

interpretation

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Rousseau and the Management of the Passions

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Rousseau has commonly been understood to desire a return to one or another of the classical accounts of the nature of man, to accept a Christian, albeit unorthodox, understanding of the human soul, or to point forward to Kant's account of the radical sovereignty of reason. Thus, he has been interpreted as seeking either to re-establish Stoic natural law doctrines or Socratic philosophy, to found the moral life upon Christian compassion and the promptings of the conscience, or to articulate a model of autonomous moral law.

Basing their assessments on views Rousseau expresses in the *Social Contract*, in the *First Discourse*, or in the "Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar" these often elaborate commentaries tend, nonetheless, to give short shrift to Rousseau's serious reservations about the role of reason and the ambiguous status of conscience in his teaching generally, evidence of which we shall examine presently.¹

Commentaries on his moral theory, or accounts of his disagreement with his contemporaries, have unfortunately dwelled only briefly on Rousseau's psycho-

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1. The force of Rousseau's critique of modernity has produced a great diversity and occasional confusion among his interpreters and critics especially in the desire to see this critique as unqualified and unambiguous. However, to praise the classics is not to counsel their imitation, just as to damn the moderns is not to deny the necessity of taking a leaf from their book. Those who have nonetheless been somewhat zealous in assimilating Rousseau to ancient thought are: M. Einaudi, *The Early Rousseau* (N.Y., 1967), K. F. Roche, *Rousseau, Stoic and Romantic* (London, 1974), M. Ellis, *Rousseau's Socratic Aemilian Myths* (N.Y., 1977), and A. Schinz, "La Notion de vertu," *Mercure de France*, vol. 1, no. 12, 1912, pp. 532-55. Imposing Christian ideas upon Rousseau's thought, by another interpretation, requires overemphasizing the centrality of the vicar's "Profession of Faith" and a number of Rousseau's letters while ignoring the implications of much that Rousseau writes elsewhere and being insensitive to the interpretive difficulties (dramatic and theoretical) that arise from taking these statements of religious belief literally. This issue is too difficult to address here although it has been raised by C. Orwin, "Humanity and Justice: The Problem of Compassion in the Thought of Rousseau", Ph.D. Diss., Harvard, 1976; J. Cropsey, "The Human Vision of Rousseau: Reflections on *Émile*," in *Political Philosophy and the Issues of Politics* (Chicago, 1977); and A. Bloom, introduction to the *Émile* (N.Y., 1979). As examples of interpretations that have taken Rousseau's religious themes as central see R. Grimsley, *Rousseau and the Religious Quest* (Oxford, 1968); P. M. Masson, *La Profession de foi du vicaire savoyard* (Fribourg, 1914); J. F. Thomas, *Le Pélagianisme de J.-J. Rousseau* (Paris, 1956). R. Masters in *The Political Philosophy of J.-J. Rousseau* (Princeton, 1968), despite his careful textual exegesis, accepts the "profession of faith" too readily but only by interpreting away the traditional meaning of conscience. cf. p. 75, n. 79. For overly-rationalist and Kantian interpretations see R. Derathe, *Le Rationalisme de J.-J. Rousseau* (Paris, 1948); E. Cassirer, *The Question of J.-J. Rousseau* (N.Y., 1954); and A. Levine, *The Politics of Autonomy* (Amherst, 1967).

logical principles, which he himself nonetheless articulates with singular attention. Why this scant appraisal of Rousseau's psychology has occurred is because his educational treatise, the *Émile*, has often been interpreted as a mere prolegomena or supplement to his more substantial moral teaching elsewhere. It has been understood to be merely the method by which his moral theory can be implemented. Yet, I would propose that an adequate understanding of Rousseau's moral teaching cannot be separated from his emphatic concern to elaborate an effective morality. The particular psychology he employs to make morality effective brings about, at the same time, a significant transformation of the meaning of the "moral life."

The need for attention to his psychology arises because of Rousseau's epistemological position. In the *Émile*, Rousseau appears to accept modern counsel by abandoning the idea of an autonomous reason and by reducing internal experiences of the mind to transformations of sense impressions. Moreover, he subjects former theories positing the existence of complex, natural faculties, innate ideas, or innate principles of knowledge to critical appraisal. To avoid imputing such possibilities to the mind, Rousseau "constructs" the mind of his student through a judicious manipulation of impressions, much in the spirit of Condillac's construction of his "statue-man."

At the same time, in an interesting departure from Locke's sensationalism, he introduces the idea of a causal connection between sense impressions and feelings of pleasure and pain. Rousseau's analysis of the passions thus constitutes an integral part of his epistemological position. The careful manipulation of sensibility is intended, Rousseau claims, to ensure a sound perception of reality and the proper cultivation of the mind's faculties as well as to define the way in which those faculties will be exercised.

The psychological inquiry is crucial too because in the absence of a distinctive moral faculty, innate moral ideas, or an independent reason capable of regulating the human soul, Rousseau is compelled to explain or find a new basis and motive for the moral experience. As a moralist and teacher of an effective morality, he is concerned to reveal how the moral life comes into being and is sustained. Since the passions play a crucial role in forming standards of conduct and in motivating a man to act upon these standards, an understanding of Rousseau's psychology is necessary if we are to comprehend the novelty of his moral theory.

One cannot begin to appreciate Rousseau's psychology without the recognition of the fundamental alteration he introduced into accounts of human nature. This was his argument that man's nature is modified in time by external circumstances. Therefore, he claims, it is not simply possible to examine social men or to engage in introspective inquiry to determine the nature of man. Although various passions and sentiments appear as natural characteristics of men, Rousseau denies that most are part of man's original endowment. The predominant passions observable in contemporary men developed historically; to understand their

origin it is necessary to examine the attribute of man responsible for his changing nature. In the *Second Discourse*, Rousseau attributes man's malleability to the faculty of "perfectibility" and claims that it is the characteristic distinguishing men from beasts. Previous accounts of human nature were defective, Rousseau claims, because each identified contingent characteristics as fundamental, or failed to comprehend the simple origin and derivation of complex passions, thus according too great a complexity to the human soul. One of the results of this was to enforce obligations, justify inegalitarian human relations, and demand certain political, moral, and religious restraints not natural or advantageous to the human soul. Rousseau's science of the passions is intended to display an economy of explanation and simplicity of derivation that dissolves what he believed were the layers of deceit and confusion covering the question of the real character of human nature from which false inferences had been made.

The interpretive problem of what Rousseau means by perfectibility and the "natural" is however a difficult one. Is perfectibility simply malleability, is it imitation, is it the capacity to learn, or is it a latent form of reasoning? Is the natural only what constitutes the original endowment, does it include later accretions, and what standard would distinguish "natural" from "artificial" additions to the human repertoire? Commentators have been puzzled by Rousseau's ambiguous discussion.²

The context of his discussion is an argument proving man's exemption from mechanical necessity. Is man simply an ingenious machine, whose sentiments are reducible to material causes, or does his behavior offer evidence to merit the positing of a spiritual substance? Although "perfectibility" appears to replace, or to offer a less controversial explanation for the effects of what had been explained as the metaphysical "freedom of the will," it is not unambiguously evident from Rousseau's discussion whether "perfectibility" conclusively proves that man has a spiritual substance or explains man's distinctive nature.

As other commentators have pointed out, Rousseau at no point explicitly denies that perfectibility can be explained mechanistically nor does the remainder of his discourse rely upon the metaphysical notion of "freedom of the will."³ Indeed, no more references are made to "purely spiritual acts" nor to man's supposed exemption from mechanical necessity. What is "perfectibility," and does Rousseau propose to explain the genesis of man's nature on the basis of mechanistic causes? Perfectibility is meant to be an observable phenomenon subject to empirical proof and scientific explanation. Can it nonetheless cover those "spiri-

2. Voltaire's stinging retort to Rousseau's second discourse that he himself preferred not to return to all fours is a good example. Also, H. Benda, "Rousseau's Early Discourses: Man, Society, and State," *Journal of Political Science*, vol. 5, 1953, pp. 13–20, and vol. 6, 1954, pp. 17–28, and M. Jack, "One State of Nature; Mandeville and Rousseau," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 39, no. 1, 1978, p. 119, misconstrue Rousseau's teaching. Exceptions to this misinterpretation include M. Plattner, *Rousseau's State of Nature* (Dekalb, 1979), and W. Galston, *Kant and the Problem of History* (Chicago, 1975).

