Till Death Do Us Part

On love and marriage in Rousseau's Emile

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When I was a child, my sister and I found a motherless baby bobcat during our walk in the woods. We decided to bring it home and nurse it with the initial intention of releasing it back to the forest once it grew strong, but we became attached to it and kept it home. The little cat was docile and playful at first. He seemed like a perfect pet. But soon his claws became too powerful for our furniture, his leaps too high for our ceilings and counters, his games too rough for our delicate human flesh. He was too good a hunter and too much of a loner to be a good housecat. Though we loved him very much, Roberto the bobcat probably missed his mom. He slowly started acting fearful and insecure. Without having suffered an injury, he often acted as if he were wounded or otherwise distressed.

When we let Roberto out into the garden, he became a different animal. He hunted critters and leaped unto trees with a vigor and energy which we never saw indoors. Outside he was free; he was quick; he was courageous. But out there he was a victim to the elements, to sickness, to hunger, to bigger predators. Our parents believed that this life of danger was a good price to pay for his happiness. We could hardly contradict them. Even our childish brains recognized the stark difference in our little cat's actions indoors and outdoors. In the wild, he was the animal he always wanted to be. Our family released him, risking his possible death for an authentic life.

But perhaps with a little more care and many more cats, my sister and I's project would have succeeded. After all, man has turned what were once wolves, bulls, and wild cats into dogs, cattle and house cats. Human beings have created contentment for the house cat in our human homes regardless of its once feral ancestry. In fact, we might all know some cats whose

human affection is so strong, lethargy so natural, and home so appropriate that it would even be cruel to release them into the woods

But let us talk of man and not of cats. Is man, like our bobcat, destined for misery in a life of domesticity, truly happy only in the wild, or is he, like the housecat, able to live a safer, more plentiful, equally as happy a life in an "unnatural" world?

For Rousseau, civilization is the attempt at the domestication of the human being. Unlike cats and dogs, humans get domesticated not necessarily through careful, selected breeding, but through cultural modifications. Civilization, the aggregate of customs and laws, enkindled through educations of various kinds, is the instrument through which man housetrains man. Rousseau believes his own civilization, the modern liberal society, is a failed attempt. Modern man is deeply miserable. Rousseau agrees with Pascal that the sciences and the arts serve less to advance knowledge and more to aggrandize vanity. The poor, the wealthy, and the noble are wretched and enslaved alike. He would have shared Baudelaire's later depiction of man as troubled in mind and spirit by folly, error, avarice, and vice.

In *Emile or On Education,* Rousseau sets out to cultivate a civil individual that is fully natural; that is, a man that is fully a man and also good for society[1]. He does this by introducing Emile, a young boy whose actions and passions are entirely foreseen and guided by his tutor Jean-Jacques, on whom Emile depends from birth to adulthood. But the education of Emile itself appears on the surface to be a failed attempt. Although Rousseau set out to create a

[1] "There remains, finally, domestic education or the education of nature.But what will a man raised uniquely for himself become for others? If perchance the double object we set for ourselves could be joined in a
single one by removing the contradictions of man, a great obstacle to his happiness would be removed" (Emile 41)

natural man, independent and unrestrained, he ended up giving him a heavy and unnatural chain: marriage. A married man, Emile ends up having to depend on his wife Sophie in many ways. In this paper, I will describe the development of Emile's sentiments in order to show that his apparent dependencies lead up Rousseau's *real* project. I conjecture that though Emile seems to be the protagonist of the story, the force of Rousseau's reform of modern liberal society is in Sophie and what she represents.

Books 1-3: Emile as Natural Man

Emile is to be a natural man. But what is a natural man? What does he want and what does he do? When Rousseau looks at man, he beholds a creature whose body and behavior are suited to its self-preservation. He has a mouth to feed himself, wit to fend off predators, arms to shelter him. His fundamental sentiment is self-preservation, no different than any other living being.

Rousseau suggests that man, in his natural condition, would be happy as long as he is able to fulfill his needs and would be miserable if he becomes unable to do so. Near the beginning of Book II, Rousseau presents us with a definition of happiness that we may apply to man in his natural condition. He tells us that happiness consists in diminishing the excess of desires, especially those that exceed our faculties, in order that our will to meet our desires equals our need. If desire and will are in equilibrium, man is happy. Unhappiness then is when there is a disproportion between desires and needs (*Emile*, 80). Thus man and beasts will experience contentment when they are in an environment where they can, for the most part, fulfill their needs. This is the definition of happiness throughout Books I and II. Thus, Emile,

in being natural, will be happy. He will be a happy infant, a happy child, and a happy teenager. How?

