by depicting our independent enjoyment of existence so starkly we are able to see the family as a gentle addition we would be drawn into to extend our happiness, but not proof of essential sociality or a political nature. The development of family bonds adds the "sweetest sentiments known to man" and extends the sentiment of existence of each; accordingly, inasmuch as it does not substantially threaten the sufficiency of the

condition of natural individuality there is no reason not to think this is a happier condition.

In the earliest forms it is also not categorically different than being alone in the sense that there is neither moral or imaginative development nor dependence. Speaking earlier of sexuality in the radically solitary condition Rousseau avers, "limited solely to that which is physical in love, and fortunate enough to be ignorant of those preferences which irritate its sentiment and augment its difficulties... imagination, which causes so much havoc among us, does not speak to savage hearts" (SD 135); while the cohabitators enjoy more than the mere physical pleasure, at the outset they are still in a kind of blessed ignorance regarding imagined preferences. However one understands the significance of part one, in the *Second Discourse* family affections are natural, since they exist before politics, language, morality, and indeed any other sociability. Not only do they develop relatively early in this literal account of the state of nature (recall that only after "multitudes of centuries" (SD 146) does the establishment of property and government end this condition), our lives remain pre-moral and "solitary" so long as we are only in a family.

In the *Essay on Language*, written a few years after the controversial *Second Discourse* but not published in his lifetime, Rousseau lends credence to this inference about the primeval status of the family by never referring to a pre-familial stage, instead describing "the first times" at a point much like the solitary family stage we see here: Self-sufficient families with a crude domestic language where sincere conjugal passions

provide all the psychic fulfillment they desired. Not only does he say that for a long time they had no need for outside contact, but they dispersed themselves across the habitable areas of the earth to avoid strangers, whom they considered hardly any different than any other beast: "they had the idea of a Father, brother, son, but not of a man. Their hut held all those who were like themselves; a stranger, an animal, a monster were all the same to them: outside of themselves and their family, the whole universe was naught to them" (EOL 268). The extension of the heart in the family is the basis from which Rousseau plausibly suggests we eventually develop our sense of the species, and even the greater order. We will also see, however, that the (complementary?) power of shrinking the universe down into a small world for ourselves is central to his teaching and a core feature of his praise of the possible role of the family throughout his works.

This power of defining the limits of the world that we care about is also part of the foundation of nationalism, as he makes clear in the sequel to the above quote. Defending something like the failed argument made by Polemarchus in the beginning of Plato's *Republic* (that justice is doing good to one's friends and harm to one's enemies) Rousseau explains that this limiting quality is what explains "the apparent contradictions one sees in the fathers of nations" who can be so vicious to all outsiders and tender towards those they love: "all their sentiments concentrated among their near ones were therefore the more energetic." Whether referring to the superficial high-society types or the earnest cosmopolitans, Rousseau believes that there is an economy in our souls such that affections cannot be spread very far without losing their vigour. Abstract rules of justice based on ideals of human equality or excellence will gain little traction when it comes to

establishing the kinds of bonds between people that make us willing to sacrifice work and well-being for the sake of others. There must be clear boundaries set to define the cause, and this means in relation to others. After his own body, the hut is the place man set this boundary for a long time while our natures were formed. In modern society, Rousseau would have us re-establish the boundary of our universe here to a large extent, thereby making our sentiments more energetic in addition to being closer to nature.

Thus, despite what might seem to some a wretchedly brutish existence, in accordance with his system Rousseau does not disparage this condition where no arts and letters, industry, or refinements of any sort ennobled us. While in the supposedly more solitary *Second Discourse* it is the primitive society that is out "happiest epoch," here it is the separate family era that is our "golden age" because of the even greater peace that reigned. In one of his clearest confrontations with Hobbes he declares:

> These times of barbarism were the golden age; not because men were united, but because they were separated. Everyone, it is said, considered himself to be master of everything; that may be so; but no one knew or desired anything but what was ready to hand: his needs, far from drawing him closer to those like himself, draw him away from them. Men may have attacked one another upon meeting, but they rarely met. Everywhere the state of war prevailed, yet the whole world was at peace. (EOL 268-9)

Because their lives were "solitary" and "poore" they were in some ways "brutish," but not "nasty" and "short." They had small herds, or hunted, and centuries would pass in which families would do no more than limit contact with outsiders: isolationism, besides minimal trade for some, would be the sole foreign policy. This matches the nascent

family stage in the *Second Discourse*, where he says of these pre-social solitary humans (who, it has been argued, can live in couples or alone) that "nothing is so gentle as man in his primitive state" (SD 150). Lacking pride, or *amour-propre*, these humans did not seek revenge and avoided competition whenever possible.

Given what we know about Rousseau's critique of modernity, and even civilization simply, we might guess that the emergence of *amour-propre* and anger would be lamented. Indeed, in line with the "golden age" depiction above, the men of "the first state of nature," those blissfully immune from "injury" above, are glowingly described as "placed by nature at equal distances from the stupidity of brutes and the fatal enlightenment of civil man" and ruled by "natural pity" (SD 150). Rousseau quickly corrects the impression one might get that this placement at the exact center of the spectrum of animal and (over)civilized human suggests the peak of happiness. Instead, it is the emergence of not only family affections but *amour-propre* and morality that lifts the species into its best condition, which he terms "nascent society." Before the advent of society, people are extremely limited in terms of language and thinking, and even if this may be in ways quite enviable (recall it is unified feeling which counts most for Rousseau) it is not simply something we can re-create now that these faculties have progressed as far as they have in us. Moreover, we should not seek to, because life reduced to family alone is stunted. Just as Rousseau praises the social humans at the end of the natural state over their more solitary forebears, we will see that his modern family depictions are importantly enhanced by friendships and engagement with the surrounding community.

Still, for all our achievements in not only security of life, but enrichments of leisure like art and music, Rousseau does not say that our lives are better than the vivid, narrow world of freedom the pre-social humans enjoyed. And even if civilized life is theoretically or potentially superior, he also, and on similar grounds, repeatedly forces us to consider whether the majority of our 'civilized' history has consisted of phases of decrepitude in which most of our lives fall far beneath the cavemen on the scale that matters most: happiness. Even if the solitary family is not to be emulated in its entirety, however, the innocence and naturalness of its affections are something Rousseau believes we can and should recapture, albeit on the level of civilized humanity. While one can (as some progressives do) draw from his presentation of our free and solitary nature that family is not a necessary part of happiness and does not necessitate inherent duties, Rousseau establishes that by nature the family is a unique relationship wherein we can enhance our existence by adding the "sweetest sentiments known to man" while preserving an important element of independence from the dangers of broader social interaction. While there may not be imperatives to mate for life, there are good reasons to elect to, and dangers in store for any society that encourages people not to.

Love and Society: Humankind's Happiest Condition

As we have seen, he defends the worth of the entirely asocial man's life and depicts it as the core of our nature to establish the sentiment of one's existence as the basis for his political and philosophic outlook, as opposed to fear (Hobbes), wealth (Locke), wisdom or justice (Ancients), or piety. This is urgent in modern life because of

the threat in our superficial society of its annihilation. Whether this utterly solitary description is more or less of an abstraction, it is crucial to note that he praises the family life more highly than solitude, and highest of all the family man of the simple, pre-political, natural society, for he has the fullest degree of existence before its general corruption (by 'instituted inequality' among other things).

What is more, he never really contradicts this praise, even if his focus in other works is on civil rivals who manage to 'uncorrupt' their way of life – be it the Greek-like citizen of the *First Discourse* and the *Social Contract*, the Genevan of the "Dedicatory Letter", or the 'natural man in bourgeois society' we find in *Emile* and to some extent *Julie*. It is not the solitary being who resembles the orang-utan that is the standard he seeks to imitate in his portrayals of these lives, but the pre-political social stage of humanity.[26] While the foregoing is a reminder of the virtues of the family alone as a more natural bonding agent, society emerges as a force which irrevocably transforms our existence and intellect from the conditions of the isolated family. It is social relations that do in a meaningful sense make us fully human, but this advance becomes more questionable the farther society strays from the sweet ties of family and friendship.

"It is only necessary in his species to establish the first relations of society to give to his sentiments a morality unknown to beasts" (LT 86-87). Obviously, this statement

[26] The solitary contemplative of Rousseau's autobiographical works, especially the *Reveries*, comes closest to a return to the utterly asocial being of the *Second Discourse*, but even there he speaks of his wife and dog as valuable companions, and his vivid imagination and thirst for beauty as both the cause of his inability to live in society and the nourishment of his solitude. He is not natural man, nor does he claim to be; rather, his happiness shows that finding a welcome place in advanced society is not required for happiness.

implies more strongly than anything in the books extolling our primitive constitution that the solitary man is not really human; at the same time it backs up the still radical notion that the first experiences of society were enough to generate in us a sense of the essentials of moral conduct (see also SD 144). In this section we will see that as families come together in the natural society, pride as well as love emerges with natural human morality. All these precede the generally corrupt attempts at law and political power. The character of these phenomena are important to understand if one is to grasp Rousseau's understanding of family values as critical to moral health in our age.

When families settle near each other, they make more refined observations about others and themselves, and young people develop affinities in their frequentations that shatter the peaceful self-sufficiency which the families had previously enjoyed:

> People grow accustomed to consider different objects and to make comparisons; imperceptibly they acquire ideas of merit and beauty which produce sentiments of preference. By dint of seeing one another, they can no longer do without seeing one another again. A tender and gentle sentiment is gradually introduced into the soul and at the least obstacle becomes an impetuous fury. Jealousy awakens with love; discord triumphs, and the gentlest of the passions receives sacrifices of human blood. (SD 148-9)

In this crucial passage, we see that love, which is connected to domestic affections but points beyond them, is a springboard for generating a sense of self and worth. The domestic affections of the cave and hut are the first thing to activate our hearts in a peaceful way; the introduction of particularized love for a non-family member is the first thing to activate our sense of justice or righteous indignation and the closely connected

desire for revenge. While quiet about the subject in the *Second Discourse*, Rousseau admits that the "golden age" in the *Essay on Language* required incest to perpetuate its radically xenophobic peace. In both books, blending families in the union of the young is the initial bridge to distinctly human socialization: to some extent this continues to be true. Only with love are humans capable of conceiving of an enemy; only with love are we able to hate. The settling of the sexes into a shared life begins the process of recognizing morality, or a sense of virtue and vice, in a simply practical sense: i.e. those qualities which made survival easier, or more pleasant. As families and individuals begin to compare themselves with others we begin to develop the tools which lead to a more human or cosmic justice such as a sense of order, self-consciousness, and sympathy – as opposed to the prevailing natural 'justice' which consisted of the impersonal right of the stronger.

As we began to settle amongst other families, we became cognizant not only of the species, but of the differences between its members. At first, "song and dance, the true children of love and leisure" were the "amusement, or rather the occupation of idle and assembled men and women." This is when our more developed heart feels the effects of what might be called 'nascent vanity':

> Each one began to look at the others and to want to be looked at himself, and public esteem had a value. The one who sang the best, the handsomest, the strongest, the most adroit, or the most eloquent became the most highly considered; and that was the first step toward inequality and, at the same time, toward vice. (SD 149)

Then, as the "idea of consideration was formed in their minds, each one claimed a right to it, and it was no longer possible to be disrespectful toward anyone with impunity" (SD 149). Before general notions of right and justice exist, and before any economic dependence, it is inter-mating amongst others which gives a preeminent urgency to "ideas of merit and beauty," (SD 148) and the longing to hold and behold a beloved gives us the first passion we would get angry enough to kill for. Even self-preservation hardly did this previously, since there is no concept of injury so long as we do not take things personally or in light of what we believe we deserve.

The first societies create a realm in which distinctions between people begin to carry currency; put another way, people develop a reputation in the eyes of others that can be useful (or detrimental) – but in this natural society nearly the only respect in which this matters is for finding a mate early on, and perhaps giving some meagre advantage to your children as they grow up. By nature, then, we modestly try to improve and display ourselves for the sake of love and family. At the end of this last paragraph, which describes the bloodshed that occurs before any notion of owning land has arisen, he ironically quotes "the axiom of the wise Locke, *where there is no property, there is no injury*" (SD 150). For Rousseau, the first and most important piece of property is reputation. Reputation only emerges as something significant when it carries weight in the eyes of mates, and the first fights were over mates once they became signifiers of it. Although he famously begins the second half with a reference to the first claimant of a piece of land as the founder of civil society and thereby of instituted inequality, it is the first girl who spurned an admirer in favour of the one who danced or hunted better that

was the founder of the first social inequality and *amour-propre*. As we will see in this work, Rousseau attempts to preserve or re-establish this ascendancy for women as the judges of men, and do so in a way that scales back the realm of vanity to that which is more natural and suitable to true happiness.

As relations became established between people, "morality" emerged, and as we have seen, each was the "judge and avenger" of his case, or that of his family and friends. With this fundamental alteration,

> The goodness suitable for the pure state of nature was no longer that which suited nascent society... it was up to the terror of revenge to take the place of the restraint of laws. Thus although men had come to have less endurance and although natural pity had already undergone some alteration, this period of the development of human faculties, maintaining a golden mean between the indolence of the primitive state and the petulant activity of our vanity, must have been the happiest and most durable epoch. (SD 150-1)

On the heels of his declaration that the gentle first humans were as far from animal stupidity as 'fatal enlightenment' (SD 150), we now see that this first age was one of too little development: if we were not entirely stupid, we were not making enough of our potential, or 'perfectibility', to experience sufficient existence to rank happiest. Instead, it is the social but not political human who is at the "golden mean" of developing enough faculties to achieve a fullness of existence that is not compromised by vanity-induced corruption. It is worth reiterating here that while this high point is not in the "first" or "pure" state of nature (SD 150), this condition is still part of the state of nature – which only ends with the introduction of laws and the idea of a right to property. Nature's

providence is shown in that we improve as a species so long as we remain natural; nature's lack of potency, however, underlies Rousseau's lament that we were driven out of this epoch "by some fatal accident, which for the common good ought never to have happened... and... all subsequent progress has been in appearance so many steps towards the perfection of the individual, and in fact toward the decrepitude of the species" (SD 151).

In his elaboration of that which sustains the happiness and freedom of these people, we see that to an important degree they remain happy so long as they preserve that which was the hallmark of the solitary family: independence. The little crafts and other niceties which began with the domestication of the hut are of course continued in this situation where appearance, and presumably artistry, begin to have some value. When these activities were limited to simple things that could be done with animal parts and things readily provided for by nature, they were not a threat to independence, even if they contributed to a little rivalry. So long as one person could perform any of the tasks themselves, "they lived free, healthy, good, and happy insofar as they could be according to their nature, and they continued to enjoy among themselves the sweetness of independent intercourse" (SD 151). Just as the change into the hut added to the solitary's happiness without threatening his freedom, so does the family entering the village gain friends without *necessarily* making any enemies, even if they are now conceivable. Families gather to enjoy song and dance together, and maybe for some added safety in numbers or other small advantages, but the family is still very much more fundamental

and each family is free to strike off elsewhere should the relationship with the village be less than sweet.

This phase continues more or less intact right up to "the point reached by most of the savage peoples known to us" (SD 150) and is the natural end of man's development. The shedding of human blood amongst various 'native' tribes seen by voyaging Europeans at the time was argued by many to be proof of our violent tendencies and the need for government. Rousseau counters that while for naturally social men there is bloodshed in retaliation to offenses, there are far fewer offenses and on a much smaller scale than we find in modern society; indeed, when more primitive cultures became most barbarous it was usually when they had become too political: that is, when they lost their naturalness. People think of cannibalism and human sacrifice when considering the 'savagery' of 'precivilized' peoples, but in fact the worst of these rituals are usually found in unnaturally stratified societies (such as the Aztecs and Mayans). As he later remarks, it is only when politics is established that real wars start, and only in well developed nation-states where these wars feature "reprisals which make nature tremble and shock reason," and where "more murders (are) committed in a single day of fighting and more horror in the capture of a single city than were committed in the state of nature during whole centuries over the entire face of the earth" (SD 161). Moreover, the propensity of each to exact revenge serves to check the ambitions of potential offenders who might well deem their chances of escape greater in an impersonal policed society than when the enraged clansmen of the offended give relentless pursuit.

While he surely underscores the dangers of family feuds, the thumotic vengefulness of early social man is not a barrier to happiness in Rousseau's estimation; in fact, it is a big part of what makes this life more full than his ancestor's. It is the things that soften this life, the things that make it easier, and the things he can become dependent on, that cause his corruption. Rousseau gives a brief account of how "Nascent society gave way to the most horrible state of war" (SD 157): as the last chapter illustrated, it is dependence caused by a division of labour that gives rise to a kind of inequality that ruins relations amongst us.

In nascent family and non-political society, we were able to remain free and independent; that is, ourselves with others added. With nascent inequality, we lose ourselves because we need others so much we are compelled to be what they want us to be. Rich or poor, we are all inextricably caught up in each other's opinions of us, and we cannot sincerely value these opinions because they are all self- serving. As argued in chapter one above, in this mindset we cannot be happy because our existence is fractured and spread about. We will see that Rousseau's romantic and married couples are also 'caught up' in the opinion of each other, and even the surrounding community to some extent, but that this is not psychically maiming because we genuinely want the best for each other inasmuch as we love each other, which love commands and compels a sincere and shared concern for virtue in ourselves and our partner.

We saw above that our natural goodness was modified when pride arose in early society, and yet our condition improved. The revolution of 'property', though, distorts our pride in a way that makes us turn against each other, because unlike spousal or

friendly relationships there is now a zero-sum environment: once the useful land is claimed by some, the rest have a hard time making a living without working for someone who profits from their labour. The workers' alternative is to take his productive property by force, and perhaps the boss' life as the surest means to get it. The situation at this point looks very much like that depicted by Hobbes: because we are *not as* solitary and brutish, life *is* nasty and short. The difference is that by placing our natural existence in a condition that preceded property, wealth, and economic independence, Rousseau can deduce much different principles concerning the requirements and possibilities of politics. He can also undermine the commercially-based regime praised by Locke inasmuch as he persuades his readers to see the goal of estate enhancement as a relatively late and artificial development, one which exacerbates the problem of social harmony and which modern politics will struggle to address without firmly counter-balancing greed and selfishness with love and community.

Many of those who oppose the traditional family place greater emphasis on the freedom and independence of the natural man and bemoan the institution of the family for causing the very sort of alienation and exploitation Rousseau sees in so many political arrangements. In particular, feminists argue that women are put under the mastery of men. Before leaving the *Second Discourse* for the family scenes in other works, we will note the critique of 'paternalism' he makes, for it highlights the essence of his insights on the difference between relationships of love and power.

As opposed to arguments for absolute government based on the presumed equivalence of the need for children to obey their fathers completely, Rousseau counters that "It suffices to note that nothing is farther from the ferocious spirit of despotism than the gentleness of that authority which looks more to the advantage of the one who obeys than to the utility of the one who commands" (SD 165), and "that by the law of nature" they become free from and equal to their parents as soon as they can care for themselves (see also SC 1.2, p.47). After this the only thing expected from one's children should be respect and gratitude, and these cannot be compelled as a right, but only freely given (just as pre-political parental attention was and all forms of affection are). This phenomenon of genuinely caring for someone for their own sake, or because their happiness is meaningful to you in itself, is something that becomes more and more rare as we become more dependent upon people outside our close-knit group.

As indicated in the last chapter, there are two ways this situation can be changed: at the political level a true community governed by the general will can replace the exploitative character of typical associations, and at the personal level one can pull away from immersion in corrupt society and invest whole-heartedly in the household with a few good friendships and apolitical causes in the community. Not only is the political solution a much greater undertaking but it is outside the scope of our work; we now focus instead on the case Rousseau makes for the family, a case which becomes more detailed in each of the three major works written between the more abstractly philosophic *Second Discourse* and *Social Contract*.

Concerning the argument that the dependence caused by a division of labour between men and women comprises the root of what is wrong with gender relations today, Rousseau's analysis offers many insights into the dangers of the dependence wives in certain circumstances face. That said, however, he clearly differentiates between mutual dependence combined with genuine affection, and the resentment natural to one that feels used and enslaved. By explaining how nascent society differs from the post-property, or political stage, we have outlined the basis of Rousseau's teaching on how domestic relations, unless without sincere affection, are categorically different than those in broader society and do not entail oppression. This done, we will in the rest of the chapter examine the treatise on Geneva and the fictional family in *Julie* to see how Rousseau envisions domestic life retaining this natural freedom even in civilized times.

The intention of the chapter to this point has been to fill out the basic characterization of our natures, and the ways in which our 'progress' out of the state of nature has in fact made our lives more difficult. In so doing, we have seen in greater detail what it is about the family that conveys so much of what Rousseau approves of over against the forces of civilization that pressure us to be productive, rational, individuals. In the family setting we can sincerely extend our existence into others because we care about them for their own sake; we are not in a situation where we need to claw our way over those around us or drown in a pond of servitude. The family is natural, the office building is not, and we have seen the reasons why Rousseau thinks that our attempts to get above nature usually have the opposite effect. We have also outlined

the relatively natural character of love and its close link with morals and *amour-propre* – although this connection will become more and more the focus as we move ahead.

The more we locate ourselves in the natural settings, the more we anchor our existence there, the happier we will be. When we become entirely immersed in the opposite, we lose all hope for feeling our existence in any unified way, for being at all virtuous, and are left weak and wretched – even if we are not materially poor. That said, he also acknowledges that we cannot go back, and for a long time we have been struggling with how best to order what is artificial in our lives in light of our natures. We will turn now to the practical advice he gives us on how to refashion ourselves and our communities in a way that can give back pre-eminence to family, and make happiness the rule rather than the exception. We will analyze two very different, but as we will see closely related, writings: the *Letter to D'Alembert*, perhaps his most 'conservative' work, helps broadly define the dangers he saw in the decline of families and marriage; *Julie* is a very popular romantic novel that provides a detailed account of why family is worth devoting oneself to and how women are strongest when they differ the most from men.

The Perils of the Theatre

In 1757, d'Alembert's article on Geneva for *l'Encyclopedie* was published and amidst the praise for its republican institutions was a passage recommending that the city-state remove its ban against theatres. This prompted Rousseau, the famed 'Citizen of Geneva', to write the "*Letter to d'Alembert on the Theatre*" which is really a book on the

practical *moeurs* of a polity – especially with regard to the effect of theatrical arts on the virtue of a people.

In his considerations on how the introduction of a theatre would change Geneva, Rousseau provides an account of the deep connections between the history, laws, habits, and desires of a people. In this case they turn largely on the themes of his *First Discourse*: luxury, vanity, and corruption. Should the laws be changed to allow even a strictly governed theatre community to set up shop, the inevitable consequence will be that the robustly independent, hard working, God-fearing Genevans will be weakened by an attachment to money and flattery, made to feel dissatisfied with their lives, and the republicanism so praised in the rest of d'Alembert's piece will be lost.

First of all, building a theatre and roads will require taxes; in addition to this cost, people will have to make more money to afford tickets as well as new outfits for their night out. No longer will their labours be directly in the service of either their amusements or their household needs; instead, additional work will now have to be done for the sake of paying for an external pleasure unrelated to the household. In addition to the men's clubs and wives' gatherings we will describe below, Rousseau depicts in detail how family, friends, neighbours, servants and farm hands enjoy honest and wholesome festivities at Clarens on Sundays. Speaking against Puritanism, as he invariably does, he says that rather than having everyone go into town to drink, dance, and gamble, why not do the same in the honest company of the homestead. The Wolmar's set aside a modest amount of money to serve as a prize for competitions, wine flows freely, and Julie herself

dances with anyone (J 373-5). In this way, everyone is preserved from the moral and financial dangers posed by the "loose women" and dubious conversation of the cabaret, but all still enjoy themselves with frolic and entertainment. In addition, young people are provided with an opportunity to mix with the opposite sex in an environment suited to decent courtship, so important to the development of good character.

More important than the dependence entailed in these economic observations is that the pleasures in question threaten their dedication to their duties: on no stage are people entertained by common life done properly, unless it is being mocked. Though the theatre may seem a place where the family or even community can get together, Rousseau observes that we go there to escape our cares and isolate ourselves, then superficially show ourselves off at intermission. Far from being a place where we are taught morals, he argues that our passions are excited in a way that no contrived 'poetic justice' can guide properly. Of his beloved Moliere, he says that "His greatest care is to ridicule goodness and simplicity and to present treachery and falsehood so that they arouse our interest and sympathy," and that his fellow playwrights are "men who, at the most, sometimes make fun of the vices without ever making virtue loved" (LT 34).

To demonstrate his point, he provides a substantive analysis of "The Misanthrope," the gist of which is that the austere moralist comes quite close to being an inspiring model for a decent person, but that the only way Moliere can make his plot entertain is to place incongruous flaws in his virtue. In both comedies and romances, sober, moderate, and wise elderly men are the most widely ridiculed – whether for their

resentful prudishness or incapacity to feel romantic love and generate it in others. Sage elderly men become doddering fools who need to learn lessons from enlightened young women. In short, the theatre pleases by turning the natural order of things upside down, and repeatedly arousing vicious passions which are not adequately offset even by the happiest of happy endings. There is much in these reflections to arm those today who want to attack 'Hollywood' for its pernicious effect on our culture, especially given that it is undeniable that the theatrical arts are a bigger part of what makes for a shared culture in our day than ever before.

The Harmony of the Sexes

Rousseau places the corrupted supremacy of women at the core of his depiction of the decadent transformation the introduction of the theatre would cause. Whereas the comedies of ancient times often featured love stories and their tragedies centred on moral and political themes, Rousseau (the romanticist) laments that in his time love had become the chief vehicle of all drama. Once, great questions like war, empire, death, freedom, and duty were the themes of tragedy, but Rousseau explains that

> Since Moliere and Corneille, only romances, under the name of dramatic plays, succeed in the theatre.
>
> Love is the realm of women. It is they who necessarily give the law in it, because, according to the order of nature, resistance belongs to them, and men can conquer this resistance only at the expense of their liberty. Hence, a natural effect of this sort of play is to extend the empire of the fair sex, to make women and girls the preceptors of the public... (LT 47)

As opposed to praising sacrifice for nobility and nation, romances praise sacrifice for love. Instead of loss of reputation or good conscience being the event most feared, romances teach us to fear the loss of the affections of our beloved. While he quickly affirms that "Nature's most charming object, the one most able to touch a sensitive heart and to lead it to the good, is, I admit, an agreeable and virtuous woman," he argues that such women are getting harder to find, and more theatre-going is not likely to reverse this trend. The kind of love needed for the stage is the kind that is not bounded by society, God, or the intentions of parents. It does not feature stability, children, and community, but daring, ecstasy, and the feeling that nothing else in the world matters: it soars beyond all bounds. Rousseau, of course, does not oppose the elevation of romantic sentiments or the power of women, so long as they are firmly rooted in family values and not too self-indulgent.