3. Cf. Marc Plattner, *Rousseau's State of Nature*, 1979, pp. 46–51.

tual acts” while remaining true to empiricism? Could perfectibility be understood mechanistically while being the cause of faculties which are not?

Rousseau turns to the origin of man’s distinctive endowment to provide answers to these questions. He claims that perfectibility is a faculty that arose fortuitously and that it need not have developed at all were it not for various external circumstances. It cannot be said therefore that the development of perfectibility is teleologically ordered by nature, nor indeed are the other faculties which Rousseau admits also emerged due to “countless accidents.” Rousseau even suggests that there are primitive men in whom perfectibility may never have developed and who are thus still in the state of nature.⁴ It appears from this hesitant beginning of man’s history that he is not directed by God’s will, nor by any immanent, natural tendency toward some determinate end. Nor is perfectibility “self-perfection” for Rousseau makes quite clear that it has also been “the source of all man’s misfortunes.”⁵ Thus it appears from Rousseau’s description that perfectibility is merely malleability, or more precisely, adaptability to circumstances.

This explanation of the concept is supported by considering what Rousseau takes to be the relation between reason and perfectibility. Continuing to distinguish men from animals, he writes: “. . . animals can neither formulate such ideas nor even acquire the perfectibility which depends on them.”⁶ Perfectibility appears thus to be dependent upon ideas for its development. Now, Rousseau also claims that reason is acquired by, and the growth of ideas is a response to, the necessity of satisfying different needs. Needs alter according to changing circumstances and the mind develops to accommodate the change in needs. The progress of the mind is thus a reaction to changing circumstances. Because perfectibility is considered by Rousseau to depend upon this process, it appears that openness to change stimulated by external, physical causes characterizes human nature.

Nonetheless, this obscures rather than clarifies the distinction between men and animals. For it is not the case, Rousseau advances, that animals are not altered by circumstance. He writes that animals were at some point in time very similar to each other until “various physical causes . . . introduced into certain species the varieties we notice.”⁷ Moreover, this alteration is not predetermined; the diverse characteristics these animals developed were “not inherent in their nature.”⁸ It cannot therefore be simply malleability with respect to varying physical causes that characterizes man’s distinctiveness. Can perfectibility be nothing more than infinite malleability? Rousseau states that perfectibility is “almost un-

4. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Œuvres Complètes*, 4 vols. (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Gallimard), III, 208.

5. III, 142.

6. III, 149.

7. III, 123.

8. *Ibid.*

limited.”⁹ It is therefore not unlimited. Moreover, the faculties as Rousseau describes them generally appear to have bounds; the mind is depicted as having “a limit of the perfection of which it is susceptible.”¹⁰ Thus man is not wholly indeterminate. But what is it in human nature that limits his malleability? Is it simply physical structure or are there also behavioral limits?

Another possibility of what Rousseau means by perfectibility is man’s capacity to imitate the activities of others. Man’s distinctiveness consists of his greater adaptability and learning capacity. This is confirmed by Rousseau’s claim that animals are limited by instinct but man, who is not governed by instinct, is able to learn from them: “. . . men, dispersed among the animals, observe and imitate their industry and thereby develop in themselves the instinct of the animals.”¹¹ This passage suggests that perfectibility is a type of imitation. However, again this interpretation cannot be the right one because Rousseau gives an example of a monkey’s capacity for imitation, and monkeys obviously lack the faculty of perfectibility.¹² Rousseau implies that imitation is a purely mechanical act and thus we may infer that it cannot be the distinctive characteristic of man. Rousseau actually explicitly distinguishes mere imitation from the faculty of perfectibility.¹³ Nonetheless, each of the examples by which he illustrates the major transitions of man’s evolution due to perfectibility is constituted by an imitation of either beasts, nature, or other men.¹⁴

Perhaps there is a specifically human form of imitation. Animal’s instinct performs the functions of deliberation and choice; men, lacking instinct, can nonetheless choose to adopt the instinct of animals. Yet, Rousseau has not provided an unqualified argument for this freedom of choice. The reformulation required to clear up this ambiguity of man’s distinctiveness would be that man contributes consciously to his alterations whereas animals are simply passively modified. This however is not evidently the solution since Rousseau denies that men have that self-consciousness. From all Rousseau wishes to claim on behalf of perfectibility, it would be more coherent perhaps, on his part, to suggest that the real ground of the distinction is man’s learning capacity, his ability to judge one choice over another, or—quite precisely—his rationality. Yet Rousseau does not take this step, much as his argument appears to require it. Rousseau wishes to understand human nature with reference to “the first and simplest operations of the human soul,” which are “anterior to reason,” but his notion of perfectibility appears to require precisely this fact of rationality which he denies.¹⁵ We shall return to Rousseau’s understanding of rationality in the second part of this paper.

Another ambiguous element of Rousseau’s account has to do with what per-

9. III, 142.

10. III, 174.

11. III, 135.

12. III, 211.

13. *Ibid.*

14. III, 135, 148, 165, 167, 171–73.

15. III, 125–26.

fectibility is meant to achieve. If perfectibility is to take man out of the realm of mechanical necessity, it must free man from the mere capitulation to his desires. Perfectibility is then the absence or restraint of certain desires, or particular sorts of desires. However, Rousseau claims that this regulation or restraint of desire occurs in animals as well. In fact, what had distinguished men and animals in his initial formulation was that the latter had a natural limit set upon their desires, whereas man had no such limit. Animals' behavior is regulated by instinct so that their self-preservation remains intact, whereas men were given to sensual excesses that endanger their self-preservation. If man's exemption from mechanical necessity requires a limitation of desire, paradoxically it has its model in animal instinct. Perfectibility appears to be in part the capacity to regain a natural instinct with which man was not endowed. However, it must be distinguished from mere instinct by the fact that man chooses this regulation, or in other words, that he actively participates in his own nature. This, however, again appears to require support by reason and self-consciousness, which Rousseau denies to be natural.

It is useful at this point to remind ourselves what Rousseau is trying to prove and then to determine if his arguments are sufficient. The task Rousseau sets himself is "to separate what is original from what is artificial, in the present nature of man . . ." and his teaching depends decisively upon this distinction.¹⁶ If man's nature was no more than his history this task would be impossible to perform and the original "natural" would be meaningless as a standard of natural right. If perfectibility was all that was inherent in man's nature, then Rousseau's discussion of the development of unnatural faculties would collapse. The purpose of Rousseau's genetic analysis is precisely to determine some elementary and fundamental features of human nature and then to judiciously manipulate man's adaptability so that the various faculties created are consistent with some original feature of primitive life. Thus, perfectibility appears to be a faculty that supplements other inherent faculties and ensures that human behavior can be sufficiently adapted to guarantee an optimal replication of the original condition. However, it also appears to produce or be instrumental in producing both artificial and natural modifications of the original endowment.

The origin of the "artificial" in man is however somewhat ambiguous. Although the artificial cannot simply be formed by nature, it must still have an originating cause. If man is the cause of the artificial, his capacity to fabricate it must either be natural or artificial. Without an infinite regress, there must be at some point in man's development an occurrence that somehow forms the artificial. The implication is that man responds to some circumstance that produces an active force that either supplements or opposes and impedes the preoccupations of his primitive condition. What is that force and does it give a decisive direction to the indeterminate character of perfectibility? When perfectibility be-

16. III, 123.

comes directed in such a way as to cause distortions in man's character, upon what criterion does the distinction between artificial and natural modifications rest? Perfectibility alone does not appear to satisfy the task it is meant to perform, namely of explaining man's distinctive nature. It supplies only the necessary condition for the phenomenon of alteration that Rousseau describes. It is necessary to look elsewhere to discover the cause of man's nature and it may require a redefinition of the "natural" to solve some of the questions with which we have been confronted. We must look to Rousseau's analysis of the human soul to resolve our dilemmas.