Rousseau believes that an infant, from birth and up until childhood, will *only* busy himself with self-preservation. Self-preservation is his first and only task because it is what nature equips him to do. At first, he will cry because he is hungry, and the parents will feed him. When he grows strong and is able to feed himself, he will do so, and similarly with all his other basic needs. For the first twelve years of his life, Rousseau believes that the child is fully in the state of nature. Jean Jaques' task is to make sure that the child, as he grows, cultivates the power to continue to meet his basic needs. The tutor also needs to be vigilant that nothing from society taints his education because his physical development is not ready to be aware of anything other than nature. But what is other than nature? Things and other people.

In Book I, pgs 38 and 39, Rousseau tells us that man as we know him in society receives three educations: (1) The education of nature, which includes the faculties about which we already talked i.e., the use of his body and mind, (2) The education of things, which are the objects and laws in his environment, and (3) the education of man, which is the use that we give the first two educations (*Emile* 38, pp 2,3). Rousseau reminds us that the education of nature is completely out of our control and the education of things is partly in our control, since we may, to some extent, control the objects and laws in our environment. The education coming from men, however, "…is the only one of which we are truly masters. Even of it, we are the masters only in hypothesis. For who can hope entirely to direct the speeches and deeds of all those surrounding a child" (*Emile 38).*

Jean Jaques must then make sure that Emile's internal organs and faculties continue their natural uninterrupted development (i.e., the education of nature), by controlling his environment (i.e., the education of things) so that Emile is able to meet his every need as they arise. At this stage of his life, Rousseau believes Emile has no *real* relations with other people. The education of man has not taken place. I do not mean that he is physically secluded from other people; we are told that the boy will interact with Jean-Jacques and certain other people chosen and directed by Jean-Jacques to be around him. What Rousseau means is that at this point other people do not yet excite his passions. He has no interest in them because the sentiment that relates people with people has not naturally taken hold.

There are two basic human sentiments and from the first arises the second. The sentiment of self-preservation (*amour-de-soi)* that is natural to men leads to the sentiment when man compares himself to others (*amour propre*)[2]. Every form of misery is an outgrowth of *amour propre* and it is found in society[3]. Though in Emile this sentiment has not taken full hold, it is possible that it can be prematurely awakened. Jean-Jacques must avoid this and in doing so will prevent tyranny, lasciviousness, and viciousness from taking hold.

Rousseau holds that a premature awakening of *amour propre* can arise as early as infancy. For example, in act of miseducation, an acquiescent parent may give her baby anything it points to, instilling in it the belief that human beings are like objects that can be used to get satisfaction (*Emile* 34). The baby becomes dependent on another person's will,

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[2]" 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. The sole passion natural to man isamour 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," (92)

[3] This is how the..hateful and irascible passions are born of amour-propre" (214)

and since Emile will never be able to fully control others' will, this dependence will be a form of slavery and is bound to make him unhappy. Thus a tyrant that desires to fully control others but is unable to do so is akin to a spoiled infant, miserable in his slavery of imaginary desires. Not only tyranny but also other traditional pursuits of happiness like honor, glory, and fame stem from this same distortion of *amour propre* and produce the same effect.

What these perversions have in common is that they inflame our *amour propre* by means of the imagination. We imagine what we cannot have and desire it; and as we do so, our capacity to imagine very quickly exceeds our power to meet those desires (*Emile* 81). Imagination may lead a poor soul to desire that someone else cares about him more than this person cares about themselves. This is perhaps the most miserable desire of them all since what the poor soul desires goes against the basic fundamental sentiment of self-preservation.

To avoid these perversions, Jean-Jacques must guard Emile against society and anchor his imaginative capacity. He does the former by curating Emile's company, raising him in the country, and keeping books away from him. He does the latter by presenting him the figure of *Robinson Crusoe*, a man whose main concern is to meet his every need. *Robinson Crusoe* as Jean-Jacques presents him also serves to develop Emile's judgment such as when he was invited to dine at a house of a wealthy noble family. Other kids, overwhelmed by the pomp and ostentatiousness of the feast, would have begun to desire all kinds of things they could not have. Emile, on the other hand, attends the feast and thinks on the hands and effort required to prepare the food he will eat (which, like all other food, will end up in the toilet all the same). He will prefer a simple meal over an ostentatious feast because his passions and imaginations have been anchored.

Book 4: Morals

Emile has been a purely natural man whose main preoccupation was to satisfy his needs. With the onset of puberty, Emile becomes a moral man. Rousseau calls this stage of Emile's life his "second birth" and says that it is in this stage "...that man is truly born to life and now that nothing human is foreign to him"(*Emile* 212,1)

One may at this point dispel the common objection against Rousseau that he believes that humans are fundamentally solitary beings. This belief is not completely discarded but it rather acquires some nuance. Because Emile has been raised by Jean Jacques to be in complete accord with nature, the natural arrival of moral sentiments makes man a *sociable* animal by nature. Thus, the common objection against Rousseau has no solid ground. However, this realization introduces a danger to the project Emile represents.