A major theme in our study going forward will be the ways that Rousseau, more than any other known writer before the radical feminist movement, advocates not just equality between the sexes, but the *empire* of women. In a piece similar in tone to the one now under discussion, the "Dedicatory Letter to the Republic of Geneva" (attached to the front of the *Second Discourse*) he proclaims to his "amiable and virtuous countrywomen" that "the fate of your sex will always be to govern ours" (SD 89). When explaining that the way to end duels is to change not laws but opinion, which is primary, he ends by declaring that "I am convinced that we will never succeed in working these

changes without bringing about the intervention of women, on whom men's way of thinking in large measure depends" (LT 71-2).

In *Julie*, not only does the heroine stop a duel, but we repeatedly see the effect she has on her young lover's moral opinions and the "sweet empire" she exerts in the family setting. To over-generalize, as opposed to the 'hard power' exercised by the typical general, magistrate or policeman, women's power is in more intangible areas like traditions, social opinions, and on the erotic and domestic side of things: they do not punish with fines and sentences but reward with esteem and affection. Political and economic power aside, virtually every man cares about what women think of him and his actions; as mothers, sisters, and spouses, women consciously and unconsciously inform men's opinions on a range of issues, especially those pertaining to morals and the practicalities of everyday life. This is not to say their private realms and the public are not intricately related, of course – in fact one of Rousseau's fragmentary early works bears the title "Essay on the Important Events of which Women were the Secret Cause" (Vol. II, O.C. pp. 1257-59 – their political achievements are mostly repeated in *Emile*, 390). The private and public realms are not only related, but also mirror each other to a considerable extent: Melzer shows very clearly the ways that Rousseau envisioned the best magistrates using a more feminine approach so that the (masculine) multitude always felt that it was acting freely even while being led (Melzer, Ch.11).

Rousseau says in the "Second Preface" to *Julie* that "if there is some reform to attempt in public morals, it must begin with domestic morals, and that depends absolutely

on fathers and mothers" (J 18). Strong evidence that Rousseau sincerely believes this lies in the fact that *Emile* and especially *Julie* are written to and for young women and mothers more than any book written by any great thinker before him can be said to be.

Whereas many political philosophers tend to discuss only what can be done with adults, Rousseau understood very profoundly the influence childhood has on human beings, and accordingly the influence of women not just as wives or potential wives but as mothers: "The good constitution of children initially depends on that of their mothers. The first education of men depends on the care of women. Men's *moeurs,* their passions, their tastes, their pleasures, their very happiness depend on women" (E 365). Eileen Hunt acknowledges that despite lacking formal citizenship, Rousseau's maternal figures "perform a political role perhaps even more important than any vote cast in the popular assembly, and equal in selflessness to that of the soldier. Rousseau glorifies women as the primary educators of future citizens... and, as such, they exert as much or perhaps even more influence on politics, as it is most broadly conceived, compared to their male counterparts" (Hunt 58). She goes on to note the tremendous impact he had for over a century on movements in France and America celebrating "republican motherhood."

Not surprisingly, Rousseau evokes for his model women those coming from the same cities in which he finds his models of male citizenship: Sparta and Rome. Whereas Aristotle denigrates Sparta for the influence its women had, Rousseau praises the robust fashion in which they insisted upon the greatness of the Spartan men. In addition to nurturing their own sons, they would publicly ridicule any man lagging behind in courage

and strength. While the Spartan case represents an extreme, it suits what Rousseau considers part of women's role as the "natural judges of men's merit" (E 390), and corresponds to the more reserved but similarly strong examples from Rome, like Lucretia and the mother of Coriolanus. When St. Preux returns to live with the Wolmars, he is struck by the way Julie's affection and care serve as an even more effective motivator of conduct than the financial bonus system her husband successfully employs along with his hands-on supervision. More than anything, the workers and children ("all those who have served her even for a single day all become her children; she shares in their pleasures, sorrows, in their lot...") fear the loss of Julie's approval, which in its generosity and fairness inspires zeal: "her charms and words do much, her gentleness, her virtues do more... how powerful and worthy of worship is the empire of beneficent beauty!" (J 365-6).

Another principle held dearly in Sparta and Rome echoes the famous exhortation in Pericles' funeral oration (from a time when Athens had exceedingly upright citizens as well); namely, that it was a point of honour that any decent woman was not spoken of in public. Speaking with "enthusiasm" of Julie, St. Preux proclaims that "Heaven seems to have given her to the world in order to show at once the excellence of which a human soul is capable, and the happiness it can enjoy in the obscurity of a private life, without the assistance of resplendent virtues that can raise it higher than itself, nor the fame that can pay them honor" (J 436). While, in contrast to Julie, 'ancient women' were severe censors of men's public actions, they were themselves very private. In the context of a

reflection on the roles for women in theatre in ancient times and modern, he points out that ancients had such respect for women's modesty above all else that they:

> Thought to honor their modesty by keeping quiet about their other virtues. They had as their maxim that the land where *moeurs* were the purest was the one where they spoke the least of women, and that the best woman was the one about whom the least was said. It is on this principle that a Spartan, hearing a foreigner singing the praises of a lady of his acquaintance, interrupted him in anger: "Won't you stop," he said to him, "slandering a virtuous woman?" (LT 48)

Similarly, in the case of the roman model, Lucretia, he has her say (in his unfinished play about her):

> Do you call the sweetness of living peaceably in the bosom of one's family a prison? As for me, I have no need of any other society for my happiness nor esteem for my glory than that of my husband, my father, and my children....I have always believed that the woman who is most worthy of esteem is she of whom one speaks the least, even to praise her. May the Gods preserve my name from ever being famous: this deadly renown is purchased by our sex only at the expense of happiness or innocence. (Quoted from Schwartz 58, original in O.C. II, 1024)

This is not to say the models are the same, for in Rome the autonomy of the family was greater than in Sparta, where young warriors would live communally for much of their youth and the allegiance to the state was generally much stronger than that to the family: in fact most unnaturally so. In the opening of *Emile*, for example, after noting the degree to which Lycurgus "denatured" the Spartans, he describes the ideal female citizen as one like the Spartan who freely, and unnaturally, gives sincere praise to the gods for a victory in a battle where she loses all five of her sons.

In the case of Rome more than Sparta the political attachments are an extension of family bonds; an even less patriotic version of the Roman model is what Rousseau recommends for our times. He says in an early work that out of their overwhelming desire to avoid tyranny, the Romans "turned all their homes into as many schools for citizens; and the unlimited power of the fathers over their children placed so much severity in the private domain that the father – more feared than the magistrates – was the censor of mores and avenger of the laws in his domestic tribunal" (*Political Economy* 224). This is how they made up for the lack of a very public and public-spirited education system as in Sparta: by making the fathers directly responsible for making their sons citizens.

Placing such importance on the domestic sphere also empowers the mothers, since this is the realm in which they more easily hold sway; Rousseau recalls this Roman model in referring to Julie as a "materfamilias," and comparing her to Agrippina when St. Preux exclaims "Julie, incomparable woman! You wield in the simplicity in private life the despotic empire of wisdom and beneficence" (J 497). In accordance with his substantial demilitarization and depoliticization of the Roman model, Rousseau seeks to elevate the role of women even higher. Rather than encouraging us to seek to be one of the few in society who wield power over others, Rousseau wants to emphasize the capacity of every woman to rule over those in her household.

Rousseau's whole project regarding the family is more Roman than Spartan insofar as the end is not the breeding of men good for the city, but of dedicated fathers and husbands, who by way of the requisite virtues are also capable and reliable citizens. More important than teaching them to rule in turn with fellow citizens is ruling in turn with their wives. Rousseau is satisfied to help men and women become good for themselves and their families, partly in despair of the likelihood of them finding themselves in a republic, but also because these people with their healthy characters are the only ones who *could* find themselves in one. Despite or rather *apart* from his romanticization of Sparta and his abstract ideal in the *Social Contract*, it is much more the case that he sees the city as a collection of households than that the household is merely where a man sleeps at night before getting back to his life in the city.

In a sense, Sparta and corrupt Paris have a great deal in common regarding the family: both the men and women act publicly, and put those matters before family concerns. The difference of course was that Spartans were public spirited and Parisians vain, so the desire for public esteem in the one is laudable and in the other not. Women's role in public was to encourage good citizenship in the one, and merely to shine in the other. One might indeed argue that Rousseau's praise of the domestic over the public sphere is somewhat dictated by the near impossibility of a just city existing in modern times, but there is a reason for this, namely that such a city is ultimately so *unnatural*. The family, on the other hand, is very natural, and the encouragement of a modest amount of virtue within it comes rather easy, or naturally. Despite the tensions of domestic life there is indeed a large area of common good for those who share a

household and children. There is no need to bend and stretch our affections to cover an imagined 'brotherhood' when we keep these inclinations in the original concentrated form. These are the affections Rousseau believes we must build from to secure virtuous conduct and citizenship. Also, in terms of virtue or morals relying upon a respect for an order in which one has a modest place, when the family presents not only the obedience of children but a husband and wife working together in different ways towards a common end, the impression on children and parents alike is richer than if the parents are interchangeable (and the children treated as equals). Not only do the parents take excellence more seriously in their responsibility for guiding their children, but they practice the modest aspects of virtue in their pursuit of harmony with each other.

In this vein, along with the principles supporting the empire of women (especially here in the writing against the theatre), he makes grand statements in order to circumscribe the dominion of women's power and ensure that there are checks and balances on this rule. Among the main features of his prescription is that it is important that they not rule utterly and openly; their influence must sometimes be consented to, but mostly be indirect. Women's rule being overt usually means the men are effeminate. Rousseau believes that a republican sensibility is valuable whether one lives in a republic or not. Accordingly, it is very important that some manly independence always be preserved, which features an instinct to rebel against oppression. In his praise of Geneva, he highlights the practices and institutions which enable men to congregate regularly apart from women, such as the men's clubs and hunting trips. In addition to these institutional checks, it is also imperative that women get the proper education, one which

does not raise them either to be men, or the servants of men. This education is outlined in book five of *Emile*. It is of course true that there is a danger that men become barbarous if they are separated too much for women: in the next section we will consider Rousseau's attempt at striking the right balance.

The Dangers of Degenderization

Elaborating upon his exhortation to the women of Geneva in the 'Dedicatory Letter' which prefaces the *Second Discourse*, in both the *Theatre* and *Julie* Rousseau gives a strong argument against the convergence of the sexes he saw in French society. One of the most prominent themes to preoccupy Rousseau between the writing of the *Second Discourse* and the *Social Contract* was re-establishing gender differences in the dawning era of individualistic egalitarianism. In the *Letter to D'Alembert*, *Julie*, and *Emile*, he repeatedly and in different ways tries to induce men and women to embrace their natural differences and integrate them fully into their identities and roles in life.

Rousseau expands in the early part of book five of *Emile* upon his observations of the differences between the sexes presented in his previous works and adds new considerations as well. Most of these can be understood as a lengthy elaboration of the question posed by Socrates towards the beginning of book five of the *Republic* (454c): is the only difference between men and women that "the male mounts and the female bears?" Though the question is brushed aside so that Socrates can take his thought experiment to the extreme of eliminating families and gender from the guardian class of

his perfectly just city, the core of Rousseau's explanation here is that from the requirements of men's arousal and women's bearing of children one can deduce the moral laws of sex and love (E 358-360; see also *Julie* 104).

Rousseau is dismissed by many commentators today because he makes many fundamental discriminations based on gender. However much one disagrees with his findings, he cannot be accused of not having thought about the issue deeply. He begins book five by asserting that "in everything not connected with sex, woman is man," but then adds:

> In everything connected with sex, woman and man are in every respect related and in every respect different. The difficulty of comparing them comes from the difficulty of determining what in their constitution is due to sex and what is not. On the basis on comparative anatomy and even just by inspection, one finds general differences between them that do not appear connected with sex. They are, nevertheless, connected with sex, but by relations which we are not in a position to perceive. We do not know the extent of these relations. (E 357-8)

Modern sociobiology has in recent years given much scientific credence to this view, namely that on the basis of the reproductive advantages they bring, men and women have developed many distinct adaptations which thoroughly affect aspects of their biology and psychology. The more this evidence mounts, the more it seems that there is validity in Rousseau's claim that men and women are:

> related in so many ways and opposed in so many other ways that it is perhaps one of the marvels of nature to have been able to construct two such similar beings who are constituted so differently... [and this] shows how vain are

> the disputes as to whether one of the two sexes is superior or whether they are equal – as though each, in fulfilling nature's ends according to its own particular purpose, were thereby less perfect than if it resembled the other more! (E 358)

In the *Letter on the Theatre* Rousseau focuses upon the notion that without a preserve for each sex, they will become similar, and no matter which side 'wins', everyone loses.[27] To paraphrase Rousseau, either women will try to act like men, thereby losing their power to command allegiance, or they will make men in their image, thereby rendering men not worth commanding. Regarding the former possibility, one which bears on many of the critiques of the briefcase-toting brands of feminism in our time, he warns "The more women want to resemble them, the less women will govern them, and then men will truly be the masters" (E 363): if women try to play men's games as 'equals', they will not only fail to do as well, but will lose their status as caregivers to be protected and respected. If they openly rule with femininity, as Rousseau declaims was already largely the case with Parisian society and was likely to spread, manly virtues will fall into disrepute and there will be few interested in or capable of doing the things men are suited for such as heavy labour and fighting enemies. The 'success' of these women would not be long-lived, for such a decadent society would soon find itself in political upheaval, if not simply being overrun by 'barbarians'. This was in effect what he feared was happening to Europe, where

[27] One might object that innately effeminate men and women without domestic inclination do not lose in the move away from strict gender roles. To the extent that people are hermaphroditic by nature – and this is surely sometimes the case – this might well be true. But Rousseau would be loathe to set the norms according to the exceptions, and not only for the militaristic considerations which recommend manly men and fecund women. Although he makes exceptions for geniuses and free spirits like himself, for example, he still passionately defends the generically virtuous kinds of lives and virtually always elevates them above the exceptional cases.

> the most esteemed woman is the one who has the greatest renown, about whom the most is said, who is the most often seen in society, at whose home one dines the most, who most imperiously sets the tone, who judges, resolves, decides, pronounces, assigns talents, merit, and virtues their degrees and places, and whose favor is most ignominiously begged for by humble, learned men. (LT 49)

Not only does Rousseau argue that this feminist 'success' would be pernicious to society in the long-term, he suggests that the feminization of society creates men that are less lovable and less capable of feeling love:

> It would not be hard to show that instead of gaining by these practices, women lose. They are flattered without being loved; they are served without being honored, they are surrounded by agreeable persons but they no longer have lovers; and the worst is that the former, without having the sentiments of the latter, usurp nonetheless all the rights. The society of the two sexes, having become too usual and too easy, has produced these two effects, and it is thus that the general spirit of gallantry stifles both genius and love. (LT 104)

However this homogenization turns out, an important part of the loss is that it makes love tepid: to look ahead to one of the themes of the next chapter, there is so much in love that comes out of the sense of a deep lack being fulfilled that sameness cannot do what a mysterious complementary other can. The practical considerations such as a division of labour (especially on the domestic scale, but also in terms of soldiers) are much more agreeable when subsumed under the realm of love: spouses attend their respective domestic duties because they care about the happiness of their home, and men often

derive from a sense of purposefulness the strength to endure the unpleasant aspects of war and work to protect and provide for those they love.

In addition to the weaknesses of the theatre's moral messages, and the financial burdens and corresponding dependencies it creates, Rousseau considers what effect the change from current pastimes would mean for Genevans. At the time, men and women for the most part socialized separately – men in clubs and women in their homes. Rousseau gives a lengthy explanation of how this is a crucial source of the health seen in families there and as a republic generally (LT 98-113). The essence of this idea is that by spending much of their time amongst themselves, the men do not become effeminate, and the women are encouraged to remain outwardly modest – even if they are openly critical about a full range of topics amongst themselves. This division is "the plan of nature, which gives different tastes to the two sexes, so that they live apart and each in his way," which plan, he adds in a footnote, is to be more fully elaborated in his next work, *Julie* (LT 106-7). The theatre would bring men and women into easy society with each other, wherein the conversation would turn on the pretty plots and phrases of the latest play; besides this degradation in intercourse, this easy society would also bring with it much greater temptation for adultery, and less reason to get married in the first place (unless as a cover for affairs).

In these men's clubs, or 'circles' as they had come to be called, a dozen or so men would meet in the afternoons to give themselves over each to the "amusements of his taste; they gamble, chat, read and smoke...go walking together" and embark upon

hunting expeditions (LT 99). Rousseau suggests that this institution preserves some semblance of ancient manliness and virtue, since these independent men can speak and think among themselves in a way he describes as less polished and obliging, but more grave and reasoned. "They dare to speak of country and virtue without passing for windbags...they cannot get away with fine phrases for answers" (LT 105).

They also spend more time outdoors and exercising as opposed to a Parisian-style day of going from a stuffy salon, to a carriage, to a stuffy theatre, and then back to an isolated house where there is more interaction with servants than family members. To illustrate his point Rousseau has us imagine a woman lazily reclining on a couch in the center of a room moving only her "eyes and tongue," surrounded by a "harem of men more womanish than she" except that they cannot keep still – fidgeting, pacing about – as a result of their natures being too constrained. He makes a similar argument in *Julie*, adding that men prefer that the ground level of the theatre remain without seats because they need a break from sitting in salons all day (J 370-1).

Rousseau believes that the differences in size and strength between men and women are of great importance in a number of different ways, but above all in its basis in and reflection of the basic division of labour that began with the first domestication of humans in the 'nascent family'; namely, that men are better suited for outdoor activities like hunting, labouring, and the combination of the two that is warring. Women have the ability to bear and feed children, which would be enough to suggest a more domestic role without the difference in strength and other aptitudes they possess. As has been said,

Rousseau's ambiguous presentation of the natural family suggests that these roles are not strictly necessary: men can feed and shelter themselves alone, just as women (especially in more primitive times) can be dangerous fighters and capable hunters. Over the thousands of generations since establishing families, however, and long before emerging from the state of nature, the sexes gravitated to and reinforced these differing roles (SD 147).

While from a modern evolutionary perspective one could more easily say that features reflecting these different roles accordingly became natural for mankind, given Rousseau's presentation of *the* natural man in part one it is not so straightforward. There are disputes over how compatible Rousseau's ideas are with Darwinism; at the least, it is true that Rousseau does not get as far as the full theory of natural selection. That said, Rousseau is one of the first prominent thinkers to assert that our nature is not permanent: while there are enduring aspects that must be recognized, there are also changes that occur apart from the unnatural developments of society and language. Besides the development of our minds that occurred with the progress of language and thought, another example is that whatever the status of family and sexual difference in the very earliest condition, in the "multitude of centuries" of the state of nature after families are the norm, certain tendencies ("women became more sedentary", men specialized in outdoor activities SD 147) set in to our natures. Controversies persist concerning this notion today, but there seems to be a growing body of evidence confirming that more than socialization goes into a child's choice of whether to play with dolls or balls. In *Emile*, Rousseau recommends that for good guidance one should "always follow nature's

indications. Everything that characterizes the fair sex ought to be respected as established by nature" (363). These are not so much nature's imperatives – Rousseau believes that our habits, opinions, and erotic capacities are actually quite malleable – but for a society that requires conventions he recommends enhancing these differences rather than working against them. They "ought to be respected as" commandments from nature, even if its voice is not so unmistakeable. One may argue that it is the nature of society more than human nature which makes these demands, but now that we have become social and political it is necessary that we attempt to reconcile the two sets of requirements.

Although the roles are not absolutely necessary, then, Rousseau teaches that when either men or women move away from them, it is a sure sign that a decadent enervation of souls has set in to a polity. One important practical observation is that Republics need their men to be fit for battle, because this is where their army comes from when needed, as opposed to standing or mercenary armies. They also need a healthy birth rate; Rousseau speaks in many works of how robust, freedom loving peoples have throughout history replenished the stock of decaying empires (*First Discourse, Essay on Language, Poland*) and how the fecund countryside repopulates sterile cities (E 362). More than mere manpower, though, he argues that embracing the roles of parents is crucial for the development of healthy individuals, as well as marriages and children. This will become clearest when we discuss *Emile* in more detail, which opens with the seemingly outrageous claim that if mothers returned to breastfeeding, morals would be healthy. Later in that book, in response to Plato's image of a society that eliminates the family in

the guardian class by raising the children in common, Rousseau counters that this "subversion of the sweetest sentiments of nature" would make the patriotism this theoretical city relies on impossible, because such artificial sentiments have "need for a natural base," and it is "by means of the small fatherland which is the family that the heart attaches itself to the large one" (E 363). We have seen in the discussion of kingship and patriarchy, and we will see elsewhere, that Rousseau denies that political ties and family ties are parallel, but if the capacity for love and duty is not implanted in the family setting, it will not likely appear later as patriotism – no matter how lovable the regime.[28]

As he first really tries to make clear in this writing on the impact of a theatre in Geneva, however, it is not only for the benefit of the children and society that parents should embrace their roles, but for the happiness of the parents themselves. We have already discussed this on the abstract level in the idea of happiness being increased by the unified extension of the sentiment of existence. We have also seen that the naturalness of conjugal bonds makes them a more reliable and widely accessible manner of accomplishing this. More than that, though, spousal and parental bonds entail responsibility; to succeed in these roles requires one to place passing interests, pleasure, laziness and other natural things aside for the sake of other people's needs. This is to subsume oneself under something bigger, to humble oneself, and this for Rousseau is at the core of what virtue and distinctly human strength is. This phenomenon of feeling oneself to be not the center of the universe, but an incomplete being with proper relations,

[28] An exception to this notion is the phenomenon of young men being extremely devoted to a group such as a military unit precisely because they lacked family bonds growing up. As with a young person seeking a parental replacement in romance, this does not refute the healthy norm, but rather reinforces the human need for family bonds and domestic education.

is vastly strengthened by the recognition of the complementarity of men and women. That their union results in the mysterious if not miraculous creation of a being like themselves which will live on after them is not something Rousseau thinks should be devalued for the sake of individual 'freedoms', for it is the natural basis for so much that can provide more meaningful happiness. To harness the potential power of sexuality for higher ends, Rousseau believes that greater value must be placed on its expression. The details of the relationship between sex education and morality will be a focus of the next chapter; there we will see that the same teaching is largely applicable to young men and women alike. Here, however, in the context of publicly supporting distinct gender identities, we will consider why he defends the social reinforcement of sexual modesty as something especially important for establishing the moral rule of women.

Modesty and Feminine Virtue

One of the great premises of the contemporary sexual liberation is that modesty is a construction, especially a patriarchal one. Rousseau would in a manner agree, inasmuch as he depicts the very earliest humans as following solely their desires (if not being utterly promiscuous), and credits humans of both sexes with powerful and malleable sex drives that need to be managed for the sake of social order. As opposed to the common contemporary presumption that the enforcement of chastity is a tool of patriarchy, however, he presents sexual constraint as a construction that secures *women's* power: at the least, he believes that sexual morality is essential to a healthy society. Rousseau defends this unfashionable position in a number of ways based on historical,

physical, political, psychological, and moral observations. In particular, he takes the physical facts of the differences concerning bodily strength, sexual mechanics, as well as the demands of pregnancy and translates them via psychological deductions into normative principles. While some of the practical aspects of his argument (lack of birth control, high infant mortality rates) no longer apply in the same way in light of contemporary technological advances, it is not as clear that the deeply ingrained, or natural, psychological and moral aspects have changed so much that we can safely leave these concerns for sexual virtue – gendered or not – behind.

The origin of social development relied upon the formation of durable families: we saw it even before tribes and it has been a constant feature ever since. It is observable that in the less 'advanced', or rustic and simple, societies, modesty has much more vigour than in our advanced metropolises. Whether he is comparing Paris to Geneva or to the Swiss and German countrysides, (see E 357-65, LT 83-90, *Lettres Morales* in O.C. 1110-11) he observes that there is so much difficulty trying to maintain chastity and fidelity in big cities that it turns most into hypocrites, which creates an unacceptable disunity of soul in Rousseau's formulation. The only exception to this hypocrisy for spouses is in the rare cases where adultery is endorsed (as with his Parisian elite and in various 'enlightened' circles in the last half-century): in these rare cases even paying homage to the virtue of fidelity is largely abandoned. The celebration of exploring one's sexuality before marriage – something much more common today – is the modern answer to overcoming the hypocrisy of chastity. In the country, on the contrary, hardly any effort goes into its easy reign among the young and married alike according to Rousseau. It is only the

"sophisms of reasoning" which stifle this natural voice in decadent societies (*Lettres Morales* in O.C. 1110).

Rousseau surely idealizes to some extent with regard to the purity of the countryside, and there is no doubt that the most patriarchal societies often feature the most brutal enforcement of female modesty, but many comparisons support the principle that sexual virtue is generally embraced more by males and females, young and old, in inverse proportion to how modernized their society is. Despite his expressed preference for rural and rustic customs, however, Rousseau would fully admit that just because something is a feature of traditional societies does not make it good; instead he provides a number of reasons why modesty – especially for women – is in accordance with our natures and essential for society.

He begins the section on gender and sexuality in the *Letter on the Theatre* by mocking the intellectuals of his day (and ours) who say of female chastity:

> "Popular prejudices! Petty errors of childhood! Deceit of the laws and education! Chasteness is nothing. It is only an invention of the social laws to protect the rights of fathers and husbands and to preserve some order in families. Why should we blush at the needs which nature has given us? Why should we find a motive for shame in (procreation)... why should man have different laws on this point than the animals?" (LT 83).