Rousseau's analysis begins with a substantial repudiation of the classical and modern rationalist's claims giving primacy to reason in the growth of ideas and the regulation of the passions. Rousseau's opinion with respect to the impotence of reason in these matters applies to both the functioning of the mind and the restraint of appetites. For the classical rationalists, reason was autonomous and creative, decisive in the accumulation of knowledge, the growth of understanding, and the consciousness of identity. Moreover, in its highest activity, reason reflected on its own states; thought, thinking itself, or philosophy, was seen as man's highest achievement. The classical rationalists understood the mind to be capable of apprehending a reality beyond the appearance of natural phenomena, to discern final causes, and to come to comprehend the *summum bonum* of human aspiration. As well, this autonomous faculty of reason could restrain men's desires, legislate precepts to man's "baser" nature, and draw the mind beyond its particular existence to a transcendent, universal order.

These metaphysical assumptions were rigorously criticized by modern rationalists, although they themselves retained the notion of an autonomous reasoning capacity and natural faculties. Even Locke, whose attack on innate ideas and whose seminal sensationalist epistemology oriented speculation toward the origin of ideas and sensory perceptions, nonetheless retained the assumptions of the irreducibility of the mind's operations, the autonomy of the constitution of the mind from that of the body, and the regulatory ability of reason over the passions. Rousseau followed many of his contemporaries in voicing reservations about Locke's epistemology. Disputing Locke's rationalism and his pedagogical proposals to employ reason with children, Rousseau countered with ". . . you employ a metaphysic he is not in a condition to understand by thus transporting him all of a sudden from sensible objects to intellectual objects."¹⁷ Rousseau not only recommends an experiential and affective education, and a strict empirical science of observation for his student, but also expresses reservations about the power of reason as such. The aim of his method, Rousseau claims, is to prevent the mind from inferring mysterious qualities either to the world or to itself. His critique of earlier philosophers is that each had imported artificial or historically

17. IV, 256.

contingent faculties to their explanation of the human mind, and granted to reason far too great an ability. Natural functions of the mind and natural processes of the world that should have been explained by the laws of physics, mechanics, and chemistry, had instead been attributed with mysterious conceptions like “substance,” “soul,” “instinct,” “final cause,” and “conscience.” The inference of mysterious causes had produced faulty educational proposals, oppressive religious and moral practices, and even political despotism.

Rousseau’s epistemological account questions granting an innate capacity to the mind for complex operations. The economy of explanation, he provides, is meant to forestall making any metaphysical assumptions. Thus, he indicates that the mind cannot gain knowledge beyond efficient causes and that its power is ratiocinative; that the mind cannot grasp what man’s nature is intended to be; that the senses must be trained to act on their proper objects; that there is no natural mechanism that coordinates the various sensations together; that the faculties become determinate capacities only through trial and error, repetition, and habituation; that sound reasoning can only be guaranteed by relying on the indubitability of the fact of impenetrability given by touch; that an appeal to logical relations is not sufficient to dispel illusions of perception; that coming to self-consciousness is not self-initiated or achieved by introspection but instead requires consciousness of the “not-self” (the resistance of external bodies); and that the mind is only focused by attention to needs.

There are two features of this account crucial for our purposes. The first of these is Rousseau’s reduction of reason to calculation or separating it from knowledge of the moral good for it leads him to insist that reason is no longer sufficient for guaranteeing morality. Rousseau suggests that reason usually will be employed to serve vicious ends. Reason supports mere self-interest and, in opposition to Hobbes’s informed judgment to the contrary, selfish calculation cannot be relied upon for moral conduct. Since men calculate from their own narrow interests, there will often be no basis for fulfilling obligations when these conflict with self-interest. Calculating reason provides no guarantee that a man will not break his obligations if he can appear to be keeping them, or ignore his obligations, hoping all others will sustain the practice. “The human race would have perished long ago,” Rousseau claims, “if its preservation had depended only on the reasoning of its members.”¹⁸ Thus, reason cannot provide an adequate incentive for moral conduct, and instead he turns to passion to provide motives for morality. His student will be shown the need for morality by the laws of pleasure and pain: “In vain does tranquil reason make us approve or criticize; it is only passion which makes us act.”¹⁹ Whereas the classical rationalists had assumed that knowledge was sufficient to ensure action, Rousseau suggests that the ancients had not been adequately aware of reason’s dependence on the passions.

This extension of the sensationalist epistemology to incorporate the functions

18. IV, 334.

19. IV, 453.

of the body with respect to feelings of pleasure and pain constitutes the second major point important for our purposes. By including the operations of the body, Rousseau opposed the view that the mind was a substance possessing an independent existence and sharply distinguished his own theory from Locke's. Locke had insisted that men do not have an experience of the causal connection between their sense impressions and feelings of pleasure and pain. Pleasure and pain could arise from sensation or reflection but do not need to accompany them. Rousseau's acceptance of Condillac's theory of attention directs the epistemological inquiry towards an analysis of the passions. "Reason alone is not active," Rousseau insists, in denying the independence of reason, "It sometimes restrains, it arouses rarely, and it has never done anything great."²⁰ Interest based on need motivates the mind to acquire knowledge. "Present interest, that is the greater mover, the only one which leads surely and far."²¹ For Rousseau, the fundamental activity of the mind resides not in itself but in psychological forces. Desire and aversion provide the motions required to activate the mind. The laws governing pleasure and pain direct the mechanism of understanding:

. . . it is by their activity that our reason is perfected; we seek to know only because we desire to have pleasure; and it is impossible to conceive why one who had neither desires nor fears would go to the trouble of reasoning.²²

Reason is relegated in Rousseau's thought to the role of servant, administering to men's desires. Its role in men's affairs is one of calculation and counsel as to the means of fulfilling the ends proposed by the passions rather than imperative command and sovereignty. Reason cannot correct passions because it naturally serves them. Rousseau writes, "it is only passions which make us act."²³ The rationalists had not realized the extent to which the mind depended on the passions. When Rousseau speaks of an "active mind" he means one animated by passion, rather than one that is spontaneous and creative.

This view constitutes a clear rejection of the classical rationalist's view that reason is man's essential attribute and that reflection upon its own states is the mark of the fulfillment of man's nature. This active part of the soul was, for Plato and Aristotle, capable of regulating man, determining his proper end, and being a sufficient motive for action. Rousseau, by contrast, denies that reason completes the individual or determines the form of his happiness. Reason is but the scout and spy of the passions. Man's happiness is not explicable from the perspective of the philosopher but, as we shall see, from that of the lover: ". . . the estimation of happiness is less the concern of reason than of sentiment."²⁴ Without the cooperation of the passions, sensibility, and imagination, reason is feeble. This epistemological account makes necessary a search for the causes of the

20. IV, 645.

21. IV, 358.

22. IV, 481.

23. IV, 453.

24. IV, 503.

mind's activities. The connection between his epistemology and theory of virtue is found in his psychological analysis. The regulation of a man's mind by a management of his passions gives rise to order in a man's moral world. The passions will be adequately regulated not by their education through reason but by relying on a method that capitalizes on their conflict.

Rousseau's analysis of the passions begins with an investigation of fundamental passions, which in turn generate all the others. If the nature of man can be scientifically determined and its underlying causes controlled, man can self-consciously manage his life. Rousseau's genetic analysis is meant to expose the supposed natural faculties and sentiments as artificial and products of society:

But would it be reasoning well to conclude from the fact that it is in man's nature to have passions, that all the passions that we feel in ourselves and see in others are natural? Their source is natural; it is true. But countless alien streams have swollen it. It is a great river which constantly grows and in which one could hardly find a few drops of its first waters.²⁵

Nonetheless, the source can be discovered and it is necessary to do so if a man's nature is to be consciously formed and the confusions of previous demands on human nature are to be avoided. The behavioral expression of that first point is the same passion as it was for Hobbes: "The first law of nature is the care of preserving oneself."²⁶ *Amour de soi*, self-love, governs all human conduct:

Our first duties are to ourselves, our primary sentiments are centered on ourselves, all our natural movements relate in the first instance to our preservation and our well-being.²⁷

The interplay of the mind and the body for the well-being of the individual is exemplified in the emergence of self-love. *Amour de soi* emerges from a more fundamental cause: the capacity for sensation. A man prefers some sensations over others because they are accompanied by pleasure or absence of pain. Desire for a specific object that provides pleasure transforms gradually into the sentiment of love, and aversion to other objects issues eventually in the sentiment of hatred. Love of pleasure and hatred of pain produce the sensibility that governs the passion of self-love: "The source of all the passions is sensibility; imagination determines their bent."²⁸

Rousseau finds what is essential to human nature in the basic motives and concerns of most men, based on the fundamental principle of self-love. It is a passion that supports the premise of the equality of all men, and thus renders political hierarchy and inequality invalid. *Amour de soi* is a passion that preserves a man and adapts according to his changing needs and desires. The decisive fea-

25. IV, 491.

26. IV, 467.

27. IV, 329.

28. IV, 492, 501.

ture of this passion is that it is absolute, focusing a man's attention solely on his own concerns, needs, and powers. This passion of self-love is healthy, Rousseau advances, because it generates self-care, self-esteem, and also many of the "gentle and affectionate passions."²⁹ Rousseau calls it an "absolute sentiment" because it is not motivated by other's opinions, nor standards drawn from others, nor does it feed at the expense of others. This passion keeps man within nature for it is not harmful to him nor would it cause him to act against his first passion of self-preservation. It is only with the advent of "alien causes" that modifications are introduced into man's nature which bring about a condition where "man finds himself outside of nature and sets himself in contradiction with himself."³⁰ Thus, *amour de soi* is the passion closest to nature and ensures a mildness of human existence which men would never know again.

Rousseau's rhetoric concerning its gentleness needs to be somewhat tempered by his subsequent observation that primitive men simply have no grounds to harm one another. The creature, too stupid to judge others or relate himself to them, is also incapable of revenge or hatred. His desires limited to what he needs to preserve himself, and his imagination largely inactive, he is gentle not so much from good will as through indifference to others. Moreover, Rousseau makes clear that when this man's natural gentleness comes in conflict with his need for self-preservation, he will use force or violence. Nonetheless, these would be acts without lingering resentment, or concern for such imaginary goods as honor, glory, or recognition. They would be simple spontaneous acts of self-preservation.

The gentleness of which Rousseau speaks is more precisely the absence of malicious violence. Rousseau's account of the ideal character of this primitive age is thus dramatic rather than precise since a creature oblivious to the presence of others would also lack most of the distinctive human characteristics. Moreover, it is ambiguous in Rousseau's account just how long the moment actually lasted in which men acted only upon *amour de soi*. The presence of another where that presence involved a recognition of the other as an "other" meant an end to a man's primitive preoccupation with himself.

At this point in man's development a second passion emerges that generates nearly all of the others. This passion is another form of self-love, but once activated, plays the decisive role of determining the direction of the original passion. Rhetorically, Rousseau describes this second form of self-love as the relative passion responsible for all the misery that is present in social life:

Amour-propre and *amour de soi*, two passions very different in their nature and their effects, must not be confused. *Amour de soi* is a natural sentiment which inclines every animal to watch over its own preservation and which, directed in many by reason and modified by pity, produces humanity and virtue. *Amour-propre* is only a relative senti-

29. IV, 493.

30. IV, 491.

ment, artificial and born in society, which inclines every individual to have a greater esteem for himself than for anyone else, inspires in men all the harm they do to one another and is the true source of honor.³¹

Rousseau goes on to add that *amour-propre* could not have existed in the state of nature for it is based on comparisons that natural, savage man was incapable of making.

Most commentators have taken this initial account as Rousseau's final word regarding the passion of *amour-propre*. Thus Rousseau has been taken to mean that *amour de soi* is healthy and can under certain conditions lead to praiseworthy conduct, while *amour-propre* is disruptive and is responsible for the disorder of men's lives. *Amour de soi* is seen as natural, therefore good, while *amour-propre* is seen as unnatural and therefore bad. This simple account can not, however, withstand a careful examination of the texts nor does it solve the problem we examined above. How can the original state of nature or the original endowment to man provide a standard for evaluating contemporary life if man is an historical animal and his earlier stages are irrecoverable? If what is good were only the natural, and if the natural was historically contingent and irrecoverable, then men could at best resign themselves or be nostalgic. However, Rousseau's social teaching is intended to go beyond traditional pessimism; in the spirit of Enlightenment optimism, he has a method to impart for managing the passion of *amour-propre*. Throughout the *Émile* Rousseau judiciously trains and manipulates this passion, seeing in it a more constructive possibility. Moreover, as I shall argue, he does not conceive of *amour-propre* as unnatural, although it may not have been part of the original endowment.

Although *amour-propre* may not have been operative originally in primitive man, it appears from Rousseau's account that it emerged quite suddenly and naturally from unified self-love and thus was a natural modification of human nature. There are two major indications that Rousseau includes *amour-propre* in his account of the natural.

First, after his initial account of the two passions and a lengthy description of the pathology of *amour-propre*, Rousseau qualifies his original statement by claiming that *amour-propre* is responsible for "what is best and worst among men, our virtues and our vices, our sciences and our errors, our conquerors and our philosophers."³² Thus, *amour-propre* cannot simply be the cause of the deterioration of men's lives. Rousseau recognizes that this passion unleashes and multiplies many of the worst passions, but is also creates others which, when properly controlled, constitute the most distinctive human sentiments.

Second, the fact that men became involved in a social context means that they necessarily are relative creatures. The mere observation of another as an "other" gave rise to comparison. If there was a time when *amour-propre* was not natural,

31. IV, 219.

32. III, 189.

it must have been a very brief duration. Indeed, Rousseau acknowledges at the end of his discourse that man's original nature has become naturally transformed. He now lists the faculties of the soul as reason, imagination, memory, and adds *amour-propre*. He makes no claim that these are somehow unnatural, even though as a comparison with the beginning of his account shows, these faculties were not part of man's original endowment.

In the *Émile*, the natural character of *amour-propre* is more adequately demonstrated. Indeed, as I propose to demonstrate, in this pedagogical treatise he enlists *amour-propre* in the service of refining his student, employing that passion to create the distinctly human attributes. There are numerous explicit passages that can be marshalled forth to support this reading. First, at the end of Book III, Rousseau writes quite unequivocally that *amour-propre* is natural: “*amour-propre*, the first and most natural of all the passions.”³³ This perhaps surprising statement can be explained by another claim made elsewhere in the *Émile*, reminding the reader again that man's nature is historical: “One must not confound what is natural in the savage state with what is natural in the civil state.”³⁴ Nonetheless, although *amour-propre* may be natural, and it remains to be seen what Rousseau now means by the “natural,” this does not mean that it is necessarily unqualifiedly good. Indeed, Rousseau makes perfectly clear that *amour-propre* is the passion responsible for the harmful passions with which men have been inflicted. How can *amour-propre* be both good and harmful?

Although *amour-propre* issues in many of the irascible sentiments that arise when men compare themselves to others, Rousseau's analysis suggests that it only generates them. Thus, the passion is not characteristically vanity, envy, rancour, spite, or viciousness but is, instead, the generating cause of them. In the *Second Discourse* Rousseau blurs the process of *amour-propre*'s development and appears to suggest that it is simply any of these corrupt passions. In the *Émile*, however, his judicious manipulation of *amour-propre* suggests that it can be molded by imagination and channelled for good purposes. Thus, it appears to be malleable and subject to education.

The problem of *amour-propre* comes about because, unlike other passions, it has no particular object to which it is naturally directed:

The sole passion natural to man is *amour de soi*, or *amour-propre* taken in an extended sense. This *amour-propre* in itself or relative to us is good and useful; and since it has no necessary relation to others, it is in this respect naturally neutral. It becomes good or bad only by the application made of it and the relations given to it.³⁵

When applied to the right objects, *amour-propre* need not issue in those relations that bring misery to the human soul.