His immediate response is to declare that this shame is as natural as the desire: to ask why he should obey it is to ask why nature makes him feel it. As in most things, Rousseau seeks to vindicate the inner promptings we feel. He also uses indications from nature to

justify his gendered understanding of sexuality. After mentioning an argument about Plato's confounding of the sexes, Julie declares that "Attack and defence, men's audacity and women's modesty, are not conventions, as the philosophers think, but natural institutions the causes of which can easily be rationally explained, and from which are easily derived all other moral distinctions" (J 104). Although the exhortation to chastity in light of the spiritual benefits for Emile is roughly the same as a girl would receive, it is still the case that there are more natural, tangible, and practical differences which he suggests make the quality especially important for women.

It is because the physiological consequences of sex for women are so immense, whereas for men they are nil, that we should expect the former to have innate abilities to control when, with whom, and under what conditions she is intimate. Obviously women were not endowed with superior strength (although he notes that they often have enough to repel an attacker), nor are they, as with many other animals, limited to a short fertile season. In fact, Rousseau observes that it is men who are physiologically limited much more than women are. Men are stronger, but cannot have sex if they are not aroused. From these two facts he argues that men being aggressors suits not only their more physically robust temperament but also their physical / psychological requirements. Underlying this latter claim is an exaggerated but not false premise that, setting aside questions of enjoyment or taste, women are virtually always physically capable of having sex. Men, on the other hand, need to be appropriately aroused, which depends on a host of physical and psychological factors, for sex to take place. However easily these factors usually combine, men must be "active and strong," or more specifically "will and be

able" (E 358). Men's imaginations are usually required to be activated in a positive fashion for successful sexual acts. Women need only provide consent if the man is interested, but it is also the case that to have sex on their terms, they must be able to arouse the man – mere consent, or even feigned interest on his part, will not suffice.

In addition to the mechanics of the act, Rousseau notes that women have an interest in securing the man's desire to protect her from others. While Rousseau does grant that savage women are much more capable of defending themselves, and today we see an increasing number of women desiring a husband with substantial nurturing and domestic capacities, it is still the case that in the long interval between these extreme states women generally developed the instinct to seek physical strength in a partner much more than men have. Rousseau argues that these physical realities led to women's instinctual and artfully enhanced ability to charm men into putting their strength into women's service. The simplest way this occurs is by putting a premium on her favours by indicating how difficult they are to obtain:

> The surest art for animating that strength is to make it necessary by resistance. Then amour-propre unites with desire, and the one triumphs in the victory that the other has made him win. From this there arises attack and defence, the audacity of one sex and the timidity of the other, and finally the modesty and the shame with which nature armed the weak in order to enslave the strong. (E 358)

Without trying to untangle the knot of whether the physical or psychological adaptations came first, it is surely the case that even in our age (where gender differences are likely the smallest in civilized history), something like this general scenario still holds in most cases. No doubt, as in Rousseau's day amongst the Parisian elite, the freedom of women

to be the aggressors has increased in our liberal age and the extent of coquetry has diminished. Still, however much progressive forces try to erase these differences, the phenomenon of women subtly sparking interest in men they desire, and men in turn having the role of directly initiating intimacy remains a norm. While some seek to root out this 'stubborn prejudice', Rousseau argues that it is a largely natural tendency that should be reinforced for the sake of morals and order.

Rather than leave things in a more ancient manner at the observation that this sexual shame reflects our dependence and mortality, as our desire for privacy in defecation does, Rousseau also argues that modesty is inherently attractive: physically, morally, and even in a simple economic sense. Rousseau asserts that nature has adorned women with "features so sweet and which a little shame renders even more touching," whether it be in their gentle glances or glowing skin which shows an attractive blush so well (LT 86), and which cosmetologists try to duplicate. Morally speaking, modesty inclines men and women to cherish their beloveds more, out of the sense that their intimacy is a gift whose giving bespeaks a sincere regard, trust, and even love. More specifically, it makes men more willing to commit to helping a woman raise a family. 'Economically' speaking, and this is related to the previous observation, the rarity of any desired thing raises its worth. Women can arouse prideful as well as moral sentiments by 'playing hard to get': "the desires, veiled by shame, become only the more seductive; in hindering them, chasteness inflames them." In a similar vein, he postulates that if there were no restraint in men or women (as described in the original natural condition), sex

would be less enjoyable: "the passions, languishing in a boring freedom, would never have been excited" (LT 84).

In addition to these replies to some of his imaginary interlocutor's claims about the conventionality of modesty in the quote above (and which sound remarkably contemporary), he even takes up the lowly question of why we should differ from the animals in sexual matters. He declares the question insulting (somewhat rich given his depiction of our natural condition), since despite the physiological similarities, "the holy image of the decent and the fair only enters the heart of man" (LT 87). That said, he points out that even animals engage in activities which heighten the interest of the others, especially when the females exclude those they are not interested in, and feign to exclude those they want to generate interest in (as with the female pigeon outside his window). In these species the female not only agrees to or refuses the less discriminating advances of some males, but even generates the behaviour of refusals to arouse the ardour of a male she desires but who shows little interest.

As indicated previously, Rousseau believes that women's desires are at least as strong as men's, but there are greatly unequal results of indulging in sexual desires: women are the ones who get pregnant. This natural reality has been to some extent negated in our day by very effective birth control options; women's 'sexual liberation' has been considerably aided by the birth control pill and the access to relatively safe abortion when preventative measures fail. While there seem to be some instinctual differences in women inclining somewhat more towards monogamy because of the biological

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imperative that prevailed in the past, a progressive would argue that given the new realities, these antiquated instincts need to be educated against in favour of the requirements of greater freedom and equality. There are also, however, social considerations according to which Rousseau defends the 'double standard', including one which applies to the fidelity of parents:

> When woman complains on this score about unjust man-made inequality, she is wrong. This inequality is not a human institution – or, at least, it is the work not of prejudice but of reason. It is up to the sex that nature has charged with the bearing of children to be responsible for them to the other sex. (361)

He readily accuses a man who is adulterous of acting "barbarously," he praises of chastity for its contribution to the psychic wellbeing of men, and adds that the adulterer "cheats" his wife of the rewards she deserves for her fidelity. It could also be added that depending on the mores of a place, if a husband fathered another woman's child there could be significant consequences for the household income as well as reputation. Rousseau maintains, however, that there remains a fundamental inequality because biologically speaking only the mother has utter certainty that her child is hers. Because a husband needs assurances on this front,

> The unfaithful woman does more; she dissolves the family and breaks all the bonds of nature.... She joins perfidy to infidelity. I have difficulty seeing what disorders and what crimes do not flow from this one. If there is a frightful condition in the world, it is that of an unhappy father who, lacking confidence in his wife, does not dare to yield to the sweetest sentiments of his heart, who wonders, in embracing his child, whether he is embracing another's, the token of his dishonour, the plunderer of his own children's property. (361)

While the number of successfully 'blended' families today is proof that this concern is not quite the same in the case of parents consciously adopting others' children as their own,[29] with the invention of DNA tests it has become a popular theme in reality and fictional shows to see the horror and heartbreak of fathers finding out that they are not the biological father of the child they have been nurturing. One might argue that again this is a case where a technological advance eliminates another motive for the double standard, but until these tests become mandatory, there will always be many husbands unwilling to let their nagging uncertainty lead them to such an accusatory action.

The greater necessity for chastity in females is accordingly not only legitimate in Rousseau's eyes, but reflects a more general gender difference which is especially relevant given Rousseau's usual warnings about the dangers of public opinion. Women must care about what people think of them. This is in part, he argues, because they generally need society more, at least once they have become weaker and dependent after the species becomes more generally domesticated. While Rousseau believes men and women to be mutually dependent, where women have not achieved economic and political equality, the costs of abandonment make them more dependent on a minimal level of approval in the opinion of their spouse. (In virtually every other respect, Rousseau argues that the opinion of women is much more influential and important to men).

[29] That said, step-parents are considerably more likely to abuse children than natural ones.

While we noted above the general reasons it is advantageous for women to have a reputation for modesty, this particular reason, that their reputation for modesty is important to the father of their children, carries definitive weight in Rousseau's mind. Accordingly, however unfair in individual circumstances, Rousseau declares in *Emile* that:

> Their honour is not only in their conduct but in their reputation; and it is not possible that a woman who consents to be regarded as disreputable can ever be decent. When a man acts well, he depends only on himself and can brave public judgment; but when a woman acts well, she has accomplished only half of her task, and what is thought of her is no less important to her than what she actually is. From this it follows that the system of women's education ought to be contrary in this respect to the system of our education. Opinion is the grave of virtue among men and its throne among women. (364-5)

In his discussion of women's education, one of the main themes is how it should accordingly have somewhat less emphasis on independence than Emile's does, and instead should cultivate the feminine qualities which are so important to a healthy relationship and society. Sophie will be expected to harness and direct Emile's spirit: she will command his respect by demonstrating her greater awareness of social propriety, and subtly assist him in following a virtuous course with her guile and sensitivity to his character.

These requirements, according to Rousseau, are not as unfair as they seem because women are naturally superior to men in most of the mental faculties involved with social interaction. He argues that females possess a greater inclination for gentleness, guile, and a general superiority of wit (E 365-9). With these talents and

others, Rousseau defends the proposition that they are ideally suited to guide men individually and govern social opinion generally. In fact, it is in large part because of the long history of being concerned with chastity due to the unique responsibility of pregnancy that women have developed this superiority, especially evident in young adults. As Julie explains to her tutor, "We find ourselves, from the tenderest age, assigned such a dangerous trust, that the responsibility of preserving it soon awakens our judgment, and an excellent way to see clearly the consequences of things is to feel intensely the risks they cause us to run" (J 45). She then proceeds to shore up her young lover's commitment to chastity using her greater social awareness to rule the conduct of her man in light of the requirements of social order.

Julie rules both her lover and her husband. Wolmar is in a way a caricature of a typical male: coldly rational, unsympathetic, observant without emotion: he is only instrumentally interested in people as subjects for his observations and refinements of his theories. Julie gives him something (besides order) to love for the first time in his life, he began to be enlivened by her emotions and stirred to embrace a more active life. Schwartz points out that this illustrates that "Women are not only more social than men are, they are the cause of men's being as social as men are" (120). While Julie might be exactly what Wolmar needs, and while his wisdom and goodness make her think the same of him in the period following their marriage, we learn that not only does she never rid her heart of her first and only love, but that her bond with Wolmar is scarred by his atheism. Despite the advantages that their division of labour bring to all, the harmony with which they manage their household, and the desire to be a better person that they

inspire in each other, this commitment of life for life is incomplete because of a spiritual deficiency. While in this arranged marriage Rousseau is able to illustrate that the maintenance of independence from society and division of the sexes can create an environment featuring sincerely shared affections and at the same time meet the requirements of virtue, it is only in *Emile,* the sequel to *Julie,* that romantic longings are fulfilled in the truly ideal marriage.

Chapter Three
Sexual Education, Virtue and Marriage

After reading the last chapter, a reader might feel better grounded in the reasons that society should promote family values and distinct roles for men and women, but still not know how to begin or whether this is urgent for those around them. In this chapter we turn from the historical developments and broader 'family values' themes of the last chapter to the presentation of a sexual education aimed at cultivating virtue and respect for marriage in Rousseau's greatest work, *Emile*. Elaborating upon the themes we identified in the *Letter to d'Alembert* and *Julie*, in the second half of *Emile* he deepens his argument for family values being at the core of morals and character by showing how the right sex education makes healthy socialization possible, and how marriage can cement the virtue and happiness of modern men and women.

We have described how Rousseau emphasizes independence and preserving oneself from corruption as goals to be pursued by keeping closer to nature: this is the focus of the first three books of *Emile*, which depict the rearing of a child up to puberty. In many ways, Emile at twelve is reminiscent of the solitary savage of the *Second Discourse*. In books four and five, he makes Emile sociable and moral, and prepares him for the one overwhelming passion and attachment suitable to him: love and marriage. In so doing, he brings together and elaborates upon his understanding of morals and happiness being bound up with sexuality and family in a more thorough fashion than in any of his other works.

In the first part of this chapter, I will use Rousseau's penetrating thoughts on how critical the emergence of the erotic and spiritual side in adolescents is on character to shed light on our debates over sexual education today. Today perhaps more than ever, our understanding would benefit by reconsidering Rousseau's position because it is appropriately situated between the theologically-based abstinence camp and its scientific opponents: the former put too much weight on arcane values and the latter put too little weight on anything which is not 'rational' and anything that might lead to marginalizing judgments. These progressive forces try to help teens make "informed choices," but usually give them information where gender differences are actively suppressed, the importance of marriage is minimized, and stigmas are reserved only for unprotected sex and having too many 'hang-ups'. It is common to think that this latter group, the *sexual liberators*, are a phenomenon peculiar to the last fifty years, but we will see that there are clear parallels between their principles and the Enlightenment forces Rousseau felt compelled to take up his pen against.

An advantage for Rousseau, but a disadvantage in trying to restate his case today, was that the state of public discourse in his day had not become as egalitarian and scientific, or value-free, as it has today; accordingly, he was freer to make his appeal in terms which sound quaint or even alarmist, very sexist, and vaguely theistic. It is worth noting, however, that many of the "men of letters" of his day accused him of having become, as Voltaire put it, a "Father of the Church," (Guehenno 7) for his increasingly moralistic writings in this period. This reflects the fact that despite the very progressive

and modern aspects of his teaching, he was consciously using a language he knew to be losing touch with 'modern' literature and thought but one which he considered to be more effective in moving people in the right direction. Building on some of the groundwork in the earlier chapters, I will try to show how well Rousseau makes the case that so many today struggle to make about the importance of keeping sexuality as dormant as possible for as long as possible, followed by its sublimation into mature, committed love solemnized by marriage.

The bulk of this chapter examines the ways Rousseau presents his moral teaching as hinging on sexual education. In the first section we will outline how he situates himself in opposition to both the traditionalists who seek to stigmatize sex and the progressives who seek to remove all stigmas from sex: Rousseau promotes abstinence in the early teenage years in order to use the powers of puberty to promote more general virtue, but then supports depicting sex as the greatest good once it makes itself known to the youth. In the second section we will elaborate on the pre-sexual stage of the 'erotic' education Rousseau proposes, where nascent passions are channelled into friendship, pity, and a sense of humanity. We will then look at the second stage, where God and natural religion are introduced. The fourth section will take up the actual presentation of sex to Emile, where we will explain the manner in which Rousseau says a youth can be made not only celibate but virtuous in general by believing sex to possess the potential to be the greatest pleasure in life if it is preserved for love.

Having established the role sexual development plays in the quality of character in a teenager, in the last two sections of the chapter we will explore Rousseau's depiction of romantic marriage as the institution most conducive to our happiness by examining the important components of Emile's courtship and marriage. In so doing, we will find a culmination not only of sexual education, but of all the terrain of his thought that has been explored in previous chapters. Marriage is an institution much more based in nature than citizenship, religion, or intellectual life; indeed, religion and citizenship usually rely quite heavily upon this more primary institution. We will see the diverse reasons upon which Rousseau presents the support of and commitment to marriage as the best antidote to the dangers faced by modern people especially. Having today cast off so many of the social barriers to elective marriage that he fought against, all that remains for us to fill Rousseau's prescription is for individuals to want it for themselves and respect it and the duties it entails as a special gift. In this age when the word "duty" is becoming another one of the quaint terms that risks becoming wholly foreign to us, we would do well to reconsider Rousseau's attempt to re-establish the status of a good marriage as one of the few things in life worth striving for, and the role this specific sort of 'sex education' has in developing the good character necessary not only for thriving communities and nations, but for our own happiness and that of those we care for.

Puberty: The Need for Education to Supplement Nature

While the notion that all that teens need to be sexually healthy are consent and condoms strikes most of us as shallow, those who fight against this simple message

usually end up sounding rather mystical if not downright dogmatic. This tone is not very persuasive for young people in our liberal age; nor was it, as we shall see, in Rousseau's day: he repeatedly attacks approaches that use fear and doctrine. Instead, he argues that the physiological changes in early sexuality are tightly bound up with moral development, and that while sexual pleasure is quite different than the pleasures enjoyed by children, the primary dangers posed by each are similar with regard to early education and character development: overgratification tends towards a tyrannical disposition, abstinence through fear leads to a stunted and disunified development, and reliance upon arcane sermons achieves nothing but disrespect for God and teacher. As with moderation and virtue generally, chastity must be freely embraced as a positive contributor to happiness in order to have a unified effect on one's soul.

The core of our self-understanding and character development begin in earnest at puberty. Rousseau goes so far as to suggest that all the precautions and efforts of the education (or diseducation) so thoroughly elaborated before book four can be ignored so long as the child is not too far gone, for only at this point are things truly critical:

> The way childhood is employed is not very important. The evil which slips in then is not without remedy, and the good done then can come later. But this is not the case with the first age at which man truly begins to live. This age never lasts long enough for the use that ought to be made of it, and its importance demands an unflagging attention. (232)

For a book which has apparently placed so much emphasis on the groundbreaking naturalist, negative education of children so thoroughly presented in books one, two, and three, this is a radical statement. Besides the effect his rearing had in making his

disposition one likely to bring him happiness, we will see in the next chapter that in "Emile and Sophie" Rousseau imagines a scenario in which Emile's life falls apart and he needs his original education to fall back upon. He also takes back the statement to a considerable extent before entering into the discussion of religion, where he notes the considerable differences between Emile and 'kids today', so many of whom have been spoiled. But the effect of the statement here is to bring all youths back in to the teaching, one which might have started sounding to many readers like a uselessly fantastical tale given the amount of 'unnatural' manipulation that had kept Emile natural thus far. All children hit a transformative stage at puberty; accordingly, the best childhood educations can be lost with the wrong approach here, but the poor ones can also often be redeemed. What is clear is that Rousseau believes that it is profoundly irresponsible to leave these developments to uncontrolled outside forces, or guided only by a few health classes – as so often happens today. Rousseau's analysis helps steer us away from taking a passively relativistic position by outlining the basic requirements of sociality and sexuality common to all humans as well as the particular systematic dangers in liberal democratic mass society.

After some wild biological speculation about the deleterious effects of early sexuality on the quality of the "spirits designed to provide balm for the blood and strength for the fibres" near the beginning of book four Rousseau elaborates upon his more persuasive observations about the effects that premature sexualization have on morals and the strength of one's soul. In the last chapter we saw that Rousseau suggested that the preeminent virtue for younger women was sexual modesty: here he emphatically

extends it to young people of both sexes as a source for strength and self-mastery, which is an essential part of virtue. He broadens his view to include not just individuals but whole societies in suggesting that

> Generally one notices more vigor of soul in men whose young years have been preserved from premature corruption than in those whose dissoluteness began with their power to give themselves over to that corruption. And this is doubtless one of the reasons why peoples with morals ordinarily surpass peoples without morals in good sense and courage. (232)

While the dissipated immorality might shine in terms of wit and delicacy, he adds, only those brought up with stricter expectations ever accomplish "great and noble" things. This has to be one of the strongest pleas ever made for the promotion of abstinence for the sake of the preservation of society, and given the difficulty most proponents of this view have in making their case today it is worth considering in some detail. We will first look at the criticisms Rousseau makes of the two prevalent forms of teaching in his day and ours.

Having described how much is at stake in preserving innocence, he returns to the important question of pedagogy, since even if the *reader* wholeheartedly agrees with Rousseau's dire warnings, few pubescent youths are likely to be able to grasp the import so thoroughly that they become safe from such a seductive temptation. Above all, Rousseau warns that cold sermons cannot deal with these passionate flames, and that once the passions of puberty become sexual, the attempt to quell these feelings, or make them sinful, will only stir rebellion and resentment. Rousseau is very outspoken about

the ineffectiveness and gross unnaturalness of the curses various religions try to put on sex; his concern is especially with the various teachings of Christianity at the time.[30]

Rousseau speaks for a youth who is likely to become "enflamed" against any religious doctrine which tries to vilify these delightful feelings. Regarding the youth's estimation of the deliverer of said teaching, he asks "what will he see other than the caprice and hatred of a man who seeks to torment him?" (233). Speaking about religious teaching in general, Rousseau instructs the would-be teacher of teens not to try to inculcate "gloomy maxims to which he feigns acquiescence" but "secretly laughs at." This maxim is repeated again in his discussion of sexuality with regard to teenage girls in book five:

> A young and beautiful girl will never despise her body, she will never in good faith grieve for the great sins her beauty causes to be committed, she will never sincerely shed tears before God for being a coveted object, and she will never be able to believe within herself that the sweetest sentiment of the heart is an invention of Satan. (392)

The power and seeming sacredness of these feelings in their hearts makes it impossible for their elders to succeed in convincing most youths that love or even sex is dirty or criminal, at least not without creating very disunified or maladjusted individuals. Their "heart gives the lie" to this suggestion; they cannot be persuaded of it because:

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[30] A difference over sex is what causes the Savoyard Vicar to break with the Church and embark upon the reflective path which culminates in the "Profession of Faith" found in the middle of Book Four; the Vicar was unwilling to embrace chastity. To be more precise, it is not merely his inability to remain celibate which causes his problems, it is that he respects marriage too much to engage in affairs with married women. Because pregnancy is not scandalous for a married woman, and also as an indication of the lack of respect for the institution in the day, the church had various degrees of acceptance for priests getting involved with married women. It is the scandal of premarital sex which was unforgivable, and the Vicar followed through on the promptings of nature when he fell in love.

> All this is contrary to nature. By following an opposite route, I shall more surely arrive at the same goal. I shall not be afraid to indulge him in the sweet sentiment for which he has such a thirst. I shall depict it to him as the supreme happiness in life because in fact it is. In depicting it to him, I want him to yield to it. In making him sense how much charm the union of hearts adds to the attraction of the senses, I shall disgust him with libertinism, and I shall make him moderate by making him fall in love. (327)

By depicting the highest end of sexuality, virtuous love, Rousseau will attune his pupil to a standard he would be reluctant to fall short of. A cold conservative might argue that what the youth feels to be a sublime sentiment promising a grander happiness than he can imagine is just the devil tempting him, or dangerous hormones running wild – essentially something utterly deceptive, or serpent-like, that needs to be fought against and squashed. Such a position might seem necessary for one whose aims are above all to preserve the economic, political, or religious order – all of which can be threatened by legitimating narrow, all-consuming romantic love. Rousseau knows that this approach might technically succeed in preserving virginity, but only through repression and pernicious guilt in a teaching which will never be believed wholeheartedly and will most likely cause alienation and even scorn. Moreover, Rousseau argues that abstinence out of fear is not properly called chastity, quoting Ovid's observation that "She who does not do something because it is forbidden, does it" (392). As was outlined in the section on modesty in the last chapter, it is necessary that chastity be a positive virtue, not merely the avoidance of a somewhat ambiguous vice.

The first flames of nascent sexuality are what open the heart to real spirituality. They awaken such sublime feelings that a youth will fight against a stodgy elder who tries to persuade him that these stirring sentiments are not only not to be respected, but despised; that they are not something that promises a greater happiness, but a feverish master one should pray to be delivered from. As was indicated above, Rousseau takes a very different tack with sexual awareness once it fully arises, but before reaching the point of praising the "supreme happiness" that attends healthy conjugal love, his initial reaction is to use this nascent passion and channel it into the healthy development of *amour-propre* by generating a disposition to pity and friendship. Rather than downplay or vilify these sentiments, in the first stage of puberty Rousseau directs the youth to begin to think of them as reflective of something much bigger than sex; in the early stages he passes over sex itself entirely. Once sex must be addressed directly it is praised intensely, but at no point does Rousseau think a general disparagement of sexuality as 'sinful' or base will be effective.

If the answer is not puritanical exhortations against all things sexual, neither is it to condone the expression of these physical and relatively indiscriminate desires. Rousseau recognizes the temptation in some, especially those following his 'course of nature' approach, to allow youth to freely express themselves and hearken to their natural inclinations. This method is also praised because it keeps one's teenagers well-disposed to you as a governor insofar as you are permissive and grant them a wide degree of privacy and autonomy in these matters. Regularly today we hear of parents who achieve a kind of non-judgmental friendship with their children, and defend it as a way to keep

close to their kids, and have them comfortable in discussing sensitive things with their parents. Sexuality, however, is of such fundamental importance to one's moral outlook and sense of taste that Rousseau cannot allow such a careless, passive, and indulgent approach to be adopted. He teaches that there is far too much at stake, and nature alone in this case does not lead to what is good for young people who are to live in civil society. Precisely because the natural inclinations are so straightforward, there needs to be not only strict precautions, but thoughtful, proactive uses made of the growing passions of this new condition.

Reflecting on parents who do not restrain and redirect the passions emerging in the young away from sex he observes that "It is as though to calm an impetuous horse the equerry were to make him jump over the edge of a precipice" (233). It is clear that this man who in so many other ways praises natural freedom and sincerity believes that it is better to have a few too many 'hang-ups' than to err on the side of treating sex as a mere bodily function, or partners as quarry. This is in line with Rousseau's statements in various other places that it is better to have a morality too strict than one barely discernible (consider his preference for fanatics over atheists and Spartans over the bourgeois). This stance would seem to be at odds with the naturalist direction Rousseau takes in the *Second Discourse* and even in the first half of *Emile*, but the teaching of books four and five is that when we want to encourage natural developments in unnatural settings, art must be used. Censorship, which he defends in the *Social Contract* and *Letter to d'Alembert* for the sake of Geneva's citizens, is important for the protection of the natural innocence of youths, as well as for the cultivation of some more than natural

sentiments about love, duty, and virtue. That is to say, these sentiments are in accordance with our natural requirements for happiness in the social condition, but they do not arise by nature in the way the desire to procreate does. Sex education is accordingly only partly a negative education; it is also a positive one and must be seen not simply as natural, but as reconciling nature with the requirements of advanced social life.

Though he has raised the stakes to an apparently daunting level, trying to navigate the channel between loose acceptance and overbearing uptightness should not cause anguish to a would-be educator, for it is not simply a process of trying to avoid two extremes and hope for the best in the end. Neither is it, as so many squeamish supervisors would have it, a case of 'just waiting for this awkward phase to be over with'. Instead, there is tremendous potential in the erotic capacity emerging in the youth. The Savoyard Vicar tells the youth he is professing to that:

> You are at the critical age when the mind opens to certitude, when the heart receives its form and its character, and when one's whole life, whether for good or for bad, is determined. Later the substance is hardened, and new impressions no longer leave a mark. Young man, receive the stamp of truth on your still flexible soul. (310)

Rousseau adds that "This adolescent fire, far from being an obstacle to education, is the means of consummating and completing it.... His first affections are the reins with which you direct all his movements" (233). When a youth begins to encounter the confusing aspects of adult human life, this is no time for a guide to let him withdraw, but rather the most important time to make an impression in order to develop the manner in which the youth responds to the mysterious aspects of existence. There is a shift in the tone of

Emile's education at this stage because independence and an eye to utility are no longer adequate in providing his happiness.

In addition to the more abstract elements arising inside of a youth, as he becomes more aware of his desire to be admired by the opposite sex one has a valuable tool in being able to teach him to act well. This gives him the first palpable internal reason to want to make something of himself; one could say that for the first time, the mere sentiment of his existence is not enough. This is the crucial difference between the child and the adult: "He was free, now I see him enslaved. So long as he loved nothing, he depended on himself and his needs. As soon as he loves, he depends on his attachments" (233). Just as in the state of nature, our internal and external situation is radically altered when love enters the picture: but this is not for the worse, even if unhappiness becomes much more of a threat. While there is a longing for connectedness to others that makes him feel insufficient, inasmuch as he believes this longing can be met the insufficiency need not make him feel smaller. Instead, by giving him a sense of having a place in a universal order, he can feel even more significant. He must, however, learn to see that his happiness lies in merging with this larger order, and not in fleeing from it or trying to evade it in pursuit of personal aggrandizement. This delicate situation can be entirely upset by allowing his nascent powers to be channelled into sexual activity, because there these new potentials are likely to become exhausted in the pleasures of the senses and his sexual conquests will form a model he will seek to emulate in all his social interactions. Kept 'innocent', it will tend rather to become an impetus for a sense of brotherhood and humanity.

Someone might say at this point that Rousseau has abandoned the path of nature in manipulating the onset of sexuality for other ends, artificially (and thus according to his own standards dangerously) delaying the more natural purpose of puberty for as long as possible. Rousseau himself does not argue, for example, that a sense of humanity is the direct result nature has in mind when it puts hair on the cheeks and chest of a boy. What he does argue is that in modern life, especially in mass society, our lives do not allow nature to function on its own. He finds that teens in the wholesome Swiss countryside, for example, are entirely innocent in their interactions, and he posits that puberty occurs much later there.

He goes so far as to declare that in our boredom and vanity we have made the public space such a sexualized environment that we cause puberty to begin much earlier than it is meant to. Once again Rousseau seems to be engaging in wild biological speculation, but as is so often the case, he has recently been proven correct: numerous studies have found that in the last half-century the average age of physical maturity, especially among women, has gone down by almost two years. Not surprisingly, they are having more success in determining the specific physical, as opposed to the moral, cause of this change, namely a higher percentage of fat in sedentary, well fed girls (there is also evidence of effects from increased exposure to hormones in our diets and environment). Rousseau would have no problem acknowledging whatever physical causes might be at work since it is a clear reflection of our unnatural modern lifestyle. He would be more interested in the speculations of many others, though, that there are even more important

psychic causes at work in the "MTV generation," who are exposed to much more sexuality in childhood than anyone in history, including those who grew up watching television in the 60's and 70's.

At the same time that modern societies make us physically mature earlier, they demand a much longer training for us to be socially mature, with the result that marrying people soon after puberty (what Rousseau calls "incontestably the surest and most natural expedient") has become a ridiculous notion. Defending himself against the obvious charge of manipulating nature here instead of following it he explains that he would of course like to follow nature's inclinations:

> But there are so many contradictions between the rights of nature and our social laws that one must constantly twist and turn in order to reconcile them. One must use a great deal of art to prevent social man from being totally artificial. (317)

This statement will be a guiding rule for the rest of *Emile*; it also sheds light on many of the seeming paradoxes in his teaching as a whole. Here, however, he is proposing a method by which to bridge the gap that has artificially developed (wherein physical maturity has moved one direction and social maturity the other) and at the same time prepare the youth's heart for the disposition to pity and community which is so important and yet so precarious in our individualistic society. As he argued in the *Second Discourse*, pity is natural, but must be refounded on modern principles because we are too removed from the condition in which it moved freely (if gently). Puberty occurs before we are psychically, or morally, ready for its physical expression, but it does open a

window where our heart is expansive enough to develop interests and a sensibility for the larger world when we are not too preoccupied with personal responsibilities. (This is why we see today that such a large proportion of volunteers for large causes, especially the most idealistic ones, tend to be teenagers).

At this age, Emile can now begin to form ideals for himself; these ideals will be so involved with others that he will want to know humankind in order to succeed with men, and perhaps especially with women. He will still be pleased by those who are useful to him, but he will get the most *joy* in friendship with the good ones, and will now begin to feel *shame* when he feels he has fallen short of his place in the eyes of those around him. His complete understanding of how and when to seek the acceptance of the broader community will not come about until his proper political education, which Rousseau only embarks upon when he is ready to marry. For the beginning Rousseau emphasizes the need to allow friendship and pity to take root in his soul, for it is the surest basis for his sentiments and judgments, and it is important that these develop before he begins interacting with others sexually or politically.

Friendship, Pity, *Amour-propre*: A More Natural Morality

The social capacities possible with the onset of puberty will not develop instantly or automatically: "In directing his nascent sensibility to his species, do not believe that it will at the outset embrace all men, and that the word mankind will signify anything to

him" (233). Rather it will be his friends, those who think like him, experience joys and sorrows with him, those whom he cannot help but identify with who will arouse his first humanitarian expansiveness, or first extension of his sentiment of existence into other people. This will not be 'altruistic', but will rather have the initial effect of making him "more disposed to love himself," as a teen that plays both tennis and soccer might well get more joy from winning a soccer championship *because*, not in spite, of the fact it is shared among twenty fellows. He will even more surely find that losing a big game feels different with his 'brothers' than alone, since there is a profound fellow-feeling that emerges. What is more, although he might not realize it at the time the outcome of the game does not matter as much as being accepted as a full member of the team. Winning a championship with teammates who dislike him would be far worse than losing with friends. In harmony with others, his sense of existence is now larger and more powerful, but insofar as this harmony is fragile, it is at the same time vulnerable. He can now feel the dependence of his happiness on the positive regard of others, and can feel his ability to sympathize with them in their sorrows as well.

With friendship, we can share sincere affection with others like us, extending our existence to include them and their well-being, and feel the same in return. Obviously this contrasts starkly with Rousseau's conception of the vast majority of relationships in developed societies. There is not only shared interest, but acceptance of our genuine selves and a sincere ability to care about the well-being of another. Rousseau proclaims that "nothing has so much weight in the human heart as the voice of clearly recognized friendship, for we know that it never speaks to us for anything other than our interest."

This is, according to Rousseau, the first and most important basis for morality, and at this point the youth enters "the moral order" (234-5). While it is the sexual development that physically triggers the change, it is the capacity to participate in a friendship that is the proper first development of the heart. In an important side of the teaching for those wishing to strengthen "abstinence-only" models of sex education, Rousseau insists that the youth must be kept de-sexualized as long as possible, and instead be made to love generally (or particularly in a non-sexual, or 'platonic' way). As stated above, he does not yet generalize his sentiments to universal notions of humanity, but the identification and extension in friendship is the first step, and must take root if the development of *amour-propre* is to proceed in a healthy way.

Friendship is the first relationship where we experience the extension of our existence into another, but it is important that this be cultivated early in order to expand into the capacity to pity, "the first relative sentiment which touches the human heart according to the order of nature" (222), and the source of all the social virtues (SD 131). As indicated previously, Rousseau's influence on modern times is vast; one of his most powerful insights is regarding the role pity can and must play in democratic times. When honour and excellence are the qualities a group values both collectively and individually, they seek to distinguish members on that basis. As each strives to appear in the image of a lofty, publicly accepted standard, virtues like self-control, leadership, magnanimity, and grace take the fore; one contributes to society almost in spite of the unfortunate events and people in it, not through them. When the general glance towards one's fellows is

with an eye to inequalities, compassion cannot have a prominent place. Pity and pride cannot coexist according to Rousseau.

In egalitarian times, however, pity does become a potentially powerful bond, since instead of being encouraged to soar above our fellows, we are prodded to be more humble, to respect the ways we are different, and celebrate what we have in common. Rousseau explains in the second of his "maxims" that a requirement of pity is that one readily imagine himself in the position of the sufferer, suffering the same ills (224). Rather than heroic feats, democrats applaud the one who can "feel your pain," and the biggest benefactors to society work through the less fortunate, not above them. Rather than build a great palace, for example, they might build a school for sick children; rather than develop the best universities in the world, they might establish universal Medicare. Rousseau encouraged this to a considerable extent, and it is notable that the first public role Emile takes on is that of a charity worker. To strengthen his capacity and inclination to pity, Emile is exposed to suffering, to "objects which swell the heart, which extend it to other beings, which make it find itself everywhere outside itself" (223). This will enhance his sociability in the surest fashion because "it is our common miseries which turn our hearts to humanity and our weakness and need that makes us sociable" (221). Emile's overflowing energy is first made to give him a taste for helping others, and finding satisfaction in "goodness, humanity, commiseration, beneficence, and all the attractive and sweet passions naturally pleasing to men" (223).

This entails his engagement with society, something he knows very little about. Accordingly, shortly after this public activity commences, so does his first exposure to books and what we call 'education'. Only now, as he begins to care about and wish to act among men is it fitting to give him a proper introduction to human affairs: now this knowledge is useful to him.

Rousseau's very egalitarian aim is to teach Emile not to be awed by the great achievements of the past, but to see how many suffered for the greatness of those few, and to recognize how few of those considered great deserve their status. He delivers a *précis* of the main arguments of the *Second Discourse* about the strong tendency in society to augment and protect artificial inequality, after "having already showed him men by means of the accidents common to the species. Now comes the measurement of natural and civil inequality and the picture of the whole social order" (235). Once Emile has been disposed to pity, he can be made to see the course of history as Rousseau depicts it:

> In the state of nature there is a *de facto* equality that is real and indestructible, because it is impossible in that state for the difference between man and man by itself to be great enough to make one dependent on another. In the civil state there is a *de jure* equality that is chimerical and vain, because the means designed to maintain it themselves serve to destroy it, and because the public power, added to that of the stronger to oppress the weak, breaks the sort of equilibrium nature had placed between them. From this first contradiction flow all those that are observed in the civil order between appearance and reality. (236)

Rather than see the illustrious men of history as they have illustrated themselves, Rousseau would have them portrayed "such as they are – not in order that young people hate them but that they pity them and not want to resemble them. This is, to my taste, the best-conceived sentiment that man can have about his species." To keep Emile from developing the weakness of restless, insatiable desires for distinction, he will from the outset be made to see the ambition of those considered great as a product of weakness and therefore pitiable. Because he pities the great, he will not pity himself for failing to be considered great, and this is fundamental to developing a healthy *amour-propre.* Emile will be disposed to love all, and not to be constantly on the lookout for enemies. He will be capable of making enemies, but not inclined to. He will be capable of excelling, but will not feel that he needs to. He will be made happy by feeling that he is filling his modest role in the world well, and this role is one that relates almost exclusively to family, friends, and neighbours. Success in performing his role will be fuelled by pride, not vanity, and this is crucial in distinguishing between good and bad forms of *amour-propre.* To develop a sense of the moral order, Emile and Sophie will be educated to see it at work on the broadest level of humanity and sanctioned by God, but they will understand it most vividly on the level of those closest to them. They will overcome petty individualism by understanding their duty to be to their family much more than to their city, or even to God.

Rousseau goes on to explain how this burgeoning sense of a moral order and the worthiness of attachments can strengthen your hold (as a parent/guardian) on the youth because he will see how much he owes you for making him what he is, and how wise you

are for being able to manage his rearing so well. In his pre-moral state, he could not have appreciated these benefactions, but would have taken them for granted; worse, he might have looked down on the giver of the effort and gifts as servile. But with his new capacity to love, he can feel gratitude and recognize your affection as an ennobling quality, even if he is still very confused about what love or the noble really are. As he goes through his teens, his experiences as well as the self-understanding imparted to him regarding them will shape his view of what these two gleaming but always blurry concepts mean to him.

Although not old enough to become sexual, Emile will be encouraged to do charitable acts, since "at any age beneficence is permitted"; although not old enough to understand universals like humanity, "the exercise of the social virtues brings the love of humanity to the depth of one's heart" (250). Accordingly, besides the more robust engagement in friendship, he also trains his heart to feel good about relieving the burdens of the needy. Again we see the new utility for him in learning about society and mankind, and we also see the theme of humility as a product of pity reinforced. Because he cannot properly love yet it would be inappropriate for him to interact sexually, but to prepare him for that ultimate sentiment, and also to prepare him to be just, he is habituated to finding pleasure in working to help others and establishing harmony amongst those around him: "This spirit of peace is an effect of his education which, not having fomented *amour-propre* and a high opinion of himself, has diverted him from seeking his pleasures in domination and in another's unhappiness" (251).

Were he to understand his goal as a sexual one, he would not care for any unfortunates – except perhaps as a means to impress women. Otherwise, those who did not arouse his lust would mean nothing, and even winning over those who did would be motivated by a desire to conquer, not a desire to harmoniously contribute to the larger order or extend his existence to include another. The achievement of his aims would have a very different effect in his heart, and the aspects of human nature and relationships he would find useful to understand would also be limited. Most of all, he would become accustomed to evaluating everything in terms of his vanity and sensual pleasure, and this would severely restrict his soul's capacities for virtue, happiness, and justice. Those who are constantly preoccupied with their personal business cannot "judge things soundly":

> Relating everything to themselves alone and regulating their ideas of good and bad according to their own interest, they fill their minds with countless ridiculous prejudices, and in everything that hampers their slightest advantage, they immediately see the overturning of the whole universe.
>
> Let us extend amour-propre to other beings. We shall transform it into a virtue, and there is no man's heart in which this virtue does not have its root... the more one generalizes this interest, the more it becomes equitable, and the love of mankind is nothing other than the love of justice. (252)

Instead of a charitable disposition being something that must be selfless or what we are often inclined to call "disinterested" caring, Rousseau is adamant that it is a matter of us enlarging ourselves to include others: we do not simply care for them "for their own sake," but rather because we have enlarged our self-interest to include them. It is "for their own sake" in the sense that we do not wish them good things so that they literally share a portion with us (as one might ardently wish that his wife's parents would win a

lottery), but it is not an abstract or aesthetic appreciation such as with the dramatic presentation of a beautiful deed or happy outcome.

Rousseau's "sentiment" of "existence" model means that we do not look at things only in light of some rationally derived standard of conduct and deserving, but instead feel ourselves extended over and into those around us in such a way that their happiness and sadness is a constitutive part of our existence. Although *sentimental*, this feeling does then make us want to *know*: what is good and bad for people, who deserves what, and how to bring about a better community. These considerations, combined with Rousseau's history lessons, will compel the youth to expand his scope beyond his neighbour, and his capacity for pity will accordingly be "generalized and extended to the whole of mankind" (253).

This model of elevated pity certainly opens itself to the charge of softheartedness leading to softheadedness, but Rousseau counters that it is only when one is initially disposed to everyone because of their humanity that we can equitably judge between claims when they conflict. Emile will be drawn to considerations of universals like humanity and justice through his localized attempts at benefaction; one could say he will be drawn to these abstractions naturally.

> It must be remembered that all these means by which I take my pupil out of himself, always have, nevertheless, a direct relation to him; for not only does he get an inner enjoyment from them, but also, in making him beneficent for the profit of others, I work for his own instruction. (253)

Besides the need to understand better how truly to help people, there will inevitably be conflicting claims on his efforts and he will have to have a standard by which to prioritize. Because he comes to recognize this dilemma from a position of wanting to help too much, instead of wanting to excuse himself from helping as much as possible or helping only those who are likely to repay him, Rousseau believes he will come to a much better understanding of justice. He will care about justice because he wants to help those who deserve his help most, and he will recognize that "pity for the wicked is a very great cruelty to men" (253) in large part because efforts on their behalf would take away from others.[31]

Through these reflections on humans and justice which now seem important to him, Emile begins meaningfully to grasp the order of things, and feel his place in the world. He begins to get a sense of the interconnectedness of things outside his proximity, and feels keenly that his charitable actions warm his heart in a unique way:

> What sublime sentiments stifle the germ of petty passions in his heart!... The true principles of the just, the true models of the beautiful, all the moral relations of beings, all the ideas of order are imprinted on his understanding. He sees the place of each thing and the cause which removes it from its place; he sees what can do good and what stands in its way. (253)

Clearly, Rousseau places a great deal of potential in this new phase of life. While it is true that the youth is now capable of sensing the whole, this is not to say that he will dedicate himself to global charity from now on. This first stage channels his nascent

[31] Also, as Julie says, it is dangerous to empower bad men: "I wish you happiness, but I would not want to contribute to it, for fear of doing harm to others by putting you in a position to do it." Returning to the consideration just noted she adds that "The world is not so short on good people who suffer, for one to be reduced to worrying about you" (J 437).

eroticism into friendship and pity, for those around him most palpably, but gradually towards all humanity. This will dispose him to a healthy sociability governed by modesty.

This disposition is still quite malleable, however, and the next two stages aim to give it stability and a more definite direction. The first is to instil in him piety for a moral God who has made an order of our world and given us an inner voice to guide us. A teaching like the one in the "Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar" (hereafter the *Profession*) has the effect of making a youth able to universalize his pity to all of humanity, but prevent him from getting carried away by extreme sects and make him comfortable in taking on a modest role in the affairs of the world. While his pity is now to be enlarged to encompass all of humanity, we will see that Emile's understanding of the "relations of beings" and their proper actions and roles leads him back to his immediate vicinity and closest relations: romantic love will be the third stage of channelling his eros, and he will find his most definite direction in pursuing his belief that the goal of this passion is to devote oneself to marriage and the family. To feel more strongly the connection between this smaller sphere and the greater political, global and cosmic ones, and to open himself up sufficiently to the splendour of virtue in order to properly engage in the chaste pursuit of his wife, Emile is now made to feel and know God.

Natural Piety

Like so much of Rousseau's work, the *Profession* vividly stakes out a position which is alternately set against the prevailing theological and philosophical doctrines. While it does question organized religion and the revelation upon which the main faiths rely in the second part, the larger first half is a broad attack on philosophical scepticism regarding God and Morality, a feature of modernity that threatens family values in its tendency to promote individualism.

The Vicar argues that the whole is unknowable; accordingly, reasonings and judgment can only get us so far. This small acknowledgment has tremendous implications, and most "great thinkers" in his estimation do not account for it; instead, they decide upon some "fundamental principles" or an elaborate system and claim they can now properly understand everything from the deductions that follow. The Vicar counters that inside of us is a book more reliable than any written by men, and our consciences do not so much need to be enlightened as uncovered and listened to. The scholars carry themselves away from these inner truths with their reasoning, and fail to provide a genuine account of the mysteries of life, such as creation and our consciences. Instead, they either debunk all higher feelings, or leave the impression that the best one can do in life is to rise above all of our passions and dispositions and proclaim truths about the universe. Whether they celebrate our beastliness or make us strive to imitate gods, they do not teach us to embrace the duties of men, and accordingly these learned men do us a great disservice.

In a few places around the Profession Rousseau repeats the axiom of the Vicar that philosophy leads to atheism, and his belief that atheists have great difficulty being consistently moral (see especially 315). Though the Vicar makes a considerable effort to root his moral understanding in our natures, he argues that proper morals ultimately rely on faith in a providential and moral God; that is, one who gives us all that we need to be happy and good, and punishes us (mostly in this life) for our failure to live up to expectations. Philosophy makes us doubt the conscience, and takes the charm away from morality by demanding everything have clear, rationally demonstrable benefits and justifications. What is needed is instead more faith and courage, or more heart and less head:

> One has countless reasons to reject the inclinations of the human heart. False prudence confines it within the limits of the human *I*; countless efforts of human courage are needed to dare to cross those limits. To enjoy good is the reward for having done good, and this reward is only obtained after having deserved it. (291)

By adopting complex arguments focusing on the difficulties surrounding the idea of moral duties, in following modern rationalism we develop a "false prudence" wherein we convince ourselves that there are no natural positive duties that apply to us. Rather than trying to follow the disposition to pity and sense of goodness inside of us, we turn into the "philosopher" described in the *Second Discourse*, whose "fellow man can be murdered with impunity right under his window; he only has to put his hands over his ears and argue with himself a little bit to prevent nature, which revolts within him, from identifying him with the man who is being assassinated" (SD 132).

The necessity for opinions about the whole is related to our erotic nature. Though Rousseau is silent about it in the case of the young Emile, the same imaginative capacity that enables us to pity also makes the terrifying awareness of our mortality inevitable (cf. 226). In his 'researches', Emile might also have been troubled by the existence of evil, and curious about the nascent longings for perfection and eternity in the growing power of the beautiful he feels. These are all impetuses for wondering about the meaning of life, and whether an omnipotent and just being rules the universe. Emile's disposition to goodness is evidently not enough to secure his virtue: he must imagine that the greatest happiness is inseparable from it. His piety reassures him about this, and now "he finds his true interest in being good... in fulfilling his duty even at the expense of his life" (314). The rationalist thrust of the Enlightenment sought to end the rule of superstition and manipulation by persuading the public that there is nothing supernatural in this world, and no world beyond this one. Rousseau thought this to be a dangerous error: he challenged the quality of the reasoning behind their atheism, and decried the folly of trying to remove God and his providence as well as support for cosmic justice from social life. Rousseau adamantly maintains that without belief in the afterlife, our degenerated societies and selfish passions will turn us, or at least the vast majority of us, into vile, miserable creatures (e.g. 314-5).

Faith in God not only provides a support for his virtue, it enables Emile to extend his existence in a radically new way. He now loves the being who created him, and from this feels a new love for the entire order he is placed in. A sense of having a proper place in this order is crucial not only to combat the morally dangerous opinion that one is the

center or most important thing in the universe, but especially to secure greater certainty about the worthiness of adopting the relational roles of husband and father, or even citizen. His happiness is also now more durable because of his faith in the justice of the order, and the resulting assurance that so long as he continues to be virtuous, the happiness it brings him will never end. Just as in the pre-pious stage, his faith in virtue is not merely a product of reason, but of his reasonings which originate in and are confirmed by his inner sentiment. He follows the dictates of his conscience freely, because they come not from a will opposed to his, but from the best part of himself. He is virtuous without any sophisticated wisdom or the need for a wise (human) authority to legislate for him. Any necessary guidance has been providentially written in his heart.

It is pretty clear that though Emile will hear a somewhat different version of this religious teaching, it will surely not differ in warning of the dangers in arming our rationality to conquer the mysteries of the universe. Rousseau has taught Emile already of the vanity in most grand claims, and he surely means for everyone to be aware that when an author claims to have captured the universe in his book, he has had to shrink, lower, and distort it to fit it in such a place.

This teaching also contributes to strengthening his natural self-love against the dangers of vanity. He will not seek the approval and admiration of people as an end in itself, but rather will enjoy contributing to the experience of goodness enjoyed by others. Even more than earning the esteem of respectable fellows, though, he will seek to be worthy of regard for the sake above all of his internal witness. He is now open to

learning that it is his conscience which he should most fear rebuke from. Other fellows are only worthy insofar as they are in agreement with this divinely influenced standard.

The Vicar describes his own experience of pulling himself out of a slide into narrow individualism, through the humbling recognition that having a modest but sound place in a larger order was all-important. He was drifting toward a condition of ignoring his generous sentiments in favour of selfish reasonings, until he came to a better understanding of his place in the universe:

> The good man orders himself in relation to the whole, and the wicked one orders the whole in relation to himself. The latter makes himself the center of all things; the former measures his radius and keeps to the circumference. Then he is ordered in relation to the common center, which is God, and in relation to all the concentric circles, which are the creatures. (292)

This passage is worth comparing to the one cited above where selfish people were said to have warped judgment, because "regulating their ideas of good and bad according to their own interest, they fill their minds with countless ridiculous prejudices" (252). A properly developed person takes a larger view, with a larger heart, and by "extend(ing) *amour-propre* to other beings" it can be turned "into a virtue... the love of mankind is nothing more than the love of justice" (242). The Vicar's presentation has more emphasis on God than Rousseau's does, and he makes much more explicit than Rousseau does elsewhere that our capacity for pity can serve as a basis for much of morality not only because it is an innate sentiment humans share, but because it is essentially a source of inner revelation in the form of conscience. This is an important difference, but whether the

unchangeable element we try to order ourselves around is God or Nature, the effect is largely the same in terms of the modesty of the perspective it recommends.[32] We are not to look at the world and consider what we can take from it, but to consider where we should be in it, and what is fitting for us to do. Rather than trying to trick the world, we should submit to it.

This perspective leads one to be much better disposed to marriage than those which place the individual at the center of the universe. For all the freedoms surrounding marriage which the liberal age has been able to secure, choosing it is still to take on significant duties with regard to one's spouse and children. Against the enlightened forces which would argue that we need have no duties except those which restrain us from harming our fellows, the proponent of marriage needs to be able to argue that submission to this institution and the partner we commit ourselves to is reasonable and commendable. Having listeners disposed to believe that we have a place in the order which prescribes duties as well as rights makes this task much less daunting than if one must start from the barest of modern premises. One might take this one step further to the promotion of fully organized religion on the grounds that God explicitly revealing to us in sacred texts his plan or wish that we commit ourselves in marriage is even more effective, but as we have seen in our cursory treatment of this subject, neither Rousseau nor his Vicar wish to base their teachings on doctrines or revelation based on hearsay.

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[32] There are obviously many important differences between God and nature being the source, not least of which is that we can decide that nature should be improved upon, or contains contradictory elements needing to be reconciled, especially in light of our more artificial social developments. Divine standards presumably overcome such possibilities, except insofar as they require fallible interpretation. Rousseau is attempting to lend nature, or his interpretation of nature, a hallowed status by proclaiming its invariable goodness and crediting its 'Author' with omnipotence and omniscience, as he does most explicitly in the profession but elsewhere as well.