What precisely is *amour-propre*? The careful dissection in the *Émile* reveals

33. IV, 488.

34. IV, 764.

35. IV, 322.

that it is composed of four stages: (a) comparison, (b) introduction of a standard of merit, (c) calculation of relative status, and (d) the consequent perception of freedom or dependence. The decisive characteristic of the passion which distinguishes it from *amour de soi* is that whereas the latter was a simple and absolute sentiment of self-preoccupation, *amour-propre* involves an affirmation of the self and is an expression of the desire for approbation. It is a psychological process introducing to the mind an idea of relative worth. It is a relative passion because it makes man an object of study, either in the eyes of others or, as we shall discover shortly, in a man's recognition of his own identity. *Amour-propre* is the first passion that takes a man outside of himself and in this, it creates all the human passions and sentiments which arise from the plurality of men.

Rousseau dwells predominantly on the ills fostered by *amour-propre*. These ills arise because *amour-propre* is responsible for making social men depend upon one another for their own esteem and they are transformed from absolute to relative creatures. Their passions are corrupted by the comparisons they make with others. Men begin to esteem themselves not so much for their own actual abilities and accomplishments but for what these represent in relation to other's situations. The standard by which they determine their own merit is drawn from outside of themselves. Moreover, from their initial attempt to elicit recognition from others and even to tyrannize others, evolves a dependency and enslavement to the whims, opinions, and will of others. Men are then no longer self-sufficient or self-motivating, and their real powers atrophy for they are intent solely on embellishing the imaginary, displayed self. Opinion begins to rule men's hearts and men become subjected to needs beyond their simple and natural preservation and are governed by imaginary pains and pleasures. It is a subjection more disabling than political servitude because it is an enslavement of the human soul. Superfluous wants produce factitious ills, and the man subject to them finds that he has lost control over his life.

This pathology of *amour-propre* occupies much of Rousseau's writings. At the point of its development, *amour-propre* has become the divisive passion that accounts for all men's misery. When men compare themselves to others, they return to themselves either satisfied or unhappy. They wish to be esteemed, and they believe that their happiness is very much the product of how they stand in relation to others. Appearance then becomes the primary purpose of human striving as men seek glory, honour, and precedence over others. Here *amour-propre* animates ambition, greed, revenge, pride, hatred, malice and distrust; life becomes a race whose only garland is being foremost. Men relentlessly seek to obtain a worth in the eyes of others. They will allow no more superiority over themselves. This is combined with a constant apprehension that others might strive to attain it. From this emerges a desire to gain superiority over others by any means.

Now men are exactly as Hobbes had described them: predatory competitors who assert their wills and want others to value their superiority at the same rate as they set upon it themselves. Moreover, spying out the motives of others, a

man sees others acting with the same intentions. Hatred and misery are produced when a man observes *amour-propre* in others because it opposes and limits his own. This is particularly the case when a man sees another enjoying pleasures, achieving honor or glory, or gaining any position of superiority. *Amour-propre* in this form is a factor separating men; the desire to be foremost makes rivals of artists, statesmen, heroes, and philosophers. Nothing is more pleasing to a man than himself and since he values only what pleases him, he constantly makes unjust comparisons, partial to only his own particular case.

Amour-propre is also responsible for the political hierarchies formerly justified by the classical accounts of the soul. The ethic of honor is exposed in Rousseau's account to be a corrupt form of *amour-propre*. Glory and honor, he writes, are "illusions of the passions."³⁶ The magnanimity expressed by the virtuous man in classical thought is, as it was for Hobbes, only a disguise of vanity; courage is simply an expression of self-love and does not represent a more noble, or elevated, condition of mankind. Men's pride is misplaced, for it depends on the imaginary existence of a natural, hierarchical order and the privileged position of man in that order. The morality of honor, pride, and magnanimity are corruptions that have caused discord, enmity, and oppression.

Rousseau's solution to human ills is not to devise social institutions to alleviate these distortions of the human soul. Rousseau's account is innovative because he employs the notion of man's perfectibility to solve the problem of *amour-propre*. Rousseau denies that the corruption of *amour-propre* need be its natural development. Whereas Hobbes had seen the vicious passions as irreducible and natural forms of self-love, Rousseau suggests that they are derivative and secondary transformations of the underlying source, *amour-propre*.

The picture of the social development of *amour-propre* that Rousseau paints ends with certain qualifications:

Extend these ideas and you will see where our *amour-propre* gets the form we believe natural to it and how *amour de soi*, ceasing to be an absolute sentiment, becomes pride in great souls, vanity in small ones, and feeds itself constantly in all at the expense of their neighbors.³⁷

This passage suggests that *amour-propre* does not naturally feed at the expense of others nor does it naturally assume the forms it has taken on in social life. The corrupt forms of *amour-propre* can instead, Rousseau appears to propose, be forestalled by a proper nurture of that dominant passion.

Subsequently he reveals that it can be used for good ends. "*Amour-propre* is a useful but dangerous instrument."³⁸ The passion is morally indifferent, becoming advantageous or disruptive on the basis of the object toward which it is directed. It need not produce an acceptance of another's opinions and the conse-

36. IV, 534.

37. IV, 494.

38. IV, 536.

quent dependency. Judiciously used, the comparisons it makes can be used for other, more advantageous tasks.³⁹ Rousseau reveals that the sorts of comparisons made determine whether the modifications of *amour-propre* are natural or not:

. . . as soon as *amour-propre* has developed, the relative *I* is constantly in play and the young man never observes others without returning to himself and comparing himself with them. The issue, then, is to know in what rank among his fellows he will put himself after having examined them.⁴⁰

The issue thus is not whether *Émile* will exercise his *amour-propre* but whether he will be free or dependent on the basis of these comparisons and whether he will judge on his own standards or another's once he has made the comparison.

We now can suggest a more satisfactory account of Rousseau's revised criterion for distinguishing the natural from the artificial. *Amour-propre* generates comparisons of which the majority lead to a man's enslavement. Here his absolute sentiment of preoccupation is eroded and his happiness becomes more intangible or even lost because it depends on others. Enslaved to others he can no longer assure himself of his own contentedness. If he were to make judgments that did not have this effect while at the same time developing a more intense and lasting happiness, this would indicate a positive development in his character. The judgments and resulting passions that produce freedom thus conform to nature because they recapture in part his original state and make him happy and self-sufficient; those which issue in dependency are factitious.

It is up to the tutor to determine whether *amour-propre* will provide the soul with generous or irascible passions. Rousseau makes clear that it should be used to construct healthy sentiments and this will depend decisively upon the sorts of judgments made:

. . . the first sentiment aroused in him by this comparison is the desire to be in the first position. This is the point where *amour de soi* turns into *amour-propre* and where begin to arise all the passions which depend on this one. But to decide whether among these passions the dominant ones in his character will be humane or gentle or cruel and malignant, whether they will be passions of beneficence and commiseration or of envy and covetousness, we must know what position he will feel he has among men . . .⁴¹

The comparisons *Émile* makes are crucial in determining the state of health of his passions. It is imperative that *Émile* judge prudently and surely. Employing the

39. Locke had, on the one hand, recognized the passion *amour-propre* as "the principal spring and direction from which the actions of men take their rise" and attributes to it all the significance Rousseau does. Yet, he argues for reasoning with children for "they love to be treated as rational creatures" and reason "should be . . . the greatest instrument to turn them by" (Section 81, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*). Rousseau is decidedly more consistent, recognizing that since *amour-propre* is the most powerful passion, it is the passion by which the lessons of reason must be developed.

40. IV, 534.

41. IV, 523.

theory of countervailing passions, and in the absence of an autonomous and creative reason to guarantee prudence, Rousseau enlists another passion to achieve the moderation of *amour-propre*. This passion is to ensure the soundness of Émile's judgment with respect to the comparisons he makes, and create a social virtue.