The Revelation and Elevation of Sex

After the *Profession*, Rousseau picks up where he left off with Emile: sex education. The difference is that now, instead of redirecting the potential in the physical development towards humanity while trying to preserve ignorant innocence about sexuality, he takes the matter up directly, letting Emile understand what the physical and emotional changes he has been undergoing are primarily about. Having channelled his erotic awakening into love of men, love of the moral order, and the God who created both, he will now channel it into a virtuous romantic love. In this section we will analyze Rousseau's innovative use of romantic ideals to secure not only Emile's chastity, but his overall taste and virtue. After outlining the argument he makes to Emile to persuade him of the value of chastity, we will demonstrate how he breaks from the ancients and moderns before more fully elaborating upon the distinct character of Emile's romantic virtue.

In the last chapter we discussed Rousseau's defence of social stigmas for promiscuity in women because of various consequences stemming from the responsibility of childrearing, as well as some physiological observations that support ideas such as the notion that nature prescribes "attack" for men and "defence" for women. In book four of *Emile*, Rousseau gives a more nuanced explanation of how important chastity is for all young people: sexual modesty can serve as a template for all virtue, and can strengthen one's commitment to the marriage and family that can secure our character as adults. He

goes so far as to declare that "the taste for chastity is connected with health, strength, courage, the virtues, love itself, and all the true goods of man" (324). This emphasis on sexuality is more radical than any philosopher had ever put forward. We have seen his conception of the gulf that exists between the bare elements of our natures and the complex requirements of advanced socialization. We have also seen that he rejects the adequacy of reason, tradition, piety, fear, or commercial ambition to bridge this gulf. Instead, he believes that in the power of sexuality and imagination there a means to socializing people properly, and an obvious end in the family that will make them happy.

It is especially important in modern society that the benefits of chastity be firmly entrenched not only because of the demands of our individualistic rights-based perspective, but because of the sexually-charged environment that flows from a permissive and egalitarian outlook which insists on broad freedom of expression. Rousseau suggests that if someone were in a place where sexual morals were fairly strict across the entire society – that is, one with considerable censorship or closed off like remote parts of the Swiss countryside of his day – the young might be able to get away with more ignorance because of less temptation. In an 'enlightened' age of mass society, however, chaste strictures from on high are less reliable because they place great demands upon undeveloped adherents who are faced with constant cross-pressures and a multitude of opposing arguments. Going up against the priestly approach, Rousseau warns that:

> There is a certain pious language about the gravest subjects which is drummed into the ears of young girls without persuading them. This language, which is all out of proportion

> with their ideas and to which they secretly attach little importance, promotes in them a facility at yielding to their inclinations, inasmuch as they lack reasons for resistance founded on things themselves. A girl who is soberly and piously raised doubtless has powerful arms against temptations; but one whose heart – or rather whose ears – is fed solely with a mystical jargon infallibly becomes the prey of the first adroit seducer who goes after her. (392)

Instead of "mystical jargon," Rousseau believes that young people must be made to appreciate the advantages of chastity, such as the respect they will command when they come to the all-important stage of finding a spouse, or the greater pleasure love-making will bring them if they have not exhausted their passions in immature and fleeting encounters. Even put in the most selfish terms these arguments are not intuitive: they require an education that persuades a youth to believe that these statements are not mere prudish bluster. Rousseau ensures that we recognize that this education is not cut from whole cloth, however, in that the emerging erotic passions are mysteriously confusing, and seem to hold the promise of something special. Instead of either fighting against or demystifying these intense feelings emerging from within, Rousseau persuades the youth that they can bring all he feels that they promise and more – but if he indulges too early or in the wrong ways he will spoil this potential. He is protected from temptation by his belief that waiting for the right person can indeed bring him this ultimate happiness – in the reciprocal love of another virtuous human being, where the sensual pleasures combine with the spiritual in true ecstasy.

As always, Rousseau does not neglect the role of rhetoric in the impression a teaching makes on a person. He emphasizes that it is now even more critical that the

youth not be picking up his first knowledge of sexuality in bits and pieces from ungoverned sources, as "This indiscreet instruction, which can have no decent purpose, at the very least soils the imagination of those who receive it, and disposes them to the vices of those who give it," (318). This message is surely more relevant than ever given the pervasiveness of sexuality in contemporary media generally, and the ease of access young people have to pornography in particular. In addition to the damage these first impressions can have on sexuality by training one to be gratified by the objectification of others, it can also affect the trust a youth has in those who are supposed to guide him: if others are forthcoming with information about this burning mystery when you his governor act as if the subject does not exist, you will lose his confidence.

In many situations Rousseau would agree that it is wise to downplay the subject matter when providing your explanation so as not to throw accelerant on an already smouldering situation by making a big deal out of something. Countering the idea for this subject, for which a burning curiosity is bound to emerge regardless of one's tactics, Rousseau enters into a brief digression on "the way the human heart is governed" (319). He reiterates the point made previously that preaching will not have the desired effect, but in part because it is likely to be done indiscriminately – above all with insufficient attention paid to timing. This discourse needs to be not only timed correctly, but delivered one-on-one in a suitably grand setting, since this lesson "ought to influence the rest of his days" (321). Reiterating observations put forth in the *Essay on Language*, Rousseau complains that whereas the ancients knew very well the utility of visual signs to drive home important speeches,

> One of the errors of our age is to use reason in too unadorned a form, as if men were all mind. In neglecting the language that speaks to the imagination, the most energetic of languages has been lost. The impression of the word is always weak, and one speaks to the heart far better through the eyes than through the ears.... Reason alone is not active. It sometimes restrains, it arouses rarely, and it has never done anything great. Always to reason is the mania of small minds. (321)

Emile is not treated to an impromptu speech in his room one night about the birds and bees. Just as the Vicar brings the youth to a hilltop overlooking the breathtaking valley of the Po, for this all-important revelation his tutor declares that:

> I shall begin by moving his imagination, I shall choose the time, the place, and the objects most favorable to the impression I want to make. I shall, so to speak, call all of nature as a witness to our conversations. I shall bring the Eternal Being, who is the Author of nature, to testify to the truth of my speech. (323)

Not only will the scene be dramatic, but an impassioned tone and delivery, combined with imagery and strong sentiment will all go into making this moment as potent as possible to reach the understanding of the young one. Rousseau will also infuse much love in the scene in order to set the tone, speaking passionately of how much of himself he has put into the youth, how this care has been a source of great pride for him, and how if the youth should go astray now, it will rob him of twenty precious years. Such a loving depiction of fulfilling his own place in the order of things should help bring about the proper effect: "By concentrating upon the sanctity of my duties, I shall make his duties more respectable to him" (323).

The effect of the religious teaching is to take the nascent social affections in a previously self-centered individual, and give him a stronger sense of how his self-love is modified in a positive way by his relations when they are well-ordered. While disposing him to be charitable and friendly to others is an invaluable beginning, these qualities are only augmentations of his goodness. As the child matures and becomes a part of more developed social life, there are numerous potential occasions and situations where overcoming and struggle are required, and this is where virtue in the stricter sense will have to have been developed. It is only when proper conduct takes on a greater seriousness through the recognition of a divine or natural universal order that the youth can be expected to have the strength that moral convictions provide to fight reliably against temptation. Accordingly, after being properly primed by the inculcation of the basic tenets of the natural religion Rousseau proposes, Emile has the laws of love revealed to him in a similarly grand fashion. In this long sentence, Rousseau outlines how much he believes can be accomplished by a sufficiently stirring and well-timed exhortation:

> ... if one then expounds the laws of nature in all their truth; if one shows him the sanction of these same laws in the physical and moral ills that their infraction brings down upon the guilty; if in speaking of this inconceivable mystery of generation, one joins the idea of the allure given to this act by the author of nature the idea of the exclusive attachment which makes it delicious, and the ideal of the duties of fidelity and of modesty which surround it and redouble its charm in fulfilling its object; if, in depicting marriage to him not only as the sweetest of associations but as the most inviolable and holiest of all contracts, one tells him forcefully all the reasons which make so sacred a bond so respectable to all men, and which bring hatred and malediction to whoever dares to stain its purity; if one presents him with a striking and true picture of the horrors

> of debauchery, of its foolish degradation, of the gradual decline by which a first disorder leads to them all and finally drags to destruction whoever succumbs to it; if, I say, one shows him clearly how the taste for chastity is connected with health, strength, courage, the virtues, love itself, and all the true goods of man, I maintain that one will then render this chastity desirable and dear to him and that his mind will be amenable to the means he will be given for preserving it; for, so long as chastity is preserved, it is respected; it is despised only after having been lost. (324)

This quote succinctly captures Rousseau's approach to moral issues by emphasizing that the rules we should embrace are those imposed not by self-interested and fallible authorities, but by nature (or more precisely its Author). Moreover, in accordance with his ideas about natural goodness, the conduct it prescribes is not exceedingly painful, incomprehensible, or even selfless; in fact the reward for the modest (if occasionally quite sharp) deprivations entailed is the opportunity to achieve the greatest happiness. Monogamous, committed love in the context of family is the sweetest kind, and brings with it the potential for an overall genuine contentment in life. His approach is very practical, even as it speaks to our most spiritual side. While reasons are proffered, Rousseau is not afraid to let some more ambiguous phenomena such as the "inconceivable mysteries of generation" play a role in persuading his audience, because he knows that our imagination and inchoate longings have to be brought in to any successful teaching that is meant to determine actions: one must "Make the language of the mind pass through the heart, so that it may make itself understood" (323).

After having impressed upon a youth the natural ends and divine purpose of sexuality, he will be more open to taking guidance from you on the qualities he should

seek in the partner he is to take for life. Having raised his interest to a sufficient height, Rousseau depicts the model for Emile – not one of perfection, but one of true merit and in possession of all lovable qualities one would want: "It is unimportant whether the model I depict is imaginary; it suffices that it make him disgusted with those that could tempt him" (329). Emile's enthusiasm begins to take hold and his chastity is now much safer not because he is scared or disgusted by sex, but because he cannot imagine being intimate with someone other than his beloved. Rousseau commends this education in taste of character "for repressing his senses by his imagination."

Just as when the sexual end was unspoken, Rousseau believes the new forces within the youth must be used in a positive fashion to provide him with the form of character that will guide him through life. Instead of dispersing these forces into broader social virtues, now they are to be directly channelled into romantic love and its attending concern for personal virtue. Before describing how this "taste for chastity" is connected with the rest of the virtues, we will consider how this elevation of romantic love illuminates some of the fundamental differences between Rousseau and previous thinkers. While in previous ages the forces of socialization fought against romantic love for the sake of preserving the religious and political order, recall that Rousseau believes that if these forces were ever legitimate they are too corrupt now to be so. Instead, the power of romantic love should be extolled and used as a foundation for morals and expressed in marriage, which can serve as the institution to replace the traditional monarchy and church. This obviously has revolutionary implications.

This dangers perceived in this doctrine have turned many conservatives against Rousseau as Burke famously did. Although Rousseau argues that it can be otherwise, love of tradition, love of God, and love of country are each potentially threatened by the private nature of romance. Love of one person inclines you to cut yourself off from society and care less for the value others bestow on your actions. The power of your neighbour's judgment is something Rousseau is willing to praise in a healthy place like his idealized Swiss communities. In the modern mass society, however, we have seen why he thinks public opinion is generally something to insulate oneself from. In such a place, rather than this being a criticism, romantic love is to be extolled and cultivated precisely because it can provide fulfillment of some of our deepest desires while removing us from the public square. By this means we can satisfy our longings without losing ourselves in the poisonous vanity and oppression inevitably involved in public success. This is not only a break from the traditionalists, but from the ancient thinkers, who valued patriotism as the most common source of virtue (surpassed only by the pursuit of wisdom) and discounted romantic love as too narrow and too illusory.

The enlightenment thinkers also discounted romantic love because it was irrational and asocial, but their critique is importantly different than that of the ancients. The ancients did not simply dismiss the irrational aspects of humanity in general; they recognized how important our erotic capacities were in fuelling all notable achievements, whether they be poetic, patriotic, or even great feats of reason. To generalize a metaphor from Plato's *Symposium*, their concern was that if one were satisfied with romantic love, going beyond this love to a love of wisdom or true virtue would not occur. Aristotle as

well as others considered the family to play a role in the orderly city that was too important for it to be left to unpredictable considerations like sexual affections. Unlike Rousseau, the ancients did not see romantic love as compatible with virtue, whether it be philosophic or political.

The moderns do not object that romantic love would compromise other lofty goals; rather (to make another admittedly crude generalization), they would be concerned that under a romantic spell one would not be devoted enough to peacefulness and a productive career. A "Romantic" would not only not be unproductive and unreliable in the defence of stable and practical government, but would be susceptible to disruptive idealism – be it violent jealousy or larger-scale riotous outrage. Rousseau did not care for these 'low but solid' modern goals and felt that what was valid in the concerns of the ancients, namely a capacity for virtue, was precisely what romance could engender in the modern world better than anything else. Rather than the love of one person being a starting place from which one broadens his knowledge, virtue, and love of the good (as Plato's "Diotima" envisions), we have seen Rousseau broaden Emile's knowledge, virtue, and love of the good as preparation for the goal of properly loving his virtuous wife.

Having explained why Rousseau radically rejects the ancient reliance upon civic virtue as impractical and the path of the moderns as too practical, what remains is to evaluate his theory of how illusory romanticism could in fact generate virtue in individuals. This process encapsulates Rousseau's standing as a modernist thinker who has ancient sensibilities but who is importantly different from each camp. Above all, he

takes the moderns' lowered outlook which focuses on passions, and does not grant a sacred place to our rational capacity. Even in the promotion of sexual virtue, he takes a kind of Hobbesian stance against the motivating power of reason in declaring that: "One has a hold of the passions only by means of the passions. It is by their empire that their tyranny must be combated" (327). It is neither by reasonings drawn out of a system, nor from withered celibates wagging their fingers that a teen will embrace chastity, but through exciting in him a passion for much greater happiness. This promise will have to seem reasonable, of course, and will accordingly need to have some accessible arguments and respected authority behind it, but it is not simply to obey the head that the heart will harness the lower regions.

It is misleading to say simply that Hobbes and Rousseau each use passions, because the types of passions each uses are fundamentally different. Hobbes sought to use fear to destroy the power of higher ideals; Rousseau resurrects ideals in the form of passionate love rooted in family affections. Hobbes sought to subdue pride; Rousseau aligns it with his natural principles of goodness and independence, and from that basis allows it to blossom into a strong sense of taste and a modest but uncompromising pride in his self-mastery.

Hobbes has a fairly straightforward account of the problem his scientifically derived absolute government is meant to solve: in the state of nature we are all miserable because there is nothing to prevent our selfishness from causing chaos. Rousseau's more ambiguous account of nature does not allow for such straightforward answers. In

particular, his state of nature depicts us as happy, but also asocial and lazy, which are not adequate characteristics for modern man. In an important sense, all the more advanced qualities of humans are artificial, especially in that they are shaped by our malleable imaginations. He sees culture, not a Leviathan or well-balanced legislature, as guiding the direction our imaginations takes, and accordingly seeks to turn culture and education away from the pernicious reinforcement of instituted inequality or the thoughtless pursuit of bourgeois equality. Instead, he promotes the model that can work with our natures and social requirements to bridge the gulf that has developed between them. Sexuality and the erotic imagination are not only powerful enough, but are inherently directed in part towards the family, whose natural affections and independence make it a much more suitable end for our pursuit of happiness.

In a related sense, Rousseau's teaching differs from the moderns in his emphasis on how adolescence is fundamentally different than childhood precisely because of the emergence of the erotic capacities and the corresponding power of the imagination. Whereas the child operates largely on pleasure and pain alone (factors emphasized in many modern outlooks from Hobbes through to today), the adolescent begins to take a larger view of his actions, in light of the impression they make on others as well as himself. Just as Emile's burgeoning concern for helping those around him led him to seek better knowledge of what is good for people and what makes society work better, so his overwhelming desire to be worthy of the affection of his beloved will lead him to seek the social skills and awareness necessary for this purpose – but no more. The good character of the one girl, or type of girl, he seeks to impress, will make him immune to

the vanity that would easily arise if he sought to gain the good favour of a wider audience.

He now develops an aesthetic sensibility: propriety begins to compete with utility and his entire capacity for pleasure falls under the domain of that which suits his taste, or at least that which does not disgust him. Again, his taste will to some extent be informed by reason, but there will be more to it as well, including his compassionate sensibility, disposition towards that which bespeaks independence, and respect for that which contributes to order. He will accordingly be turned off of ostentation, deception, and that which entails the oppression of the unfortunate. Before puberty he had for the most part used his reason only to understand the non-human world and sought out only what was useful; now he has begun the study of human affairs and begins to understand humans around him – as well as the new human who has sprung up inside of him. Shame, anger, indignation, tears, laughter, esteem – these words now have meaning for him because he experiences them, and sees what causes them in others.

More than just providing new 'experiences', they in fact, as Rousseau would say, create a whole new world for him. Whereas once, like the primitive humans from the *Second Discourse*, his imagination extended no farther than his needs, and foresight rarely extended to the end of the day, as higher sentiments emerge within him play and short term pleasure begin to seem like petty things which are easily sacrificed to honour. Pride in victory, whether it be on a hunt or in games with his fellows, can satisfy the young teenager for some time, but eventually there will be no means by which to

preserve his innocence, at which time he will need an education that can enable him to develop virtue. A willingness to embrace chastity is the most decisive expression of this phenomenon of struggle and sacrifice for a grander long-term psychic benefit (that is, for the sake of his soul) that a teen is likely to experience. With the image of supreme happiness in the love of a virtuous woman, Emile has the strength to willingly – and because of this willingness or freedom, happily – pursue a decent path in the meantime.

With the proper moral preparation, which is on the one hand preservation from bad opinions or passions combined with the activation and direction of the conscience, the youth is now capable of having his desires restrained, channelled, and sublimated into devotion towards greater ideals such as transcendent virtue. It is not by the logical force of abstract notions that he is able to control himself; again, it is by means of the passions. The conscience is informed by reason, but makes itself felt by means of the innately human passions of shame and pride; recall that these were quite vivid in the social state of nature and were almost entirely bound up with sex until the distortions of property and complex society arose. By this means alone can one turn the natural inclination to find a sexual partner into the desire to find a virtuous mate, and to settle for nothing less. The proper training of Emile's *amour-propre* is key: it is only a woman with the ability to judge character well and who knows him for who he is whose favour is worth having. He is told that when this occurs, it is the most rewarding experience he is likely to have. He has known since his first teaching about sexuality that this all points to marriage: now that he is in love with Sophie he is ready for it.

Having demonstrated the importance of the relationship between a Rousseau's revolutionary romantic sex education and moral development, we will close the chapter with a consideration of the features of the heterosexual marriage and family he presents as uniquely conducive to morals and happiness.

Marriage and Morals

In the last chapter we outlined the broader considerations Rousseau makes in order to justify the importance of different expectations for men and women for a healthy society; here we will look more closely at the psychological phenomena as they operate on a more individual level. Emile and Sophie each bring unique qualities to the marriage: in their relationship Rousseau consciously diverged from both patriarchy and our modern equality. Not only is this important to the cohesiveness of the partnership, but the implicit recognition of incompleteness contributes to the quality of their love and depth of their moral sense. Their marriage is also the product of a free choice on the part of each, and this bestows upon it a uniquely authoritative character that raises the relationship to a higher status than anything in modern life.

Rousseau's ambiguous view of natural sociability is reflected in his belief that to a considerable extent it is women's attachment to social opinion that cements men's attachment as well. While Emile has developed a generous heart and a taste for good conduct, it is his choice to take on a husband's responsibility to Sophie which firmly attaches him to society. Still, Rousseau makes it clear that while Sophie must and does

give more thought to societal expectations and judgments, she must also be educated to know what true merit is and that the only people worth pleasing are those of the best character (365). In this she is not categorically different than Emile, who is also taught to love virtue, respect the opinion of the wise, and otherwise try his best not to make enemies in wider society to ensure that (at a minimum) he can get what he needs in it to support his family. While each gives guidance and judgment to the other, for the less innately social and less consistently moral men, a decent wife serves as a second, often more reliable conscience, beckoning one from the temptations of vice and irresponsibility back to the path of wholesome conduct.

While "romantic" ideals are often fairly criticized for leading to destructively idealistic behaviours, Rousseau insists that Emile's devotion to Sophie is healthy and wise. While not unequivocal, he is the first famous political thinker to praise the influence of women because of its salutary effect on men. As we know from the last chapter, he believes women have a greater sensibility in social matters, which includes being more grounded and practical; a wife who seeks to make her husband more devoted to domestic practicalities and aware of certain social realities will also help keep him from becoming devoted to extreme and impractical moral and political causes. One example of this is when Emile learns that Sophie is concerned because Emile enters into their relationship wealthy, whereas her father lost his fortune: his first response is to sacrifice any claim he has on wealth. We see not only her greater sensibility regarding things which can cause tension in relationships down the road, but also Emile learning that the practicalities of family life trump ideals as he realizes that giving up all his

wealth is not the right answer, even if it seems like a noble, or rather romantic, gesture (422-3). This is but one example of the ways in which the abilities of each make the life they share together superior to what they could be on their own: throughout book five Rousseau outlines the various mental aptitudes and personality traits that make it seem as though men and women were designed to be paired together.

While Rousseau clearly intends for us to see that the roles men and women play are different, it would be wrong to say that there is only complementarity to them, as important as that is. There is also a very important middle ground that they share, namely, a love of virtue tempered by an awareness of the practical importance of being accepted in their community. Even before meeting Sophie, Emile starts to feel that the opinion of others matters; he is taught that this is legitimate, but that there is also a grander set of standards, a natural and divinely ordered one, which only the best sort of people manage to align their judgments with. Sophie arrives at a similar understanding in her youth, and once they meet they delight in pursuing a better understanding of the world together. Not only does this help put vanity strictly in check and ensures a healthy *amour-propre*, but it provides the critical grounds on which they will be able to promise themselves to each other, namely, a shared moral outlook to which they are both devoted. Their shared values are the stable core upon which their marriage will stand, not the romantic passion which initially bonds them together.

That said, their shared love of virtue is an essential ingredient of their attraction. Both Emile's and Sophie's taste makes it necessary that their beloved display core virtues

of character more than any other quality (like wit, wealth, or physical beauty). Moreover, the virtue directly employed in their sexual modesty serves to enhance their bond. The powerful experience of this chaste love strengthens their pious sentiments by way of the idealistic charms filling their hearts and the sweetness of the sometimes painful sacrifices they make to preserve their chastity. The only direct mention of Emile's religiosity occurs in a description of how in their walks, "as they contemplate nature's marvels, their innocent and pure hearts dare to lift themselves up to its Author" (426). While today many think that adolescents are not likely to be interested in religion, Rousseau maintains that the opposite is true. Puberty is a time when we are first struck by overwhelming psychic experiences but still possess enough innocence that we are most open to a positive conception of God. In the case of these two lovers, "They see each other as perfect; they love one another; they converse with each other enthusiastically about what gives virtue its reward." In short, if God is not merely to be feared, or a consolation for death, then this age when the heart and imagination are most open is the best time to teach religion and dispose people to love the moral order.

The cultivation of an appreciation of the closely related but importantly different character of men and women is important to Rousseau for the sake not only of understanding the different roles in the household and society each sex is more inclined to, but to encourage the participants to embrace these differences as deeply ingrained in human nature and corresponding to a separate set of virtues we should be proud to display. He did not generate this in-depth line of argument to preserve 'male superiority', but rather, as we saw in the discussion of Julie's "Empire" at the end of the last chapter, to

enhance respect for the role of mothers as the most important guides in the household and society in general. While Rousseau lamented the decline of manliness in elite Europe, it is the education of the matron to which Rousseau directs much of his effort. As he directly suggests at the opening of *Emile* it is mothers who have the first influence on the character of children, and it is from prospective wives that young men take much of the direction for their conduct. As we saw in the last chapter, Rousseau holds as a fundamental principle the idea that "Men will always be what women make of them," and only real women can make real men. This principle is a guiding theme of book five and his overall teachings on gender. When one considers that he seeks to supplant the masculine notions of authority, power, and reason which had characterized virtually all previous thought with romance, pity, and domesticity, it is clear that the elevation of the feminine guides more than just his family teaching.

There is also a critical sense of fundamental incompleteness being cured by a naturally ordained duty that follows from a recognition that the sexes were made to join with each other in the production of children and their rearing in a household. There is a naturally cosmic element not only in the enthusiastic passions of romance, but in the miraculous generation of children. In addition, recognizing the sexes as different but equal is a strong argument for marriage being something that fulfills us as human beings, and not just a personal choice or a tool of social order. It helps us see marriage as something we should all strongly desire to enter into, and not just something one would be willing to do if the right person came along, or for the sake of children. If the sexes are not complementary, there would seem to be little reason not to treat the relationship

like a friendship, and not only are friendships not necessarily exclusive, they are never contracted.

While we love our friends (in theory more durably) romantic love feels to us as though it contains more. There are surely illusions in this promise (an issue we will address more fully in the final chapter), but Rousseau points out that much of human life is based on illusions: the question is whether they contribute in a positive or a negative way to happiness: "In love everything is only illusion, I admit it. But what is real are the sentiments for the truly beautiful with which love animates us.... Does the lover any the less sacrifice all his low sentiments... detach himself any the less from the baseness of the human I?" (391). The last half of his great work *Emile* is dedicated to persuading us that in the case of romantic illusions giving us the strength to make an affectionate commitment to domestic life, the answer is yes. Love-based marriage is the one place where Rousseau overcomes the tensions between the characteristics of our deeply fixed natures and the inhospitable world which has developed around us in a way applicable to the common person.

Besides appealing to some of our highest longings, the character of this natural association satisfies more modest requirements of happiness that we struggle to find elsewhere in modern society. One of the most important elements of happiness in Rousseau's conception is that our relationships be based on sincerity and affection. This, he argues, is impossible in most public relationships, but it is much different in the family. In marriage, Emile finds a place where his heart is warmed at the end of a trying

day. Even in the 'independent' occupation of a of carpenter, whether it is his tools, or the weather, or his suppliers, or his buyers, in the working world he finds that he relies on countless things that care for him only as a means, if at all. No matter how independent his profession, he cannot entirely escape this truth: most men are likely to be affected by it much more. What a respite the home provides in comparison. Whatever might go awry in this realm, each finds a uniquely caring other, one whose happiness is bound up with theirs. In children they have a project that each is willing to sacrifice for in common, and innocent creatures that they can truly care about even more than themselves. Honesty, sympathy, and appreciation are all so much more suited to the home than the public world, and these are especially important to Rousseau. While he would like to instil them in whole communities, he sets a more modest goal in most of his works of facilitating them on the household level.

Besides the moral demands required of a worthy spouse, and the propensity to virtue that obtains from a perspective of recognizing oneself as having an important but insufficient place in the order of things, there is a unique moral quality in marriage so long as it is freely chosen. This quality makes it such that when there is an interregnum in the rule of the naturally sweet and gentle affections of domestic life, it can endure in a legitimate way that is unlike any other relationship in modern life.

Just as with true political obedience, the need for freely obtained affection and esteem to be the source of our marital bonds is why Rousseau so strongly fights the practice of arranged marriages. While in *Julie* he uses the arranged aspect to bring out

more starkly the parts that have less to do with romance and more to do with virtue and the necessities of a harmonious household, he is very adamant that the partners in a marriage should choose each other, or that their hearts should compel them. Rousseau teaches that we are prone to resent anything that binds us according to the will of any other person or group, and nothing besides slavery or (perhaps) extended incarceration binds a person more than an unwanted marriage.

The constraints of marriage are one of the reasons why he thought the institution was so disrespected in his day amongst the elites, compounded of course by their vanity and moral vapidity. There is no reason to think that the weakness of marriage and their character flaws are unrelated phenomena, however, since institutions by their nature provide a check on personal aggrandizement. Accordingly, when one as weighty as marriage loses its capacity to be something people respect or seek to define themselves in relation to, there is one less set of parameters to guide individuals by and they are left instead to the all-too-natural tendency to consider themselves the center of the universe.

In Sophie's father's speech to her about choosing a husband, he says that while her parents can assist with considerations of suitability based on opinion and convention, it is up to her to find someone who suits her nature and taste: "It is up to the spouses to match themselves. Mutual inclination ought to be their first bond" (400). He uses the same terminology in the context of marriage as Rousseau does when he affirms that it is a "right of nature" that women affectionately consent to sex. In light of this, Sophie's father then grants her the right to choose her husband, which even just before the

Revolution in France was not at all widely held. He does add that she should take the counsel of her parents, who are more experienced judges of the sincerity of people's presentations of their character, especially if she falls in passionate love, which he warns can obscure judgment. This is typical of Rousseau's approach to freedom generally, in the sense that personal choice is crucial, but there must be a place for wisdom to guide consent. Nonetheless, here and in some of the letters in *Julie* (especially the Englishman's) pertaining to her father's refusal to even consider her impressive but 'common' lover as a possible spouse, Rousseau contributes to the radical change in modernity towards the nearly complete freedom of individuals to marry based on personal choice. It is especially notable that Rousseau has Sophie hear this argument from her father, for the freedom of young women to act independently of their father's demands is what is most necessary for marriage to become truly voluntary.

This freedom in marriage is the critical step towards making it an independent moral bedrock for society. Nothing else in modern society requires us to make a lifelong vow, but in marriage we freely give up important aspects of our freedom for the sake of a permanent partnership that imposes many duties upon us. This partnership emerges from desires, but unlike other commitments in life, be they business contracts, or occupations, or even allegiance to one's country, there is no expiry date: in the vow one gives up the right to break the bond regardless of how much desires change. This also opens up the possibility of being bound to unhappiness, something Rousseau elsewhere steadfastly avoids. But Rousseau points out that in addition to this being categorically different in

that it was a product of your will. Also, in speaking of the tutor-pupil relationship at the outset of the book, he prohibits their 'divorce', because:

> As soon as they envisage from afar their separation, as soon as they foresee the moment which is going to make them strangers to one another, they are already strangers, Each sets up his own little separate system; and both, engrossed by the time when they will no longer be together, stay only reluctantly.... But when they regard themselves as people who are going to spend their lives together, it is important for each to make himself loved by the other; and by that very fact they become dear to one another. (53)

Like the true patriot who has had a vote go against his wishes, he discounts the wish and moves on in a unified way with the group. Marriage is in reality what the social contract is in theory, an alienation of one's natural freedom for the sake of a power-sharing partnership with explicit duties as well as securities. It forges a fixed social unit out of free individuals where the participants can wholeheartedly devote themselves to its mutual betterment while transcending the selfish, transactional character of almost all other partnerships. Rousseau is adamant that divorce should not be acceptable. So long as either partner can break the contract upon an alteration in desires, there is virtually no security or even morality in it: it is not a unit.

In marriage, there is also a concern for our betterment and overall well-being that does not exist in the world consumed by production. Emile's tutor is replaced by Sophie because she is a good judge of his conduct, has a genuine concern for what is good for him, and is blessed with a healthy dose of the prudence that most women enjoy in greater measure. Likewise, he is able to counsel her in the few areas where men have a useful perspective. There is sincerity in her care for him, at least as long as she does not let her

selfish motives rise to a tyrannical level. She is also a constant spectator; even if she does let Emile out of her sight more than was the case with the unrealistic omnipresence of the tutor, she is still a daily presence in his life. Not only is she able to give comprehensive guidance because of her enduring presence, but she has much more at stake in Emile not straying from the path of good morals and good living since the long term effects of his actions bear directly on her welfare as his lifetime companion. The lifelong vow makes each a full partner in the other's life, whereas in more fleeting circumstances we are inclined to take what is good from a person and ignore the bad – we seek to exploit them for our advantage, and do not truly care for their happiness as spouses and parents do.

Finally, as an institution, marriage can rely on the weight of tradition to help individuals bear the burden of obligations they would not choose under different circumstances. Traditional roles also mean that each does not resent their partner for having to do them either. Having a sex-based division of labour is advantageous in that the couple is relieved of the added responsibility of dividing the family's responsibilities equitably, and haggling over 'whose night it is' to do a certain chore. Rousseau establishes two means of avoiding the inherent tendency towards oppression in authority and partnerships: holding the law supreme over men, and avoiding dependence altogether. Traditional gender roles play the part of the law in domestic situations. They divide up duties and assign them in such a way that there is no resentment on the part of either for having to do domestic tasks (which includes generating income), because there is no other's will to resent.

In conclusion, Rousseau believes that sexual education holds tremendous potential in developing character, and that sexual differentiation can produce a uniquely fulfilling and virtue enhancing marriage. By training the nascent social passions to seek friendship with others and disposing them to pity rather than envy or disdain one takes a tremendously valuable step towards establishing a healthy *amour-propre*. By introducing God and principles of morality only when the youth is confronted with wonder one is likely to have these essential lessons take hold in a positive way. By introducing sex as the source of the greatest happiness if reserved for a person worth spending the rest of one's life with one gives a youth the taste for chastity and a palpable reason to embrace it. In persuading that all the emerging aspects of adulthood point towards our happiness being best assured by a loving marriage and family, Rousseau believes that a youth will have the greatest opportunity to care about virtue, enjoy living harmoniously with others, and partake of a modern existence most in accordance with our natures.

In the next chapter we will evaluate the main critiques of Rousseau's elevation of romantic, gendered, marriage and consider how well Rousseau responds to them.

Chapter Four
Qualified Romanticism and the Challenges of Individualism: Rousseau's Life and Ours

We closed the last chapter in a fashion similar to the manner in which *Emile* closes: thanks to love, marriage, and virtue, Emile and Sophie start off on what seems assured to be a happy and fulfilling life together. Rousseau uses Emile's erotic potential first to strengthen his disposition to goodness, but then goes beyond this to endow him with a belief in a moral order and a providential creator that provides him with the higher sentiments necessary for a commitment to virtue. This ennobling of the imagination is necessary to function at the level required by advanced society. This is true even though Emile, who is not made to seek success in society: after making Emile good for himself, Rousseau leads him to embrace first and foremost a life committed to a family with the woman he loves. Rather than being a citizen whose care for family duties is subsumed under his dedication to honouring ancestors and replenishing the stock of decent citizens, Emile's romantic love is the strongest thing he ever feels, and his family affections will contribute the most to his life's happiness. He is virtuous because his wife expects it and his children learn from it; because of the simplicity, sincerity, and independence of his family-centred life, however, this virtue should rarely be tested.

There are three main challenges we would expect to this case for gendered, romantic, marriage: sexism is unacceptable; romanticism is dangerously impractical; and marriage itself is an antiquated institution that demands so much of individuals that it is an unacceptable compromise of their freedom. We have seen most of what we will be

presenting in terms of the content of Rousseau's case for the different sex roles in the analysis presented at the end of the last two chapters, but in our closing considerations we will return to the question of whether this sexism can be disregarded without undermining the rest of his case for family. Our focus in this final chapter, though, will be on the criticisms against idealism and in favour of individualism. We begin by expanding upon the very practical side of Rousseau's romanticism, and then turn to a re-consideration of the importance of family to Rousseau in light of the case for individualism he defends both politically and personally.

In the last chapter, we outlined how radical Rousseau's romanticism and elevation of the family is in light of his philosophical predecessors, both ancient and modern. We mentioned in passing as well that even amongst 'conservative' supporters of the family (following Burke or the Church for example) there is strong opposition to his romantic means. Many in the pro-family values camp hold Rousseau's title of "Father of Romanticism" against him inasmuch as they see romanticism as something that elevates love over family, sentiment over duty, and personal fulfillment over public-spiritedness. Whether it is in his praise of conscience, patriotism, pity, or the idea of the sentiment of existence, his elevation of romantic love is only one example of Rousseau's conscious and radical attempt to establish a new respect for the authority of inner sentiment, and by this means to correct the ills of classical, clerical, and Enlightenment perspectives. Clearly, this opens him up to the charge of promoting an outlook that is dangerously subjective or idealistic. As we explained in the last chapter, however, Rousseau's teaching in *Emile* clearly aims to direct romantic passions and other sentiments towards

what is good for people in light of the requirements of sociability. He elevates the erotic longings of the youth which emerge with his sexual awakening first into humanity, and then piety and conscience before indulging him in anything sexual; then, even when he does let Emile immerse himself in love, this power is soon channelled into a mature political awareness culminating in a strong sense of duty to his wife and children.

While the notion of empowering women (and men) to choose whom they marry based on affinity was a blow to the established customs, and his books which outline the requirements of true citizenship or depict the possibility of a happy solitude certainly take a different approach, it would be a distortion of his views as presented in the most celebrated of his works to say that he is not an avid proponent of promoting values which protect and elevate the family to the highest degree. Moreover, this is done with moral and political considerations as the foremost motivation: romantic feeling for Rousseau is in these books clearly not an end in itself. Also, in light of his erotic understanding of humankind, or the malleable and fundamental role of the imagination, this is not only a means, but the only means to provide the average person with a good opportunity to preserve wholeness in the face of enlightened individualism. Having provided an account for why he believes romanticizing marriage is essential in modernity, in this chapter we will address the criticisms from the traditionalists who oppose the romantic basis for his marriage, as well as the progressive individualists who oppose giving any moral weight to the institution of marriage as something antithetical to egalitarian freedom.

Just as with liberal feminism, both these criticisms are well-articulated by Rousseau himself. We will, accordingly, base this re-evaluation largely on the anti-romantic elements of Rousseau's writing, and the anti-social aspects of his view of nature and his own life. First, we shall elaborate upon the sober pro-family aspects of the books upon which his romantic reputation was earned: *Julie* and *Emile.* This will be followed by an analysis of "Emile and Sophie," where Rousseau literarily depicts the failure of Emile's marriage and his retreat to radical independence. We will then turn to Rousseau's autobiographical works to examine his defence of his own independent existence and its implications for our theme of family values. We will close by exploring how the reconciliation of these themes sheds important light on understanding Rousseau's thought as a whole, and in particular helps deepen our understanding of the family's intermediate position between romanticized devotion to the whole and radical individualism.

Julie: Romance Denied

It is worth noting that none of the main characters in *Julie* or *Emile* (at least as depicted in *Emile and Sophie*) achieve a durable happiness. Enraptured for a time by an ideal of a perfect happiness, each is depicted in grievous anguish when these ideals are ripped from the realm of actuality. For all their impact in elevating the "romantic movement," these books also quite clearly critique and curtail the power of romance. Leaving aside the short and rough "sequel" to Emile for the time being, we will look afresh at *Julie.* Julie is the model of the domestic empress, governing over an ideal household and estate in partnership with a man she respects a great deal: but Wolmar is

not the man she fell madly in love with, nor could he be. While this appears to all parties in the novel as an obstacle that has been overcome – that virtue triumphed over passion – we find out in the tragic ending that this triumph was not complete.

Rousseau could not have more starkly illuminated the fact that the 'unromantic' side of marriage is of tremendous importance than by the means of his plot twist. After spending hundreds of pages detailing the enchanting love affair with St. Preux and making the reader long for its legitimation in marriage, he proceeds to pull the reader in the other direction by having the more or less arranged marriage to Wolmar look to be a superior result for her, entailing as it does an idyll of domestic perfection. Rousseau comments on this intention when in the "Second Preface" he says that the second half of the novel is meant to be beneficial for the kind of people drawn in by the romantic beginning (J 12): rather than being the source of romanticism, this statement instead emphasizes the fact that he sought to educate the lofty feelings of the reader and make them conducive to happiness. He forces the reader to consider repeatedly if the cold-hearted, eminently prudent Wolmar is not superior to Julie's lover as a husband precisely because he has the virtues required to govern a household with her to such a high degree. While, in keeping with his belief that marriages must be chosen by the spouses, he does not leave it at this conclusion, he nonetheless comes very close to utterly superseding the romantic with a glorified depiction of the domestic through this presentation of their well-ordered estate.

The first half of *Julie* in many ways displays the format of the typical romantic novel: two young people of good character and intellect are deeply in love with each other, but for some reason cannot marry. The obstacle in their case is one of the most common: Julie's aristocratic father will not consider the possibility of her marrying a commoner, even though he admits the young man has many talents. St. Preux is a typical hero of a romance because he is extremely sensitive, passionate, and is quite willing to make great noble sacrifices for his beloved. He differs from the medieval prototype in that he has no trace of 'noble blood' in him: in fact we cover more than half of the novel before he is named, and even then it is a nickname he has recently adopted (J 342). An even more modernized feature of the story is that he and Julie do make love out of wedlock – though their first kiss, as well as the deprivation in their relative lack of consummation (it only happens twice), are as important to the plot as this fact. An utterly unique twist in the novel is that the romantic hero does not just come to terms with her marrying another man, he is made to enjoy living with them as their friend and as the future tutor of their children.

In the first half, through their letters to each other and to their closest friends, Rousseau portrays the charming love between two young people "who live in a small town at the foot of the Alps" where her father is a respected estate-holder. The setting allows him to display on the one hand a kind of rustic charm one would not find in a city, but also more education, class awareness, and sense of the broader world than one would find in a more rural milieu. The rusticity allows the young people to be characterized with a less affected and more innocently developed passion, while her aristocratic

background ensures that they inevitably face all of the barriers their semi-modern society posed to the happy enjoyment of romantic love. Rousseau presents these unnatural but not always unreasonable prejudices against the backdrop of their enchanting longing to be together as man and wife.

Because of Julie's 'nobility', Rousseau is able to depict not only the ill effects and injustice of traditional patriarchy, but also to emphasize the civilizing effect women have on men inasmuch as it is Julie who explicitly has a "name" to live up to while her lover has no attachments besides her. This is in accordance with his thesis that opinion matters a great deal to women, but should not matter much to men except insofar as they have duties that follow from their attachment to women. (Wolmar too is socialized by Julie: his only passion before her was to observe humanity, but as her husband he becomes active in their homestead and the community). Although "St. Preux" appropriately aims to keep himself from having a bad reputation, he does not face any real tests on this front until he comes to care greatly for Julie. He turns down a duel and leaves town suddenly and very sadly on a few occasions so as to remove her from any suspicions or difficulties. He even effectively agrees to give her up at the midway point in the novel in the knowledge that her family loyalties mean enough to her that he must lose this battle in her heart.

To heighten the drama, and also to have an effect on the taste of his audience, Rousseau depicts the power of their love on each other in great detail. It occasionally weakens them, but on the whole it makes each take virtue and self-improvement much

more seriously. At the outset of her marriage, however, having been transformed in the matrimonial ceremony at church towards a life of matronly duties, Julie becomes the main expositor of the case against romance. While we learn that this is not her final position on the matter, she goes so far as to say that it is an illusion to think "that love is essential to a happy marriage," but rather that important "conformities" of "character" are far more important in order to establish a lasting affection. She makes a powerful speech about the hotheadedness and frailty of love making it a poor basis in itself, because the power of it is what inclines people to the opinion it will last forever, "But on the contrary, its very ardour consumes it; it wears with youth, fades with beauty." As for the kind of worship of the beloved which was developed early on in Emile's case, she warns that this too is dangerous, because the illusion of perfection cannot last for very long; when the "idol they served" no longer appears, "they take out their spite on the one who remains." In a similar vein to the speech Emile hears before he is forced to travel before becoming a husband, she declares that:

> One does not marry in order to think solely about each other, but in order to fulfill conjointly the duties of civil life, govern the household prudently, raise one's children well. Lovers never see anyone but themselves, are endlessly occupied with each other alone, and the only thing they can do is love each other. That is not enough for Spouses who have so many other duties to attend to. (J 306)

One of these duties that bonds the couple but also occupies them with something besides themselves is raising children. While the subject has perhaps been neglected in the present work, it is one that Rousseau once again emphasizes in a radically revolutionary way. Julie's devotion to the education of her children is only a precursor to

Emile. Rousseau emphasizes the importance of parents being primary caregivers at the outset of his educational treatise, because he believes that a child who has the experience of his parents hiring out his care to others will be scarred for life. The care for children is such a wholesome, naturally affectionate activity that the parents are worse off for the bargain as well. Rousseau proceeds to make raising children more attractive by providing such a careful and philosophic account of how it should be done. He brings a previously unrecognized urgency to each stage of the child's development, and dramatically emphasizes how crucial the appropriate influences at each moment are to determining whether the child will become decent and fit for happiness or miserably ruined. By succeeding in making readers, especially mothers, take on a new appreciation for the nobility of the task of raising a child, he strengthened family values across modernity.

It should be noted that despite the moral seriousness of all Rousseau's characters, their lives and relationships are not as dull as one might imagine (especially reading quotes like the one above). Rousseau does not have the lovers in this novel preoccupied with only themselves, nor do the spouses constantly attend to duties. Instead, there is a constant cast of friends coming in and out of the drama. Besides the three characters mentioned thus far, Julie's cousin and best friend Claire is almost constantly at her side, and provides counsel to all, especially the young lovers. An English lord becomes a friend of the group, and makes plans to retire with everyone at Clarens. St. Preux travels with him to Rome a couple times, and provides him with advice concerning a romantic triangle he is immersed in, just as he had helped St. Preux when he was in despair. In

short, not only do we see that Rousseau does not imagine love to be sufficient for a couple's sociability, but its power and the tensions of living together often require the advice of those we trust.

Much of the rest of *Julie* is an outline of the ways that dedicating oneself to a household which devotes itself in everything to the happiness of the spouses and children with a community of friends is an exalted endeavour which brings far more satisfaction than anything else modern life has to offer. It is a detailed description of a gendered household in which the abilities of each spouse are exercised in a fashion so conducive to the well-being of the family unit that it brings a profound feeling of fulfillment to each. Rousseau's intention, as expressed in the 'Second Preface', is not simply to enliven the young with romantic ideals of marriage, but:

> I like to picture a husband and wife reading this collection together, finding in it a source of renewed courage to bear their common labors, and perhaps new perspectives to make them useful. How could they behold this tableau of a happy couple without wanting to imitate such an attractive model? How will they be stirred by the charm of conjugal union, even in the absence of love's charm, without their own union being reconfirmed and strengthened? When they are through reading, they will be neither saddened by their estate nor repelled by their chores. On the contrary, everything around them will seem to take on a more cheerful outlook; their duties will become nobler in their eyes; they will rediscover their taste for the pleasures of nature.... They will fulfill the same functions, but they will fulfill them with a changed soul, and will do as genuine Patriarchs what they had been doing as peasants. (J 16-17)

As we saw in the last chapter, Rousseau's next book *Emile* provides a more theoretical account aimed at establishing the same message. While he separates romance and

marriage as a literary device in *Julie,* he brings them together most emphatically in the marriage of Emile and Sophie. We have described the immense potential he sees in our eroticism, but we have also shown that at every stage of development he puts this human capacity in the service of practical and moral ends. Nascent Eros is used to dispose the young man's heart to friendship and humanity, and then piety. When it is given a romantic bent, it is harnessed for refining his sense of taste and generating a corresponding desire for virtue that leads him to seek and deserve a worthy spouse. Never is romance indulged for its own sake, but as a power to elevate character and produce a lasting happiness. In the rest of this section we will make clear how little their marriage is vulnerable to the complaints against romance.

In addition to avowing this goal repeatedly, Rousseau as tutor takes some direct actions with the young couple to ensure that their "romance" does not delude them into losing sight of the requirements of a virtuous life, and also to ensure that the lifelong commitment they are making is not obscured by illusion. Fearing that Emile is too attached to his beloved, one morning shortly after her agreement to marry him, Rousseau leads him to believe Sophie is dead. The reason for this test is to confirm that the young man is so overwhelmed by his passion that he is vulnerable to losing his composure, and incapable of deliberating fully in the light of what is truly good and virtuous. Having powerfully raised this self-awareness, he Socratically persuades Emile that they need to go away to complete his education: that he still needs to learn some things about himself and the world before he is ready to be a sober, responsible husband and a full member of his community.

In reviewing Emile's education with the still feverishly agitated young man, he starkly contrasts the stages leading up to Sophie and the new dependency that his love for her has created:

> Nature and fortune had left you free. You could endure poverty; you could tolerate the pains of the body; those of the soul were unknown to you. You were bound to nothing but the human condition, and now you are bound to all the attachments you have given yourself. In learning to desire, you have made yourself the slave of your desires. (443)

He then tells Emile directly that this last development threatens to undo much of the success of his earlier education which taught him to keep his desires modest and "endure the law of necessity in physical ills, but you have not yet imposed laws on the appetites of your heart, and the disorders of our lives arise far more from our affections than from our needs." While just before puberty he had apparently grasped the notion that "Everything on earth is only transitory," he now seems to think not only that Sophie will always live, but that their passion for each other will not fade. This latter hope will surely disappoint him even if the former does not, and unless there is a bridle put on these (romantic) hopes and desires, Rousseau explains that he is on a sure path to disorder and misery.

Rousseau presents this situation as not only posing a threat to his virtue, but providing an opportunity to prove the solidity of it. Emile is taught that virtue requires struggle against strong passions in light of the dictates of reason and conscience, and in this way it is different than goodness, which is always sweet and enjoyable to practice. Emile's goodness had always been maintained and encouraged, but now that his heart is

fully developed he must learn to virtuously master the unruly passions. Rousseau counsels Emile that this must be done in light of the limits of what is properly allotted to him as a human being; these limits are what he must study further, because man is only unhappy when his imagination makes him think he has a right to things he does not have: "the illusions of pride are the source of our greatest ills" (445-6).

To be truly protected against fortune as well as the dangers of unhealthy *amour-propre*, Emile is told that he must "extend the law of necessity to moral things" and "Attach (his) heart only to imperishable beauty," which includes the moderation of his romance-fuelled desires and cherishing duty in the face of all other incentives and considerations. At the end of this speech Emile is reminded that even life itself is not something to preserve unjustly because he believes in heaven. In short, he reveals to Emile that his romantic passion has caused an imbalance in his virtue and uses the opportunity to remind him of the essential principles of good character. As he does on their wedding day, when Rousseau rather dourly informs Emile and Sophie that the happiness their love brings them is at its peak and will only get weaker (E 475), he tells Emile here that he has enjoyed as much happiness in this courtship as anyone ever will, but that it will fade and need to be replaced with an enduring attachment based on a true compatibility of like minded virtuous souls.

Though famous for his depictions of romance, it is clear by the end of the book that Rousseau insists that the romantic part of love not be the main ingredient of the glue that binds spouses for life. It adds a crucial charm at the outset of a relationship that lends

credibility to the unintuitive notion that marriage to a virtuous person can bring one great, perhaps the greatest, happiness. It also generally enhances one's respect for virtue and interest in being respectable at the critical age when most opinions are fixed for life (E 432). For those, especially young adults, with restless souls, it also provides a healthier – but because of jealousy not completely safe – avenue in which to channel their longings. Rousseau makes explicit even to Emile that the power of romance will fade with his own years and his years with Sophie, and that it is the characteristics he developed before falling in love that will guard his happiness and success as a father and husband in the future. The acceptance of necessity, generosity in sentiments, simple piety, wariness of external dependence, and love of virtue which preceded his romantic attachment are meant to remain with Emile and keep him happy afterwards. The transcendent feelings that falling in love with Sophie brought him will still serve as a reminder and supplement to their special bond, and will help him continue to believe their vows to be sacred. Once the business of real life begins, though, their friendship and good characters will serve as the basis for their long-term success, not the power of their romantic passion. As was made clear, it is the moral freedom that one exercises in entering into marriage that gives it its uniquely inviolable character, not the uniqueness of the affection.

This positive case for what I have called his "practical Romanticism" has perhaps still failed to compel sceptical readers who consider Rousseau's case far too naïvely romantic, especially in the degree to which it underestimates our selfishness. As already indicated, Rousseau himself was not unaware that despite all the rhetoric of how "natural" this proposal is, it is a delicate one that cannot be expected to overcome utterly

the dangers in modern society and our natural selfishness. Starting with a consideration of a tragic ending Rousseau penned a number of years later entitled "Emile and Sophie," and then considering his case for the unattached life in his *Confessions* and final treatise *The Reveries of a Solitary Wanderer*, in this final chapter we will examine how well Rousseau's own critiques of romantic marriage address today's main criticisms and consider how the conditionality of his praise of individualism might inform contemporary notions of freedom.