Whereas it is *amour-propre* which causes men to stray from sound deliberation, it is fear which ensures that men engage and develop their prudence. *Amour-propre* is the passion that disguises from men the reality of their existence, obscuring the real limitations of life. From the imaginary world of power, precedence, and vain hopes, men must be awakened by the brute resistance of the real world. Just as Hobbes had conceived his political project as awakening men from their complacency, Rousseau seeks to remind forgetful men of just how much they have to fear. Fear counsels well, and Rousseau follows a tradition of modern thinkers who recognized that fear is a stable and certain passion on which to ground an effective morality.

Rousseau adopts part of Hobbes's analysis of fear as the basis of his own. There are two features in particular which are important for our purpose. First, Hobbes identifies fear as the enduring basis of sound reasoning about the relations among men. Stressing and intensifying the fear of the consequences of the state of nature and what men would experience at the hands of other self-seeking men, in the absence of sovereign power, Hobbes magnifies the concern for security and derives from it the motive for abiding by the law. Prudent calculating men who fear much and who can reckon the means of avoiding death discover the meaning of justice. For Hobbes, fear is to be used for a specific political task, namely to guarantee obedience to the law. His state of nature doctrine reveals the insubstantiality of imaginary aspirations (self-sufficiency and unenlightened self-interest, love of honor and vanity, and religious obligations not commanded by the sovereign) that raise hopes of avoiding the fundamental and permanent vulnerability of men. Death is a natural and powerful sanction for injustice and is thus used by Hobbes to restore men to right reasoning. Fear of violent death dissolves the appearance of the pleasures to be obtained from the imaginary goods men pursue and makes them acutely aware of the pains they can avoid. Thus sound reasoning about obligation emerges not from consideration of the great and noble ends men may achieve, for these are a product of vanity, but from what is most powerful and real in men's lives. Fearfulness of death rather than agreeableness of life keeps men on the straight and narrow road to justice. Fear dispels vanity and enlightens men to the true precariousness of their condition.

The second feature of Hobbes's account has to do with the precise description of the fundamental fear. He describes it as not simply fear of death but fear of *violent* death. For Hobbes, men are relative creatures; their happiness is *notable* felicity, their satisfaction is *recognized* superiority, and their fear is that of *dishonor*. Their appetites or aversions are not merely sensual but compounded with

the praise or blame of others. Fear is the perception of not being capable of maintaining precedence. For Hobbes, fear is not simply that of being denied the next pleasure but of losing superiority: “. . . continually to be out-gone is misery, continually to out-go the next before is felicity. And to forsake the course is to die.”⁴² Whereas animals fear anything that produces displeasure, men’s fear arises from a consideration of others in the race.

The worry of being denied felicity or notable success prefigures the ultimate fear—death. The fear is of *violent* death because the emphasis is on losing stature at the hands of and in the eyes of others. Aversion from shameful death is the main part of fear. The man who desires honor more than he fears dishonor is not acting prudently. The vanity associated with imagining future pleasures feeds at the expense of others. Only fear can purge this excess of expectation and thereby make men prudent. In the absence of a regulating reason, the passion of fear of violent death must generate a moderation of desire and dispel the vanity associated with pleasures.

For Rousseau too, as we have seen, vanity or *amour-propre* is the passion to be combatted. As for Hobbes, fear is the tool he uses; not a lofty virtue or an independent reason but a solid passion serves to moderate or mute the vicious passions of *amour-propre* and ensure that a man acts prudently. However, Rousseau’s notion of fear is more comprehensive than that of Hobbes. Émile is made prudent not merely by the fear of violent death. In fact, Rousseau applies his general critique of Hobbes particularly to his analysis of fear. Hobbes had imported the passions of social men into his understanding of natural men. His view of the fear of violent death was artificially contrived for it made necessary the transition to civil life. Rousseau accuses Hobbes of so restricting the fear of death that an autocratic society becomes a logical necessity as a solution to what would otherwise be terror. Hobbes was contradictory, Rousseau claims, for although he described man as naturally apolitical, individualistic, and independent, he also described the natural condition as one where the passions displayed in it could only be understood by reference to social conditions.

Thus Émile’s fear is not as narrowly focussed. His fears are not meant to be historically or socially contingent but rather to relate to the natural facts of life. His is a more comprehensive and consistent fear that intrudes to every facet of his life, even in the absence of spectators. Thus Rousseau’s concern is not mere allegiance to a sovereign and a guarantee that a citizen would keep his obligations, but a more sustaining bond between men. Hobbes had suggested that fear gives rise to the narrow calculation of self-interest. Rousseau takes this one step further: Émile’s fearfulness will be channelled to provide for a social virtue that is a more reliable and socially binding force in men’s coexistence. Fear becomes an even more creative and positive passion in Rousseau’s account, for he will combine it with *amour-propre* to create a virtue. Out of fearfulness for himself,

42. Thomas Hobbes, *Elements of the Law*, I.ix.21.

and exposed to the common lot of men, *Émile* will extend his care for himself to others, at the same time satisfying his relative regard for himself. Whereas Hobbes's fear drives men into the private calculation of their interests, Rousseau's fear extends men into the commonality of their social existence. Before we turn to this manipulation of the passions, let us step back and observe how *Émile*'s fear is fabricated.

Throughout his education *Émile* regularly is reminded of his vulnerability, the precariousness of human life, and his susceptibility to pain and suffering: "the more he gets used to suffering . . . the more the sting of strangeness is taken from him."⁴³ He is to be made conscious of the variability and flux of life, made vulnerable to the countless accidents which prevail in men's lives, and accustomed to an increasing severity in feeling the harshness of man's lot. A fearfulness connected to man's corporal condition is to be a major part of *Émile*'s perception of existence. The frontispiece to this stage of his education depicts Achilles being dipped into the river Styx. *Émile* too is to be made invulnerable and this is to be achieved by impressing his precariousness upon him. However, rather than intending to produce courage as the virtue, *Émile* is to be brought to a sense of fear and the ability to be adaptable: "one must show him the sad lives of man's love, one must make him fear it."⁴⁴

The training of this virtue is initially wholly somatic. The hardy constitution of the body prepares a mind that will not be overwhelmed by alteration. Rousseau claims that at an early age a "primitive vigor" must be inculcated so as to prevent that "importunate sensitivity" that cannot withstand the shock of change. The child's "fibres" are still soft and flexible and so can be prepared for later. A future state of mind appears as an effect of the interaction between external stimulus and the constitution of the body. What begins as a "salutary precaution for making the texture of the fibres more flexible and able to adapt . . ." becomes a model for future mental and moral flexibility.⁴⁵ Becoming accustomed to increasing burdens of physical severity prepares *Émile*'s sensibility for future moral severity.

There are two prominent examples of the tutor contriving *Émile*'s lessons so as to harden his soul by fear. At one point the tutor reveals that vices are really somatic diseases. *Émile* thus learns to fear too excessive and felicitous an exuberance by the aversion he has to being bedridden and treated as ill. He moderates himself through fear of suffering. Much later, but continuing this same psychological principle, Rousseau deadens the rampant excursions of *Émile*'s imagination by exposing him to hunting and to death. *Émile*'s nascent sexual passion is suppressed by a "ferocious passion" and he is "accustomed to blood, to cruelty" so as to prevent a premature softening of the soul. Rousseau writes, "it is enough for me that it serves to suspend a more dangerous passion" in de-

43. IV, 378.

44. IV, 507.

45. IV, 278.

fense of such sanguinary preoccupations.⁴⁶ Inclination is curbed through exposure to the mortal condition of all animate life; the “drunkenness of passion” is muted by the fear of death and the sense of suffering. Thus not reason but fear is the instrument used to ensure moderation. Fearfulness brings him to reasonableness for consciousness of the precariousness of human life particularly mutes the effects of vanity and imaginary hopes.

That it is for this purpose—of forestalling an imaginary sense of superiority—that Rousseau awakens Émile’s fearfulness is made clear somewhat later: “Let his haughty head at an early age feel the harsh yoke that nature imposes on man, the heavy yoke of necessity under which every finite being must bend.”⁴⁷ Rousseau thus indicates his intention to prevent perceptions of reality which are products of *amour-propre*. The capriciousness and irregularity of most men’s experiences lead to distortions of their understanding. Men exaggerate their own powers or claim too high a station for themselves. Fear returns men to their mortal condition; as a reliable counselor, it prevents men from such errors that arise from overestimating their own powers.

This limited, and hence sound, self-consciousness is the basis of man’s perception of his place in the world. His is not the proud bearing of the magnanimous man who knows his privileged place, nor the bold confidence of the man who stands above nature, creating meaning solely for himself and determining his own destiny. The stance in defiance of nature leads to the domineering hubris of the man who sees himself the master of the universe. Rousseau’s fearing man lives neither in respect and awe of nature’s beneficence and thus led naturally to contemplate on eternity, nor does he dominate over nature and thus reflect on his freedom. Rousseau’s man does not transcend his particular, miserable existence, nor withdraw in abject self-pity. Rather, he extends his sentiments to other suffering, fearing men and thus forms a social bond with them.

Fearfulness and his perception of precariousness ensure that Émile is conscious of his real nature as a suffering being. He is to perceive himself as forever subject to all the ills under which men suffer and liable to fall to a less fortunate station. The purpose of this is to ensure that Émile is adaptable to changing circumstances so that when fortune obliges him to seek another station or home, he can do so without any loss of happiness. But the emphasis on fearfulness has a more important function, revealing how much more ambitious Rousseau’s intentions were than Hobbes. The more comprehensive fear is used for a more comprehensive task.

Since man’s constitution is decisively governed by only two principles—*amour-propre* and fear—it is from these alone that the human soul must be regulated. Fear can moderate *amour-propre* because the comparisons *amour-propre* makes on behalf of fear can forestall the emergence of the harmful passions. When *amour-propre* is engaged in imagining the pleasures of others, it

46. IV, 645.

47. IV, 320.

produces envy, regret, jealousy, covetousness, and vanity. Moreover, it makes a man unhappy because he does not command these same pleasures. Moreover, men observing others' enjoyment makes them want to enjoy the same pleasures, thereby making them dependent upon others.

A very different sentiment emerges when *amour-propre* is governed by fear. Then compassion can develop from imagining the pains of others. The motive for beneficence rests in man's natural awareness of and aversion to pain and arises from the ills others experience that men in turn fear for themselves. Fear can be used to produce a social virtue. By extending aid to others, a man succors his own fear for himself. Moreover, his *amour-propre* is gratified because he realizes that the other depends upon him. Observing other suffering men and comparing himself to them, a man feels the pleasure of not suffering as they do and his *amour-propre* is gratified in his feeling useful. It is relative to himself that a man shows pity to others. If he feels susceptible to pain, he will not glory in his superiority. Pity requires the development of *amour-propre* but then is able to forestall vanity and the irascible passions if a man feels equally vulnerable. "It is man's weakness which makes him sociable," Rousseau writes, and "it is our common miseries which turn our hearts to humanity."⁴⁸ Vulnerability and fear provide the basis by which men's passions can be enlisted in the construction of social relations. A sense of the precariousness of life and imagining the pains of others creates a bond of respect and mutual forbearance. The ethos of honor and glory, on the other hand—which has been revealed to be the product of *amour-propre*—creates only enmity and discord. Imagining the pleasures of other men inspires envy and "*amour-propre* suffers too in making us feel that this man has no need of us."⁴⁹ Thus in the judicious use of fear and *amour-propre* to elicit compassion. Rousseau finds a solution to the problem of man's nature.

Although this dampening of pride and vanity by fear has produced a social virtue, the complete satisfaction of *amour-propre* has not been achieved. Therefore, thus far, the human constitution is on the right path although its condition is unstable. Rousseau employs another route to ensure that *amour-propre* is satisfied in a healthy manner. This route involves his students' education to moral virtue.

For Rousseau, as we have seen, the moderation of desire cannot occur by reason and so a channeling of the passions will be required to produce self-restraint. He sees human nature as more malleable than the classical and modern rationalists had believed and so suggests that by the agency of imagination those desires can be directed to others objects thereby moderating the passions.

The problem of *amour-propre* is that it has no object to which it is naturally directed. Because there is no autonomous reason and because all the other passions are a product of *amour-propre*, the solution to the problem must be gener-

48. IV, 503.

49. IV, 503. I am indebted to Orwin. *op. cit. supra*, for this analysis of compassion.

ated from within the passion itself. *Amour-propre* must generate passions that in turn moderate their own source. The regulation of its activity is possible only by its own interest, true or imaginary. Love is the agent that achieves this:

On this passion [love] perhaps the only one he will feel intensely in his whole life, depends the final form his character is going to take. Once fixed by a durable passion, his way of thinking, his sentiments, and his tastes are going to acquire a consistency which will no longer permit them to deteriorate.⁵⁰

Rousseau seeks to find in the attachment of one sex to the other the basis of the moral experience. Love gives Émile the motive that ensures his decency, health, sound judgment, and virtue. Through love the human machine is moralized:

We have made an active and thinking being. It remains for us, in order to complete the man, only to make him a loving and feeling being—that is to say, to perfect reason by sentiment.⁵¹

Love, and not contemplation, is “the supreme happiness of life.”⁵² Émile’s virtuous conduct is to be motivated by the illusions of love and is art’s taming of man’s appetites: “Far from arising from nature, love is the rule and bridle of nature’s inclinations.”⁵³ Even more interestingly it especially serves to moderate *amour-propre*.

The most intensely pleasureable inclination of *amour-propre* because it is connected to sensuality is the desire to be loved. To be admired, loved, and needed is the most gratifying pleasure to *amour-propre* and it can be more easily and harmlessly satisfied than any other desire for recognition. Moreover the satisfaction of *amour-propre* in the loving relationship gives rise to the regulation of desire for the sake of assuring and being worthy of that love. This occurs in the skillful employment of *amour-propre* and imagination. The tutor conspires that Émile love an imagined ideal of the beloved with which he can make judicious perceptions about social relations and sound moral valuations:

It is unimportant whether the object I depict for him is imaginary; it suffices that it make him disgusted with those that could tempt him; it suffices that he everywhere find comparisons which make him prefer his chimera to the real objects that strike his eye . . . By providing the imaginary object, I am the master of comparisons and I easily prevent my young man from having illusions about real objects.⁵⁴

Worth is not determined by an objective criterion inferred from a natural order in the soul. The ideal is imaginary and based on what is advantageous to the social preservation of the individual. Thus, not reasoned judgment about the relations of men, but the imagined ideal becomes the basis of Émile’s wisdom. Only

50. IV, 778.

51. IV, 481.

52. IV, 654.

53. IV, 494.

54. IV, 656.

if *amour-propre*, the desire to be foremost, can be channeled toward noble ideals inspired by imagination, can man's relative regard for himself be fully satisfied.

Rousseau's account regains some of the intensity of the moral experience described by the classics, but without the conflict between appetite and duty it required. *Émile* does not calculate his moral duties in the manner of the Hobbesian bourgeois, nor does he feel torn between inclination and imposed obedience in a morality of submission, in the manner of the Christian. There is no conflict in *Émile*'s soul between desire and duty, and thus the project of keeping his soul in unity is achieved. The resolution is different from that in Eden because there is no dread, shame, temptation, or motive for deception. Moreover, sexual desire is made legitimate and is seen as the natural basis for morality. Immediate desire for fulfillment, or immoderation, is quelled by an act of will that stems from the imaginary ideal a man wishes to attain. Man lives up to his own ideal, regulating his desires by commitment to a law he has set for himself. He will not be torn between his desire and others' expectations, but instead will be motivated by the possibility of attaining the greatest happiness. His ideal is a rule that is a natural modification of his desires. "Let your condition limit your desires," Rousseau writes in depicting the regulation of desire by the imaginary ideal and in "showing him the necessity for exercising strength of soul."⁵⁵ Moral regulation is an extension of the natural necessity under which man falls; *Émile* must "extend the law of necessity to moral things."⁵⁶ The moral ideal may not have been in the minds of man in the state of nature but it represents the natural modification of the original promptings, advances his freedom, and is advantageous for the preservation of the being. Love gives man "new reasons to be himself."⁵⁷ Here man becomes conscious of his ability to be good, for he can regulate his inclinations and be virtuous. Previously he had been good without virtue:

But he would have had nothing to combat in order to follow his inclinations and thus he would have been good without merit; he would not have been virtuous and now he knows how to be so in spite of his passions. The mere appearance of order brings him to order and to love it.⁵⁸

The fulfilled desire that woman offers and the ideal in which she partakes serve to create men's moral strength. In arousing desire, woman encourages men's strength and enlists *amour-propre* in a man's relative regard for himself: "The surest art for animating the 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."⁵⁹ The achievement of the ideal satisfies *amour-propre*: "He has that amiable delicacy which flatters and feeds *amour-propre*

55. IV, 820.

56. *Ibid.*

57. IV, 801.

58. IV, 858.

59. IV, 694.

with the good witness of oneself.”⁶⁰ The ideal sets in motion a self-approbation that deeply satisfies *amour-propre*.