Emile and Sophie: Romance Destroyed

"Emile and Sophie, or Solitary Beings" is a short piece Rousseau wrote a few years after the publication of Emile. It was sent out to be published with some other pieces of and about drama, but a little while later Rousseau asked for it back. The text we have is the one he sent for publication and thus there is justification in taking it seriously; further justification lies in the fact that most of Rousseau's major themes are revisited from the perspective of a matured version of the child Rousseau created to be the archetype of civilized happiness. It is in the format of two letters Emile wrote to his tutor after his life had fallen apart and he had ended up a slave in North Africa. In the first few pages, Emile himself confirms the success of the main features of Rousseau's strategy:

> I was free, I was happy dear Master! You had prepared my heart to enjoy happiness, and you had given me Sophie. To the delights of love, to the outpourings of friendship, a growing family added the charms of paternal tenderness. Everything foretold a pleasant life, everything promised me

> a gentle old age and a quiet death in the arms of my children. (E&S 198)

We also learn in the third paragraph that he is still a believer in a just afterlife, though little mention is made of God directly in the piece. Emile goes on to show gratitude for some of the main principles which were instilled in him, such as the ability to "accept one's destiny" and avoid the unhappiness which inevitably follows when one wishes for objects and characteristics one does not possess. In addition to his early negative education, he notes that because no "sensitive person can live forever without passions, without attachments (since) such a being is not a man, but rather a beast or a god," he was raised not to be a happy hermit, but a social, family man. He recaps the highlights of his erotic education:

> At the age of strong passions, I shaped my reason with the aid of my senses; what serves to deceive others was for me the path of truth...you taught me...to open my heart to the noblest emotions, to become attached only to the most worthy beings among my fellows, to extend, as it were, my universal self over all of humanity, and thus to shield it from the base passions which concentrate it...
>
> I learned to subjugate my senses by means of the same imagination that aroused them. I loved Sophie even before knowing her. This love protected my heart from the pitfalls of vice. It encouraged a taste for the beautiful and decent. It engraved indelibly the holy laws of virtue. (E&S 199-200)

It seems, then, that Emile achieved the life of independence from corrupt opinions, guided by compassion and a taste for the noble, immersed in a family-centred community which Rousseau presents as the model for modern happiness.

In this hypothetical ending, however, Rousseau presents a scenario where things have taken a tragic turn:

> Alas! What has become of that happy time of joy and hope, when the present was enhanced by the expectation of the future; when my heart, drunk with joy, filled itself each day with a century of happiness? Everything has vanished like a dream; young still, I have lost everything – wife, children, friends – in a word, everything, even relationships with my equals. My heart has been torn apart by every attachment. It now clings only to the least of these, to the tepid love of a life without pleasure, but free from remorse. (E&S 198)

In a passage which seems to be foreshadowed in the section from *Emile* discussed at the outset of this chapter, we learn that despite Rousseau's efforts to temper Emile's passionate love for Sophie, he was indeed quite vulnerable to losing himself by losing that love. His consolation, "a life free from remorse" would, according to the Vicar at least, seem to be much more than most men can claim, but it does not at this point seem to be enough to secure any substantial contentment with his existence. He goes on to ask the desperate question of what might "keep urging me to nurture this sad life that I have so little reason to love? Memories and the consolation of being in tune with the world, by submitting myself to it without complaint against its eternal laws." At the least, Rousseau's guidance to appraise and embrace the role of a human modestly, and not long for more or debase oneself to less, has sustained his pupil through this unfortunate time. That said, we can understand why Emile is, at best, qualified in his gratitude, for Rousseau's guidance did not serve him as well as a family man facing adversity as it has since he became a solitary being.

Emile is now entirely alone, and the first part of the letter explains how this happened. Briefly, after what seems to be about seven years of a very happy marriage, Sophie's father, mother, and daughter all die within a few months. She is devastated and inconsolable, and responsive only to pity. Anticipating what many have said in criticizing the role he advocates for women, it seems that her virtue and sense of meaning in the world was too much grounded in the household and her procreative function. Though this source was praised as a strong one in book five and elsewhere, we see here what is vulnerable about it. Additionally, Emile laments that she had not been sufficiently prepared for this kind of emotional hardship – a complaint Emile later addresses to his tutor concerning himself as well. Seeing Sophie surrounded by objects that remind her of what she has lost, unable to get her to come to terms with her grief, Emile arranges to have the two of them go to Paris where he hopes at least to find her some distraction.

The first cause Emile cites of his calamity is the tutor leaving them. Emile goes so far as to say that "by your abandonment you have caused me more misfortune than any good you had ever done me in my entire life" (200). While we will see statements below which suggest that this is an exaggerated claim, whether he wishes he had not been given the gift of the tutor's expert attention remains a question throughout the first letter. What is clearer is that Emile, and the Sophie who was to be his new governor, lack the ability to deal with this misfortune. Coming to terms with death and knowing not to throw themselves into the distractions of the city are to be two points where Rousseau could well have advised them, but it seems that Emile should have known better given the

distaste Rousseau engendered in him for Paris as a teenager. As for coping with death, though Emile makes no mention of being especially devastated by the losses himself, he seems to lack the ability to give any effective counsel to his wife. Rousseau posits that women have a weakness in grasping abstractions and rationalizing them; this, combined with her deep attachment to procreation might be the cause of her imagined reaction to this sudden misfortune. Whatever intellectual or emotional advantages Emile possesses in this situation, however, he demonstrates a lack of ability to govern wisely in these circumstances – as he himself admits.

For all his supposed patriarchal bias, it is notable that Rousseau does very little to teach Emile how to 'rule in turn' over his wife: the bulk of the effort is instead directed at praising the power of Sophie, and making *him* open to being managed by *her*. As with *Julie*, Rousseau seems above all to think it urgent to inspire men and women with respect for the role of the domestic empress. We are left to suspect given the events in this sequel that the empire of women, even when adhering to 'feminine' roles, is not unproblematic. Why not make Emile more predominant? We learn in the second letter that, due to the political education he received in his travels with his tutor, he is quite competent at ruling in public affairs, so it must have something to do with the character of his domestic devotion. In particular, in order to transfix his entire being to the love of this virtuous goddess, she is idealized: Emile believes her to be beyond man-made guidance in her perfection. Just as one might not want a true patriot to be aware of all the subtle levers which direct the course of the state, the veneer of mysteriously inspired perfection in the state or a woman is dulled by the recognition of her susceptibility to the

craftiness of mere men, or her dependence upon their guidance. Perhaps Rousseau does not instruct Emile in how to rule in his turn because he fears it might damage the stirring case he makes for the exalted mother and wife. It is not clear that Rousseau believes that this tension between ideals and prudence can ever quite be overcome; given the disparaging characterization of a life without ideals Rousseau gives us concerning Enlightenment rationalism, however, this is not grounds to give up on idealism.

Regardless, this first stratagem we see Emile employ with his wife fails miserably. The big city proves to be everything we would expect it to be: Emile and Sophie both find themselves seeking distraction in the vain pastimes of the progressive-minded Parisians. Describing the dissolution of their bonds provides Rousseau with another opportunity to critique modern liberals and their 'marriages' where each spouse enjoys above all the freedom to engage in their separate pursuits. As both he and his wife begin to adopt their manners, the strength which maintained their virtue soon begins to dissipate. He describes what happened to him in terms which directly oppose the goals of his education: "I wandered anxiously from one pleasure to another. I searched for everything, and everything bored me; I was happy only where I was not, and acted frivolously to enjoy myself" (E&S 202).

As for Sophie, she spent most of her time with a couple they had come to Paris with. As she and Emile began to change they found themselves avoiding each other's company to escape the reminder of how they had fallen away from virtue and each other. "We were no longer one, we were two: worldly manners had divided us and our hearts

were no longer in harmony" (E&S 203). As a sign of how advanced the decline of morals in Paris is, the couple she befriends turns out to have had an 'open relationship', which they defend as freer and happier. Emile says that this would have utterly outraged them in the past, but by the time they find out they are already friends with them, and their zeal for virtue has waned along with their passion for their marriage and family. No longer filled by their virtuous love, they are not capable of certitude in moral matters; rather, they are looking for some justification for their own mode of existence. Against the flattering wisdom of enlightened individualism and the other dubious aspects of the fashionably modern company they are keeping only their consciences murmur – not loud enough to flee the viciousness, but enough to poison their company with each other. The power of 'enlightened' individualism is strong enough that when it becomes the cultural norm Rousseau thinks even his chosen couple is vulnerable.

Then Sophie distances herself even further, and Emile decides he must rejuvenate their relationship and retreat from the insincere, superficial lifestyle they have slipped into. He renews his attentions towards his wife but she is utterly unresponsive. He finally decides to overcome her reluctance with a bold amorous offensive, at which point she informs him that she is pregnant with the child of another man. His world crushed and his spirit broken, he wanders for a night before deciding that he must leave Paris and his family behind. Having portrayed a succession of events, decisions, and environments that threaten to destroy the family project he carefully built, Rousseau proceeds to demonstrate the universality of the pre-romantic aspects of his educational treatise. The failure of his romantic marriage turns into a redemption of his naturalistic individualism.

Emile strikes off to busy himself in working as a carpenter in the countryside as a useful and mind-consuming distraction. He writes that this overturning of his life made him feel "the importance of education" more than ever before, because it allowed him to look at his "natural emotions" from a more objective standpoint. In doing so, he saw that he was "bound by the law of necessity (so) I stopped my vain complaints, bent my will under the inevitable yoke, and looked upon the past as alien to me" (E&S 212). He immerses himself in carpentry in the days, and considers his situation in the evenings, including whether he can possibly take Sophie back. He tries to make the case for her, arguing that he should be able to set aside public opinions about cheating, that she handled herself proudly in how she told him, and that he can be sure about her greater faithfulness now that she feels how terrible it is to break it.

In addition to reflections about the dependence upon social opinions as well as the variable affections of his spouse a loving husband submits himself to, he speaks of Sophie's direct power over him. In considering that which recommends reconciliation, he suggests that he will likely enjoy more authority, since "the humiliation of remorse will soften this proud soul and will render the empire that love gave her over me less tyrannical" (E&S 213). This is surely one of the more blatant confirmations in Rousseau's writings that there is an inevitable tension between spouses; far from men constantly having the upper hand, there is also a real danger that women will predominate. While Emile's virtue and commitment are strong, Rousseau recognizes that there are bound to be cases where he has desires separate from or within the household

that clash with his wife's thoughts on what he should do. While Rousseau believes that these conflicts are much less dangerous in the limited context of the household where sincere goodwill usually reigns, there is still a danger that one of the spouses could dominate the other.

Because of their stronger emotions and superior practical and social wiles (which we described in the last two chapters), without some institutional supports for patriarchal authority, Rousseau believes the disequilibrium to incline too far to the side of women. By nature, one could say, women are superior at navigating and manipulating the levers of social interaction. While there is nothing more barbarous than a man who treats his wife with no respect, there is nothing more likely than that a respected wife will dominate her husband if a society does not strengthen and respect the position of men as leaders. It is because women are socially smarter, not inferior, that Rousseau thinks men need an 'institutional advantage'. It is true that he also believes that their aptitude for thinking about broader issues is relevant to men being the dominant political actors. That said, because of their predominant natural strengths being physical power and a taste for independence, in civilized times Rousseau teaches that there needs to be an appropriate education and a certain amount of patriarchal prejudice in society in order for men to be the robust social and political creatures that a healthy polity needs. While we have seen how much Rousseau innovates in recognizing the important roles women play in this education, he also defends legal discriminations that preserve a distinctly manly model for the role of citizen, or homeowner. Rather than this controversial position emerging from a notion of male superiority, it stems more from a combination of natural male

indifference and women's greater aptitude in succeeding socially without any artificial assistance.

Emile's deliberations end when he admits that these are sophisms designed to enable him to fulfill the desire he still has to return to Sophie and the vain hope that they could restore their happiness. He decides that this is impossible, and acknowledges that his own lack of virtue played a decisive part: "if Emile had always been prudent, Sophie would never have sinned" (E&S 213). He adds that a man who tolerates dishonour shows a baseness in himself and decides that she "will never love a man to whom she has given the right to despise her": again illustrating that the principles of tolerance and forgiveness so praised in modern life run up against the realities of human nature, especially in matters of the heart. He also considers whether he should remove his son from Sophie and her scandalous situation, but decides that in spite of his desire to avenge himself on her, he must grant his son the right to live with his mother. Because he is sure that these steps are correct, but in light of his uncertainty over whether he can be so near to his son and the woman he loved and stick with his decisions faithfully, he decides he must start off in the opposite direction of Paris.

It is not valid to consider this unpublished and unfinished sequel a rejection of the teaching of *Emile*. Instead, we have seen that there is a critique concerning some of the vulnerabilities of their condition: Sophie is so attached to procreation and the household that something tragic like the loss of a child can be devastating, Emile is perhaps too reliant on his tutor's and then Sophie's wisdom to handle some of these more delicate

psychological matters, and because each had placed so much of their hope for future happiness in their marriage, its failure is devastating. We also see how difficult any of this would be to maintain in a corrupt city. It is worth emphasizing, however, that the plot turns on misfortunes, without which there is no indication anything would have gone amiss. In the next section we will examine the characteristics of Emile's solitude, and then turn to Rousseau's account of the goodness of his own solitary existence. Containing as it does a rejection of the duties of a paterfamilias, it would seem to undermine his whole teaching.

Emile and Jean-Jacques: Or, the Solitaries

If Rousseau authored this tale to acknowledge some of the shortcomings of family devotion, especially a whole-hearted romantically-based one, he also presents in it a triumph of his solitary, quasi-stoic, teachings on the means to happiness in adversity. This avid proponent of family affections also provides an autobiographical model of how to be a happy human being when virtually all social ties have been severed. The Emile he raised might be heartbroken by the failure of his family circle – which is at the same time the collapse of his education in how to achieve a uniquely high level of happiness – but out of the ashes comes the marvel of Rousseau's original education in how to accept necessity and bear hardships with the solace of a clear conscience and the appreciation of the sentiment of existence. It is true that when Emile acknowledges this blessing at the outset of his first letter it is in the midst of a more powerful lamentation of what he has lost; Rousseau himself occasionally shares similar regrets in his autobiographical works

that he could not have lived a simple and stable life cherished by family and friends. This is a crucial distinction that speaks to Rousseau's status as a uniquely 'democratic' philosopher: he understands himself as utterly superior to virtually all others in his ability to understand humankind, society, and himself, but insists that this path of knowledge is not only unnatural but makes one incapable of enjoying the bulk of what makes human beings happy. Still, in the situations they find themselves in, both these solitaries learn to take pride in their ability to reduce dramatically their expectations of men and the universe, and make a new, nourishing world out of their exile.

Emile even asserts that he was able to maintain a sense of freedom and happiness after he is captured by Berbers and made their slave. In his new state he realizes: "that we are all weak, subject to circumstances and hard necessity; that he who knows best how to desire all that is ordered by the latter is the most free, for he is never forced to do what he does not choose to do...the time of my enslavement was that of my reign" (E&S 226). Whatever else motivated Rousseau to write this sequel, we see very clearly that while the culmination of Emile's education in his love of and devotion to his wife and children leaves him vulnerable, there is a core of resilience and independence underlying it which can sustain him even in the worst imaginable circumstances.

Rousseau does not quite face such a dramatic overturning of his life, but the circumstances of his solitude are still quite similar. He describes in considerable detail how he has redeemed his life despite never finding the durable, reciprocal love or friendship his heart longed for. The second half of his *Confessions*, and the work written

just before his death, *The Reveries of a Solitary Walker*, depict a man who laments that he is cast out of human society, but who learns to find as a solitary in nature all that he needs for a happy existence. With nothing but his imagination and the freedom to exist unburdened in the splendour of the natural world, Rousseau fills his life with vivid dramas and has his curiosity constantly engaged by taking up the science or pastime of botany. Before a final discussion of the clash of individual freedom and duty in marriage, we will take a closer look at Rousseau's account of his very individualistic freedom and avoidance of duty in his own life.

In *Emile* Rousseau presents an average person with an extraordinary socializing education; in his autobiographical works he describes an extraordinary person who is unable to live in society. Both are extreme depictions meant to illustrate the possibilities in human nature but neither is intended to be literally pursued by readers. Rousseau believed his existence to be unique and did not mean in his personal writings to set out an example he would have most, if any, follow. He can easily be called a hypocrite for extolling the virtues of citizenship and fatherhood while living the detached and unsociable life he led, but this easy dismissal does not do him justice, especially because he grapples with this issue intensely and repeatedly throughout his *oeuvre*. After briefly speaking to the issue of hypocrisy, we will explore the more interesting question of whether his autobiographical works undermine or supplement his family values teaching.

We will not enter into a detailed examination of the case he makes for himself as a valuable citizen by virtue of his writings (see Christopher Kelly's *Rousseau as Author* for

a thorough analysis of this theme), except to reiterate the weighty observation that his promotion of family values and attack on the dangerous aspects of the Enlightenment are done in the name of preserving the virtue of his homeland and offering a healthy alternative for the rest of modernity. Despite the emphasis many theorists place on the supposed contribution the *Social Contract* and other parts of his writing made to the extreme character of modern revolutions and ideology, this work has defended the proposition that his support of an innovative but relatively conservative notion of the central role of the family deserves at least as much consideration. Such a consideration serves to moderate and broaden one's view of his political teaching, even as the political philosophy helps us understand the motivation for and the elements of his conception of the family.

It is also in terms of family, though, that Rousseau runs up against the charge of hypocrisy in a way that threatens to undermine his proposed teaching. We will briefly consider Rousseau's defence for not having raised children and marrying, since it is so closely related to our theme and helps broaden our treatment of the topic thus far. We will then revisit the question of how his promotion of family can be reconciled with the radically egalitarian and communal political teaching as well as the radically solitary life he led.

The most direct treatment of the subject is found in his "Letter to Mme Franceuil,"[33] which responds to her accusation that his family teaching cannot be taken

[33] The letter is translated and appended to Kelly's translation of the *Confessions* (551-2).

seriously given his abandonment of his illegitimate children. He cites his poverty, ill health, and the honour of the unmarried mother as the main reasons he felt that he could not keep them, and adds that if he had to rely on his writing to support a family, it would force him to write to please wealthy people and this he could never do. He complains to this noble lady that the unjust laws of France forbid him from marrying without converting to Catholicism and that it is the injustice of the rich which prevents the poor like him of having enough to afford feeding the children they produce. He closes by saying that an orphan is as likely to find a peasant's happiness as an impoverished bastard is, and a peasant's life is all he would want for a child anyway. He adds in the *Confessions* (IX 349) that these children would have been raised amongst Therese's knavish family, which he claims is a worse situation than an orphanage.

There is surely disingenuousness in the claim that the overburdened orphanages of the day could have provided just as good of an upbringing as a child could have expected from he and Therese on account of his meagre income and her questionable relations. The claim that rings truer is that writing for income[34] would have compromised his freedom to write without concern for contemporary taste, especially the opinions of the elite, and even that he would have been too distracted to devote himself to writing as much as he thought he needed to. This is not an assertion that one's natural duties can ever be shirked, something especially hard to defend in a work that aims to persuade people to take their career less seriously and their family more so. Still, however much

[34] Which he is adamant that he never did: during his most productive years he and his wife lived off the proceeds of his copying pages of music, combined with some generosity from patrons (which he often had trouble taking in light of his feelings about independence: at one point he controversially turned down a pension from the King of France). Later in life he did earn money from the proceeds of his books, but was never rich, despite his fame.

one is inclined to deny Rousseau an exception based on his talent and disposition, there is no disputing the fact that his "career" (however little he got paid for it) is utterly exceptional. Accordingly, if there is some validity to his argument, his critics should take seriously the possibility that if the success he had in persuading so many in his day to take parenthood more seriously came at the cost of his own offspring losing their natural family, it might be a cost worth swallowing, or at least not a devastating undermining of his argument. Pointing out that Socrates did not spend as much time at home as a father should, or that Jesus was apparently a failure at raising a family, does not mean that one must choose between respecting the teaching of either one and believing that family duties are of the utmost importance for the average person.

Related to this observation is a distinction Rousseau makes between the majority of people and those with the talents or wisdom to be properly considered prodigies, or even "preceptors of the human race." While Rousseau takes great pains to make most educated or wealthy people see that they are essentially the same as the average person, if not worse off, it is clear that Rousseau was neither a normal nor upper class person, but an extremely sensitive genius. This meant for one thing that he found it difficult to deal with people: he had trouble maintaining friendships, and around the time his fame peaked he seems quite clearly to have developed a case of paranoia to go along with the sporadic but serious bouts of real persecution he faced. He describes in the *Reveries* (83) coming to the realization "that I have never been truly suited for civil society," where for a man like him "everything is annoyance, obligation, and duty and that my independent natural temperament always made me incapable of the subjection necessary to anyone who wants

to live among men." Instead, it is in the very few and temporary friendships Rousseau enjoyed, living quietly with his supportive Therese, but above all in solitary contemplation where he has found himself at peace, unified, and happy. The fruits of this solitude, namely his books promoting equality, family, sincerity, deism, an appreciation of nature, and happiness for modern man in general, are what he calls his "children" and are not unreasonably offered as adequate service to his country and mankind.

Rousseau's unique character means that he can illuminate something quite different with his own existence than he does with the 'typical' Emile, the man who is made by Rousseau for society. We have emphasized throughout the important role that women play as the impetus for and the agents of men's socialization. As Rousseau's teachings imply, however, and as his autobiography makes clear, he believes that socialization is an ambiguous good. We saw in the first two chapters the manifold ways in which Rousseau believes that our societies are generally pernicious with regard to our happiness. We presented his case for the most universal remedy in *Emile*, the general theme of which emerges out of the recognition that while a so-called negative education can do a lot to preserve our strength and happiness, to live socially still requires positive education. Much of the dependence that weakens modern man can be guarded against, but for the remainder we need to mould the imagination through socialization or culture to bridge the chasm between our nature and society. Still, precisely because of the civilizing necessities entailed, the value of a good woman to a good man follows only inasmuch as socialization into a life with her is superior to the less social alternatives. Put another way, for those who would be happier pursuing a life at the margins or at a distance from

mainstream society, domestic life would be a danger, not a refuge. It is this strain in Rousseau's thought that points in a 'bohemian', artistic, and anarchic-seeming direction, and for which so many conservatives vilify Rousseau "the romantic."

There is no question that Rousseau's life differs considerably from the one he sought to engender in the rest of us. Not coincidentally, this is exemplified in the divergence between the domestic relationships of his characters and his own. Rather than the radically egalitarian marriage of Sophie and Emile ruling in turn in their separate spheres, Rousseau lived with an illiterate laundress he cohabited with from the age of 33, only marrying her 23 years later. He praises her for some of her feminine qualities in the *Confessions,* including her kind heart, lively expression, sincerity, and good intuitions and judgment. One could almost think he had properly followed his general teaching on sexuality and morality when he declares that "I have always considered the day which united me to Therese as that which determined my moral being" (C IX 347). It is made clear, however, over the next few pages that the "moral being" Rousseau becomes is not what we might expect: he confesses that he did not ever love her, but had something more along the lines of physical love and pre-civilized domestic affection for her.

He tells Therese at the outset that he will never marry her (C VII 278); although he never quite explains why, we are left to surmise that he cannot justify taking on the obligations involved, or that he did not love her enough to feel it was warranted. Only in the letter to Mme de Franceuil cited above does he suggest it is the laws of France which stopped him. Regardless, this freedom-loving man chooses – like so many today who he

ostensibly argues against – to 'shack up' rather than commit to marriage; compounding this further is that he avoids the responsibility of rearing the children she gives birth to. In direct opposition to Emile, he enters into the relationship for the sake of "pleasure" and "amusement" only to have it slip into an enduring companionship. He admits that rather than being in search of a worthy wife, or being overwhelmed by romantic feelings, he was lonely, and needed to have a woman who would enliven his heart "In place of extinguished ambition." While he commends her judgment, he admits that she is not capable of learning: "Her mind is what nature has made of it." In typical anti-philosophic fashion he goes on to say that their feelings for each other nourished his mind and heart, and that "I lived with my Therese as pleasantly as with the finest genius in the universe." She is, then, a piece of nature who endears herself to him through her service to him and pleasant disposition. Besides only breaking the last part of his early vow to "never either abandon her or marry her," there does not seem to be very much that is morally admirable about the most important relationship in his life (C VII 278-9).

It is of course very different in his model for the rest of us. Emile is transfixed and transformed by someone who is his moral and intellectual complement in a far more egalitarian fashion: something considered vital to making their long-term companionship fulfilling. In addition to similarity in intelligence and values, they complement each others' weaknesses such that each can look up to the other – together they live a qualitatively better life than either could have had on their own. Emile and Sophie understand their incompleteness as something deeper than the need Rousseau describes here for companionship; their incompleteness is understood as a function of gender as

well as one common to the human condition. All of this contributes to a powerful romance at the outset, a willing lifelong commitment at marriage, and a sincere friendship afterwards. How can we possibly reconcile his depiction of what marriage should be with his own relationship? To begin considering this, we will look closer at Rousseau's relationship to see what is admirable about it.

Schwartz (105), in discussing this disparity, asserts that Rousseau's affection does not surpass the level of the "physical" love of the solitary savage, "that general desire which inclines one sex to unite with the other," one utterly indiscriminate in its object. Rousseau certainly gives some credence to this low estimation in his characterization of it, including his admission that he has never felt love for Therese. Schwartz acknowledges that Rousseau breaks with the savage in that he stays with her for life, but dismisses the relevance of this. Given our suggestion that enduring cohabitation, or the 'solitary household', is a bigger part of the state of nature than other commentators acknowledge, this is not even exceptional, except that he vows "never to abandon her." However attractive Schwartz's assertion is, it does not really do justice to the other things Rousseau says about his relationship. When he first saw her, he was "struck by her modest bearing, and even more by her lively and sweet expression, which has never had its like for me." After his repeated defences of her honour in the house of rogues they lived in they developed a bond, and "the relations of our hearts, the agreement of our inclinations soon had its usual effect" (C VII 277-9). Clearly she is not interchangeable with any other woman.