The operative principle in leading men to virtue is this passion. Since reason is inactive and incapable of restraining the appetites, a dominant passion must replace them. *Amour-propre* issues in acts of virtue because virtue is merely a special case of that passion. Men’s desire to be foremost and their need for approbation need not feed at the expense of others nor rely on their recognition. Given its malleability, the need for approbation can be internalized so that the standard of merit by which a man assesses himself comes from within. The ideals inspired by imagination act to moderate the passions. Virtuous conduct emerges from the love of self-approbation. Rousseau uses *amour-propre* to instill in his student a concern for self-scrutiny: “I see no problem in his being his own competitor . . . he will want to outdo himself.”⁶¹ Virtue is flattering to *amour-propre* because self-regulation brings on the self-approval of dignity and honor. Such a man’s sense of honor is not related to others’ opinions but to the opinion that a man entertains of himself. It is a virtue more respectable than simple regard for what others think; it is a self-regard, a sublime selfishness, that can serve to moderate a man’s inclinations. The self-regulating man will not do some things that will debase him in his own view of himself. What is honorable is what he as a judge of himself would choose. A man’s *amour-propre* likes to think of his perfections and passionately seeks what flatters it. Men thinking themselves worthy of performing virtuous acts and being loved become more virtuous. Virtue is attractive when it flatters *amour-propre* and it does so because of the pleasure of self-approval. *Amour-propre* directed toward virtuous deeds receives moral qualification and a determinate form. Herein lies the solution to the problem of *amour-propre*.

Herein also lies Rousseau’s solution to the problem of the tyrannical will, that most corrupted form of *amour-propre*. Plato’s response in the *Republic* was to enlist that will, which he sees as a natural modification of spiritedness, in the fame and glory of founding a new republic in speech. Rousseau, who sees that will as unnatural, subverts it to sublime selfishness by directing it toward the privacy of domestic life. The love of private intimacies binds pleasure and justice together. A man’s love of himself is the strongest motive to ensure that he will act morally. Not the noble perfection of the soul, but the self-regulation of the love-smitten man becomes the new basis for virtue. Thus, virtue becomes love’s labor regained. Man is not required to transcend his sensual nature in becoming moral and the management of the passions becomes the chief means to produce moral conduct. Rousseau employs the natural passions to create a moral being: “. . . it is always from nature itself that the proper instruments to regulate nature must be drawn.”⁶² This means too, however, that the classical register of virtues

60. IV, 806.

61. IV, 454.

62. IV, 654.

is substantially altered. The classical list and order—wisdom, justice, courage, and moderation—represented the regulation of distinct and ordered parts of the soul. For Rousseau this account is no longer meaningful because man's corporal existence of passions limits his moral possibilities. His energies can be channeled by fear and sublimated by *amour-propre* and imagination but they take on the form in the homely virtues of domesticity. Love and intimacy produce all the virtues a man needs: decency, fidelity, love of family, humanity, a sense of hygiene, modesty, and sensitivity.

To conclude, Rousseau's psychology of fear and *amour-propre* is based on the assumption that the skillful manipulation of fundamental appetites creates a moral world because these are the main determinants of human conduct. The regulation of the nature of man is essentially similar to the self-regulation of the universe. The principle of the physical world is force; matter submits to the laws of motion. After initial chaos and many "accidents" arising from "fortuitous causes," the particles arrange themselves in that ordered universe that now appears before men's eyes. Occasionally, the order is disrupted by flux in the physical world, like the Lisbon earthquake. By analogy, the principle of the human soul is physical sensibility and this active principle submits to the laws of pleasure and pain. There is initial confusion and many errors but eventually the perceptions, passions, and sentiments are ordered and control of man's happiness becomes a matter of self-conscious direction. Men's passions are their whole nature as there is no natural, independent reason, nor a natural tendency of the soul toward moral or intellectual activity. The discursive persuasion of a philosopher-legislator who leads the soul to its natural perfection, thus aiding it to fulfill its natural potential, relies on a metaphysic Rousseau has rejected. The love of God and the intervention of His grace, which was once seen as necessary to suppress the passions generated by self-love and to direct men towards their divine origin, is also now of no significance.

However, Rousseau retains the notion that it is not within an individual's power alone to acquire happiness. Replacing philosopher and priest, it is now the educator who takes the place of God. Where the grace and precepts of God had failed, because they had made men slavish or imperious, the judicious application of psychology by the educator is now meant to produce an effective morality. Thus, man's nature is emptied of any natural moral capacity, spiritual longing, or limit, and the educator becomes fully responsible for the inculcation of morality. The soul is no longer an ordered phenomenon since there is no inherent tendency of growth, nor any natural communion with eternity or God. The disorder of the passions is seen as the normal character of the human soul and the role of the educator is hence significantly enhanced.

Since man's dispensation is a disorderly network of passions, it is the educator's role to provide the conditions under which the consequences of passionate action are beneficial. The operations of sensibility and the pleasure-pain mecha-

nism are directed or harnessed by the educator. Understanding man's nature as malleable means that the human constitution can be constructed by the judicious management of fundamental passions. It is an innovation in political science already inaugurated by Machiavelli when he praised founders who used boldness and prudence (virtue) to establish new orders:

And in examining their actions and life, one sees that fortune provided them with nothing other than the occasion which gave them the matter into which they could introduce whatever form they pleased.⁶³

Henceforth, the management of the passions rather than the formation of character becomes the technique of education to virtue. The emphasis on the will of the educator or legislator as the dominant force in establishing conformity of conduct is a consequence of denying the existence of or accessibility to a transcendent realm. Henceforth, the political scientist could speak of "human behavior" rather than "human character" and see his role as creator of order rather than as facilitator in the cultivation of natural faculties.

It is an open question whether this does not pose the most serious dangers of potential abuse where human freedom, dignity, and privacy are simply relinquished for the purpose of some imposed, imagined ideal. For Rousseau the ideal was freedom, and moral restraint was an unqualified good. There is nothing in Rousseau's thought, however, that rationally justifies this choice of ideals. Some of the political experiences of this century remind us how insidious psychological manipulation can be when linked to vicious ends. The intrusions and manipulations of the educator—who incidentally thereby satisfies his own *amour-propre*—are not a matter of deliberate and self-conscious choice on the part of the recipient. Insofar as the ideals are not created in light of natural longings and constraints, but rather are simply imposed through the management of skillfully developed passions and sentiments, one may question whether this is to give too much power to technical specialists whose self-criticism and responsibility do not extend beyond the rather limited aim of "efficiency." The recipients of this "management of the self" lack the rigorous reasoning and reflection to know otherwise since their faculties have been restricted to use in the self-scrutiny they have been taught to engage upon in relation to their imaginary ideals. Rousseau's psychology lays the modern foundation of much political administration and behavioral regulation, although he himself continued to raise the questions of the ultimate good for man. It could be that these questions have to be raised again in modern applications of psychology.

63. N. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, ch. 6, p. 33.