They began an affair, and "A little experience with that excellent girl, a little reflection about my situation made me feel that, although I had only been thinking about my pleasures, I had done much for my happiness." While many pro-family commentators are (like Rousseau) concerned that the lack of seriousness with which we take up new relationships prevents us from ever taking them seriously enough, Rousseau shows us while he certainly does not contradict the theory, in Therese he found more than just an attractive housekeeper. Rather than just being his servant,

> We made little country walks tete-a-tete...that were delightful to me. I saw that she loved me sincerely, and that redoubled my tenderness. This sweet intimacy took the place of everything for me; the future no longer touched me or touched me only as the present prolonged: I desired nothing but to ensure its endurance. (ibid)

Her affection filled his heart. He makes it clear that he was made uniquely happy by her when he says that he was put in a condition that he wanted to last forever. As with so many other men, this way of living also had a salutary effect on his habits and his work:

> This attachment made any other dissipation superfluous and insipid to me. I no longer wanted to go out except to go to Therese's; her residence almost became mine. This quiet life became so advantageous to my work that in less than three months my opera was entirely done. (ibid)

Very clearly, Rousseau felt the charms of domestic life in a powerful way in this period. While his feelings were not those of a consuming romantic love, they fill his heart all the same in a sweet way and are focused on a single object. His attachment to Therese improves his conduct and gives him the only sustained duty he ever adopts in his life. In this sense, she does in large part determine his moral existence, however modest – or

close to nature – it is. Besides keeping to his promise never to abandon her, he reports in the *Confessions* that he did sacrifice a sizable share of his modest income and limited patience in caring for her meddling mother and other of her siblings. This appears to be a duty he (perhaps admirably) took upon himself for longer than he needed to, having endured theft from her siblings and suspicious loyalties from her mother, with whom who he shared his house for a number of years.

This is not to say that their relationship is not categorically different than Emile and Sophie's marriage – not only do they not rear children, there is little in the way of virtue (in the sense of either dedication, struggle, or sacrifice in the name of a shared higher end or duty, or in the shared pursuit of truth and beauty) involved in their bond. The part Rousseau had to play in this match hardly seems onerous, and it is clear that it is their goodness and compatibility of temperament (i.e. a lack of friction) which bound them together. Therese gave Rousseau emotional support and occasionally enlightened him concerning the intentions of a few of his associates and visitors, but for the most part her 'virtue' as far as he was concerned was her lack of demands upon him and her willingness to support him in his pursuit of a solitary existence.[35]

This examination of Rousseau's 'marriage' shows that while it was categorically different than what he believes marriage should be, with the glaring exception of

[35] Depending on the status of his writing as a 'higher end', and her estimation of it as such, we might judge her to have displayed virtue in the suffering she surely endured living with this temperamental genius. We might also or especially re-evaluate her willingness to give up her children in this light; an act which Rousseau claims was even more painful for her than it was for him. Rousseau does not give us much license for this interpretation however, in that he does not tell us much about their deliberations over this choice, and does not portray her as any kind of disciple. Not surprisingly, he seems content to show her as in love with his heart, not mind

orphaning his children it was not as bereft of anything resembling duty, distinction, and even virtue as others suggest. That said, it is not surprising that this man who not only celebrates the pre-political emotions and habits in our natures but chooses to live a relatively solitary life in retreat from society would have a domestic relationship that resembles pre-political humanity. To a considerable degree, he and Therese lived a solitary life in a hut sharing sweet sentiments: "a little society all the better united because reciprocal affection and freedom were its only bonds" (SD 147). Through their happiness at this arrangement, in his peculiar way he provides an example of the self-sufficiency of the domestic sphere. No doubt there would have been even more of these sentiments if Rousseau had raised five or more actual children instead of five or more epoch-making books, but it is easy to suggest that the high estimation he bestows upon affectionate but unromantic domestic life in the late state of nature of the *Second Discourse* was in part inspired and confirmed by Rousseau's own experience of it.

It is also the case, however, that his romanticization of domestic life in *Emile* and especially *Julie* is inspired by his own life, but in this case what it lacked. He explicitly affirms that with *Julie* he needed to "vent...the desire to love which I had not been able to satisfy, and with which I felt myself devoured" (C IX 362), and so he created a realistic but perfected world where he could live with the kinds of people that suited his heart. Not only is his imagination like ours in that it is far more powerful than the savage's, Rousseau's stands out from normal civilized people as well. At the beginning of the *Confessions*, he explains that reading his mother's romances and his father's Plutarch as a child gave him "bizarre and romantic concepts about human life, from

which experience and reflection have never been able to cure me completely" (C I 8). While he may never have been "cured" of it, his experience and reflection certainly have provided an immense amount of insight that he has integrated into his teaching.

As with civilization itself, Rousseau portrays a deep ambiguity about the goodness of a romantic imagination. His is the source of his own unsociability, because it made him imagine and long for perfection and greatness in everything around him; when his sensitive soul instead saw injustice and mediocrity in reality, he began to replace it with the plots and characters in the books which had lifted his heart. "This love of imaginary objects and facility at occupying myself with them disgusted me completely with everything that surrounded me, and determined that taste for solitude, which has always remained with me since then" (C I 34). His sensitivity and imagination saved him from utter despair, but they are also responsible for pushing him to the precipice.

While there is little question that it is not only Rousseau's writings that have a prominent romantic side, we have also seen that he teaches about the dangers inherent in romance along with the positive potential. He expresses even more strident reservations about its goodness in his own life, even as we have seen it touted as that which makes his solitude rich. In describing the one time he felt a passion he unreservedly calls romantic love, he ominously prefaces his tale as that of "the last peaceful moments I have been allowed" (C 368); he then describes this love a couple of times as something that needed a cure and as something that came from a 'poisoned cup'. It is a 'madness' and

'extravagance' that led him astray and into an abyss, leaving him in a "truly deplorable state" from which it took him years to recover (C 369-75).[36]

Yet in hearing his eloquent depictions of the character of the "sublime" movements that went on in his soul as this terrible passion flooded his heart, are we really supposed to believe that he can in good conscience repent the experience? Does the wretchedly heartbroken Emile really repent it either? He makes similarly, and sometimes the same, eloquent depictions of the blissful aspect, though he certainly gives even more passionate accounts of despair, anger, and torment. Rousseau, however, from the time he met her knew that his own real-life Sophie (d'Houdetot) was the committed lover of his worthy friend St. Lambert; without cause to hope for reciprocity she could never break his heart in the thorough fashion of Emile's. Whereas Rousseau understood that his ideal would never become reality, Emile is a man who felt assured of a life of happiness with his wife and children. It is still an experience Rousseau drew many insights from: however prone his heart may have been to take flight, his mind and power of self-reflection brought all such experiences under scrutiny and evaluation such that he was able to claim to know the potential as well as the limits of romantic love as well as the other inner sentiments he promoted for the benefit of humankind.

Solitariness, Family, and Freedom Reconsidered

[36] To be fair, some of Rousseau's feelings are bound up with the souring of his one true romantic love coinciding with and contributing to his break from their circle, which included Grimm, Diderot, and other leading intellectuals. This was the last group he was a part of before breaking away from society even more completely, and within a couple of years this was compounded by the official persecution brought upon him in reaction to the publication of *Emile* and the *Social Contract*. Nonetheless, he makes quite clear in the *Confessions* how powerful romantic feelings for women and heroes were in directing his life, for better and worse.

Just as there is something important in his inner romantic self that is applicable to us, so is there something in his drive for independence, or as he puts it in describing the effect Plutarch had on him, his "free and republican spirit...impatient with the yoke and servitude" (C I 8). Not only is this need for freedom something that exists in all of us, but there are bound to be people whose personalities are similar enough to his own that his example holds more in the way of instruction for them than does the family-directed model he generally sought to promote. Aversion to duties is a natural phenomenon. We all, says Rousseau, dislike obligations which come to us from other people's wills; in the social realm so many of its duties are subject to being influenced by the personal desires of those in authority (including the multitude) that this phenomenon is next to impossible to eradicate. In light of the power of these observations, critics of Rousseau's gendered family since Wollstonecraft have used his own democratic or egalitarian principles and demanded that the same principles of consent and equal contribution to a general will be applied. In this final section, we will again consider the similarities and differences between Rousseau's political and family principles. After critiquing the claim that the political unit should be properly conceived at the level of the individual instead of the household, we will close with some summary observations concerning what we have learned from Rousseau about the connections between the egalitarian liberty of our politics and the importance of family values.

In general, Rousseau elevates the status of the family as the essential unit because the affections and responsibilities of the home are a better basis for people to develop and

maintain a healthy sense of community that is not prey to the dangers of vanity in society. It is also essential that they pass this mentality on to the next generation, and nothing does this better than demonstrating the importance of that care from the beginning of their lives. We have also seen why he thinks family is more effectively elevated when we differentiate the roles on the basis of sex; as we have seen, for the sake of both natural principles as well as practical ones his full political equality, or citizenship, is extended only to men as the heads of households. In the present-day West, these distinctions have been rejected: women have full political equality, and it follows that for the most part the political unit in our liberal age is the individual. It is not so clear, however, that the arguments for political equality and independence work in the same way within the level of the household: i.e. for a polity of two.

Because of his independent streak, Rousseau is very cognizant of the difficulties that can emerge whenever demands are made upon us that go beyond our immediate desires. When one commits to the family life, the attendant duties to the broader community regarding wealth-creation and maintenance of a good social reputation can be a burden which some struggle mightily to bear. We have seen Rousseau's prescriptions for reducing the dependence we have on things like money and status, but for the family man (and woman) the minimal requirements in these respects are notably larger than they are for the unattached individual. When Emile tragically loses his family bonds, he can simply start walking in a random direction out of Paris without any intention of ever turning back, and essentially start a new life. The decent husband and wife give up this option for life, and instead become a unity.

Though marriage is the closest to nature as far as institutions go, there will inevitably be a clash of wills in this partnership of life for life: few could become an utterly devoted spouse in quite the same way that there might be an utterly devoted Spartan citizen, who could wholeheartedly cast aside all personal considerations for what is determined to be best for the group, even when he disagreed. Political disputes happen on a much larger stage than domestic ones and so even if the issues being discussed are of greater overall importance, it is easy to relegate ourselves to a bit part; decisions can repeatedly go against our better judgment without it being taken personally. Even though it is questions of justice which arouse anger in people, as long as the issue is not one that *is* personal – like an issue of discrimination against our religion, region, race, etc., we are generally able to accept continual losses by 'our side' in a large political unit and remain loyal. We are even often inclined to think that all the actions of our country are somewhat sacred, or ought always to be respected. This helps explain why we can continue to love our country, even when it does not 'love us back'. With erotic love, however, Rousseau is insistent that it almost always needs to be returned if it is to endure. For a number of reasons, even without being Spartans, it is in many ways easier to accept being on the losing side repeatedly in one's polity than it is to accede without murmur to the decisions one's spouse makes over and over, even if you do love them (at least in the beginning) more than your country.

The city-household parallel does not hold up, despite the similarities. In the case of a community of only one other person, we expect compromises and trade-offs, even in

cases where we acknowledge that our demands are somewhat idiosyncratic or even irrational. A shared dedication to virtue will steer two people well through many difficult situations, but there will inevitably be both large cases where the proper course is not clear, and smaller cases where lofty principles are not at issue; nonetheless, agreement must be found or at least tolerance generated. Marriage is obviously a very personal relationship, and all our feelings and thoughts become relevant in a way they are not in the public square. As an example, if a person gets cold easily, does not like loud music, finds taking God's name in vain offensive, or has an aversion to the color purple, he would have to endure these things when exposed to them in public and make all the adjustments to comply with whatever environment he found himself in. If at home, however, he found that his spouse was as unyielding as the public was to his preferences, he would feel slighted and would take it very personally even if the same demands of reasonableness were made by the spouse as in the public square. Marriage is a unique partnership in that each is always exactly half of the ruling class of the polity, with the children as the needy subjects. Whenever two equal sides have conflicts and no superior authority to enforce the peace, there is a risk of civil war. This is essentially the basis upon which Locke grants ultimate authority to husbands: someone has to have the last say, it might as well be the stronger one. Rousseau is not willing to rest his case on merely this basis.

Just as in a polity, traditional expectations can have a salutary role in forming agreeable notions of roles and conduct. Rousseau, rejecting tradition qua tradition because too often it arose to preserve artificial inequality, re-establishes its wisdom on

natural grounds in defining the characteristics of a good husband and wife. As we have outlined, he takes great care to elucidate what he sees as the innate characteristics of each sex, and draws out the household and community functions suitable to each from this standard. Whereas recognizing our fundamental self-sufficiency is an important part of establishing our political equality, recognizing our insufficiency is an important aspect of our devotion to a spouse and household. This recognition of insufficiency, or vulnerability, has also been shown to be important to the modest bearing that makes us gentle, sociable, and more open to moral considerations in general.

In this functional sense, it is less important what the content is, than that there be domestically-centred roles which we feel to be a necessary part of our identity. It is on these grounds that proponents of liberal feminism and same-sex marriage could make Rousseau's pro-family teaching work towards their de-gendered perspective. If progressive egalitarians can successfully establish the morally-relevant sense of completion in marriage while removing gender expectations, then Rousseau's teaching that family values are the best and only means for fostering a healthy community in our age can be preserved and he will be proved to have erred in thinking sexual differentiation fundamental. If, however, the progressive claim is that family values are not so important that we should sacrifice women's freedom to pursue careers for it, or that substantial compromises concerning domestic and personal/public priorities are possible then he has not been refuted, but merely dismissed.

I believe that it is quite likely that for all the advances we have made in terms of educational and career equality for women, Rousseau would not be inclined to change his position. He did, after all, know and interact with so many truly accomplished and impressive women in the Paris of his day that he would hardly be surprised to find that they can equal men in virtually any field. It seems it must be at least in part out a recognition of this potential to succeed in public that he felt it so urgent to draw them so strongly back to the family. From Rousseau's outlook, it would be fair to say that liberal feminism is the biggest threat to happiness not because women are not capable of doing impressive things, but because their widespread success will destroy the social fabric that we need to prevent us all from falling into the worst kind of alienated, commercial, independent, bourgeois misery. Without women making the home a happy, rich place, it is harder to imagine men wanting to be more dedicated to it. Without women taking pride in the rearing of their children, not only will they be deprived of critical emotional development, but it will also likely not lead men to think it worth their attention. It also does not take a genius to imagine that a household where both parents leave the house from dawn until dusk to pursue their careers would be a place where the nurturing, education, and socialization of children would be compromised. These children might even somehow get the impression that having a successful career is the most important thing in life.

While the utility of social norms favouring family-directed roles has been stated, it is still of considerable importance that each of these commitments be understood as a product of our free choice. It is the case that in both the social and marital contract we

alienate our natural rights in exchange for partial and relative ones. Establishing the dignity of the devoted citizen is also a crucial correction to the modern political outlook. Making his readers see that having a regime worth devoting oneself to would be an ennobling honour, not a servile condition, puts them in a better frame of mind to recognize an attainable and desirable substitute in a worthy marriage. Liberalism is accordingly not understood as a good in itself, but praiseworthy more along the lines of "a least bad form of regime." Liberal principles alone cannot explain why we would ever agree to bind ourselves to one other person for life. Rousseau's understanding of freedom as entirely compatible with willingly placing a yoke around one's neck makes marriage far more intelligible as a worthy institution.

Accordingly, while it is impossible to legitimately proscribe divorce, we should never lose sight of the importance of placing as much seriousness as we can into the voluntary vow in marriage to dedicate oneself for life. Rousseau helps us understand the effect such an attitude can have in shaping the imagination in such a way that we accommodate and direct our desires to comply with its permanence. Insofar as the relationship is seen as permanently being contingent upon meeting the satisfactions of each, it will fail to wring the wholehearted devotion out of us that makes our labours and sacrifices a source of pride, as is the case for patriots.

Rousseau likewise makes independence from marriage a refuge for the maladjusted, and not something to boast about. Rousseau's sensitive and idealistic disposition is somewhat unique, but not entirely: there will always be people who are so 'free-spirited'

or 'socially retarded' or are for whatever good or bad reason psychologically incapable of committing to one person for life in the project of running a household. Whereas the spirit of egalitarianism inclines one to celebrate these idiosyncrasies or anything which bespeaks an independence from traditional patterns, Rousseau makes the impassioned case for this norm being one worth living up to for both men and women. This is only comprehensible when we understand his view of nature not being that of the solitary wanderer, but of the men and women of savage society who identify strongly with their families.

Rousseau is instructive to us in this regard precisely because he is one of those incapable of being a normal, responsible, member of a community and yet he believes so strongly that this must be the model held up for emulation. He is eminently aware of how those who are too atypical to follow this model will either chafe under its yoke or risk opprobrium by wandering outside the norms, but still refuses to devote his efforts to justifying the outliers. Rather, it is to the wider populace that he writes at least half of his major works and in this Rousseau is perhaps the most democratic of political philosophers. He knows that all the possibilities and freedoms opened up by the technological age will tend to threaten society's cohesiveness and reduce shared standards to the lowest common denominator. These will be vanity and money, and their pre-eminence will ruin our chances at happiness.

For all its promptings in nature, though, there is something unnatural in the formal vow to marry for life. Compounding this, we live in such unnatural circumstances that

we have in many ways less incentive than ever to make commitments which last longer than they please us. Instant, personalized gratification is the one 'freedom' which is cherished by our society much more than Rousseau's or any other. As Rousseau helps us understand, there can be no doubt that the impulse behind this has a great deal of support in human nature. We generally take pride in the radical decline of social duties in our lives, and celebrate the liberation in usually being able to do whatever we think or feel best. As Rousseau also helps us understand, however, a radical decline in duty is only good when it corresponds with a decline in dependence. So long as we live in a complex society where adults need many things from others, and children especially demand a great deal to develop properly, relying on freedom and goodness is unlikely to be adequate.

Rousseau makes us aware of the danger of living in a society that asks too little of us, that celebrates freedom in too minimalistic of a sense. His insights into the psychology of modern man and the way in which the Lockean commercial regime is likely to make us miserable because of alienation and insincerity is also a common theme that ties together his citizen, solitary, and family. By feeling his existence in the whole, imagining his good as intertwined with his citizens, the citizen is immune to this danger. Immersion in the family-based community can rival this; because it is much more practical and natural, it is accordingly a much more reliable basis upon which to secure our happiness.

Conclusion

Rousseau's polemical style and powerful rhetoric lends his work to very divergent interpretations. Most of his serious students being political scientists, his more overtly political works have tended to garner the bulk of academic attention. Many people I have met who have a passing familiarity with Rousseau and political science have been quite taken aback when I give them a brief description of the topic I have been pursuing, either because they do not remember anything about family in the *Social Contract*, or are not quite sure what love and marriage has to do with a social science. In this dissertation I have endeavoured to demonstrate: *that* promoting family values was arguably the most urgent practical aim of Rousseau; *why* he felt that this was the best remedy for the ills of modernity; and *how* he proposed to persuade us to be not just willing to take on the responsibilities of commitment to family, but eager, even longing to do so. In so doing, we have attempted not only to use Rousseau's insights to generate a better understanding of the diverse and sometimes obscure issues underlying debates over the family in a liberal age, but to generate a better understanding of Rousseau's thought by focusing on the family-related themes running through most of his major works.

In our analysis of Rousseau's *oeuvre*, we began by highlighting the relevant themes of his attacks on the vanity of the Enlightenment and lowliness of the bourgeois in the *Discourses*. In chapter two, we then showed the ways his next writings became increasingly focused on defending a conception of the centrality of family affections and

relationships to the character of polities and individuals. In his next notable work, the unpublished *Essay on Language*, to the very political attempt to persuade Geneva to maintain their ban on theatres that followed it, the prominence of family bonds and importance of sex-based identity emerge. Adding the novel *Julie*, it is clear that in this period of the peak of his fame he elaborated quite thoroughly the family-centred principles that culminated in *Emile.* By examining these works after establishing the basis of his more general outlook, we have seen how recurring and consistent across his works are the contrasts of concepts like affection and reason, natural relationships and politics, pity and exploitation, harmony and competition, independence and insincerity. We have also seen how understanding the features that make family life happy help shed light on the unity of his understanding of the tensions between these concepts and the overall coherence of his thought.

In particular, our demonstration that family is central in his account of the state of nature helped us overcome many misunderstandings that are generated by the common but overly-narrow consideration of part one of the *Second Discourse* as containing all that is essential to human nature. By seeing that stark picture as rhetorically establishing the essential independence and goodness of a being largely satisfied with the sentiment of existence, but not defining the best or the limit of what nature provides, we are able to understand the natural family as enhancing the barest existence without compromising the essence of our goodness. Because we remain unified and independent, but add the "sweetest sentiments known to man," the family is understood as uniquely ambiguous in its degree of sociality: in this light we can better understand why it is a distinct refuge.

Its members have a degree of affection for each other that makes their co-operation far less prone to the resentment, insincerity, vanity, and otherwise pernicious dependence Rousseau sees in the bulk of public relationships.

We also saw that love is fundamentally related to the development of the more developed, more fully human, aspects of society. Whereas the affections of spouses can draw them away from society in a healthy way, the longings of the young to find love, and be considered loveable, is the natural bridge to the ideas of merit and competition seen in the natural societies at the peak of the state of nature. This initial vanity is not in itself degrading, but it generates the potential for misery when relatively innocent natural inequalities are transformed into exploitative and poisonous artificial inequalities. It is essential to recognize the natural desire to be judged approvingly by a mate on legitimate grounds, however, because this is an essential power by which Rousseau would have us encourage young adults to embrace virtues and healthy social development. In particular, Rousseau insists that women must be educated to be good judges of character, because young men – whom he considers especially and dangerously malleable – will, in any but the most barbarous of societies, aim to develop the qualities women approve of.

Despite the protests of some of his feminist critics, strict standards about sexuality are not something Rousseau only thinks young women should have. If we 'democratically' leave the opinions of young men and women in these matters up to natural inclinations and personal tastes, Rousseau is adamant that we are not only neglecting to take advantage of a potentially useful influence, but foolishly and culpably

degrading the character of the next generation because so much is determined here. In this way he can assist with the battles that continue to be fought over sex education and censorship for the young. In chapter three we showed how essential puberty is to the development of Emile's character: his nascent sexuality is directed into much more than a desire to marry a virtuous woman, but it cannot be understood apart from this. Rousseau shows us a youth that embraces chastity not out of fear or prudery, but out of the very free desire to save himself for the highest sort of happiness he can imagine. As he and Sophie practice self-mastery in respect to this intense good, Rousseau sees them developing the kind of essential strength of character that will serve each well for the rest of their lives.

Rousseau shows us that a moral sense and basic virtues are not only developed by the means of this restraint, but by the recognition of insufficiency that generates the longing for love that enables one to wholeheartedly commit to marriage and the responsibilities of the household that follow. In the erotic youth, Rousseau tries to educate these new sentiments towards a recognition of humility, pity, and piety, or the willingness to accept your place in the ordered whole, as opposed to succumbing to the selfish, individualist, notion that the world revolves around you and your desires. Religion and moral conceptions are properly explored at this age in a way that childhood was not at all suited to. In short, the temptation to disengage from teenagers, or try to treat them as equals, is the height of irresponsibility in Rousseau's mind, for now that they are curious and have wonder about life's mysteries they are uniquely open to education.

Finally, there are the duties of managing a household. Here, Rousseau describes the necessity of taking on responsibility, and learning how to rule in turn with one's spouse. Unlike the men in the public square arguing or stubbornly demanding a hearing, Rousseau depicts a different kind of regime in the household, and one where we tried to demonstrate that women do not lose out in spite of the husband's official predominance. One can certainly object entirely out of principle or practice to the notion that generalized differences between men and women should have any translation into broad expectations or political rights. It would not be fair, however, to claim that Rousseau has not given an extensive amount of thought and argument to support his idea that women should be respected as domestic empresses and men should be tasked with whatever public duties might be required. In each of the last three chapters we also raised the argument made in different contexts that the division of marriage into sex-based roles helps encourage devotion in an erotic sense as something divinely sanctioned, and in a practical sense in that it drastically reduces disputes over how to share sometimes onerous duties.

Most importantly, it must be understood that Rousseau directly opposes liberal feminism not because he thinks that women are incapable of doing many wage-earning jobs just as well as men, but because he thinks that the desire to gain this equality for women is not only bad for women but terribly dangerous to the health of society. By first developing his case against the commercialist or careerist character of bourgeois unhappiness, we established that his goal is not to prevent women from going to the office, but directing men's ambitions and sense of existence back to the home. He

replaces the Lockean model with charming scenes of domestic enjoyments eviscerates the notion that a parent's goal is to leave their child with a good name and a large inheritance. By devoting his greatest work to a prolonged, comprehensive, and stirring meditation on raising a common child to be immune to the dangers of modern society, he not only instructs parents and legislators, but generates a popular respect for the honour in raising one's children well.

The need for a family-based political and social outlook arises because although there are some artificial modifications, extensions, and supports regarding both the practical duties and the imagination, focusing on the family as the basis of our lives and aspirations builds on the most natural passions. As opposed to the radically individualistic, nationalistic, or communistic alternatives, which seek to lower the respect for sexual desire, parental affection, and family duties because they conflict with various permutations of radical equality and strict obedience to the state, Rousseau seeks to elevate this institution as a natural and effective bridge between the individual and society. Rousseau is vilified for the communistic and nationalistic aspects of writing, but to take his abstract presentations of what pure justice demands, or what making the best citizens demands, as his practical teaching is a dangerous error. He is like Plato in the respect that each depicts political ideals with the aim of reducing the hopes people place in the reality of politics. But whereas Plato hoped to turn more of the dissatisfied to a life of thought, Rousseau redirects his readers to an appreciation of the family life in a small, non-commercial community. Instead of seeing Rousseau's teachings in the celebration of extreme solitude in the *Reveries* or in the extreme citizenship of the *Social Contract,* it is

clear that it is the teachings we have studied in this work, the "Discourses", the "Letter on the Theatre," and especially *Julie* and *Emile* where he gives direct guidance to people in order to preserve them from the profound unhappiness that he feared the individualism and egalitarianism of modern society would bring them.

However difficult Rousseau personally found society, he is by no means a misanthrope. On the contrary, his love of mankind combined with his inability to live peaceably amongst men is why he was able to write books that had such an impact. While he neglected his own family, through his life of contemplation and writing he was able to elevate family values in the modern democratic West. As I have argued, in his appeal for us to cherish the bonds of family and the sentiments of romantic and parental love, his impact has improved the lives of countless children and their parents. My hope is that this work will help persuade readers that Jean-Jacques can continue to help us if his critique of our Enlightened lives and proposals for strengthening modern family values is taken seriously.

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