Rousseau had promised us happiness for Emile because he is created to demonstrate a hypothesis. Everything is good in the hands of nature, as the opening reminds us. Emile is, by hypothesis, completely natural. Emile must be good. Emile must be happy. His whole education is controlled, so there is no room for failure.

But with the natural arrival of moral sentiments, we open the door to the natural frailty of human happiness. Natural man might be good, but his happiness is frail as long as his heart connects him with other people. We can see evidence of this claim in p. 221, where Rousseau tells us that "...it is our common miseries which turn our hearts to humanity; we would owe humanity nothing if we were not men." We cannot even form the idea of a completely self-sufficient being, because when we do so we feel in our hearts that "...he would

be alone; he would be miserable. I[4]do not conceive who needs nothing can love anything. I do not conceive how someone who loves nothing can be happy." (*Emile* 221,1).

Though Rousseau does not mention Robinson Crusoe after book three, I imagine that the onset of puberty marks the destruction of the ideal of Crusoe for Emile. We were told that Jean-Jacques had presented Emile a censored version of Crusoe[5]. We now know what was cut out. Crusoe's despair and loneliness, which Emile as a kid would not have had the physical maturity to understand, now become vivid to him. What does he now understand? What does he feel? What exactly is human attachment?

As we had laid out, the fundamental human sentiment in Emile, as in every living being, is self-preservation. Thus far, the game of childhood is to provide those needs, the task of the tutor is to make sure that this is the only game the child plays. With puberty, the child realizes that some of the things that surround him are not like the others. Some of the things in his environment are people with wills just like his. Moreover, Emile will notice that some of these people -- perhaps, his nurse, his tutor, his companions-- constantly do things that please him. He notices that some other people -- may be a nasty shopkeeper or a mean kid-- do things that displease him. He begins to expect good or ill from people, and "those from whom one expects good or ill by their inner disposition… inspire in us sentiments similar to those they manifest towards us. We seek what serves us, but we love what wants to serve us. We flee what harms us, but we hate what wants to harm us".

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[4] The "I" here is meant to be a man. Rousseau is permitted to take this liberty because he has shown us that the phenomenon of puberty allows us to see this.
[5]" This novel, disencumbered of all its rigmarole, beginning.." (283)

Love develops as Emile begins to recognize patterns of behavior in the people that surround him. When someone continues to be well-disposed towards Emile by their own free will, he begins to love. As Rousseau says, "one loves only after having judged; one prefers only after having compared. These judgments are made without one's being made aware of it, but they are nonetheless real" (*Emile,* 214, 3).

I especially dwell on the last sentence to point out that the pattern recognition or judgment that gives rise to love is to an important extent unconscious. At least as far as love is concerned, this logic happens in the background of the human mind. Love is born out of human sentiments but it is advanced by reason; but though reasonable, it is unconscious. Even romantic love, though it is commonly believed to be whimsical and capricious, is far from it, if correctly understood. Further on in the paragraph, Rousseau explains that the act of choosing a lover "… which is held to be the opposite of reason, comes to us from it. Love has been presented as blind because it has better eyes than we do and sees relations we are not able to perceive ", thus, "…Far from arising from nature, love is the rule and the bridle of nature's inclinations. It is due to love that…. One sex ceases to be anything for the other" (*Emile* 214, 3).

But romantic love is not on Emile's mind immediately. Even after the onset of puberty, love for one's fellows comes first, romantic love comes second. Rousseau claims this is the order of nature, and his justification is anthropological. He mentions primitive and secluded societies where even after puberty men retain their boyish inclinations and a desire for women does not arise until marriage is decided, as late as possibly twenty-five years old.

Until then Emile loves humanity but hates modern liberal society. He loves humanity because he now recognizes in other people creatures like himself. But though they are creatures like himself, there is no one he meets in the city that he does not pity. Emile, a fully natural adolescent, has been educated to have few needs and has been given the power to meet them. But the "man of the world" (ie. the product of the modern liberal society)"..is whole in his mask. Almost never being in himself, he is always alien and ill at ease when forced to go back [to himself]. What he is, is nothing; what he appears to be is everything to him" (*Emile 230).*

His appraisal and subsequent pity of high-society is thus all-encompassing: the poor and lame are miserable because they are unable to meet their most basic needs; the rich and noble are miserable because they are oppressed by all kinds of imaginary needs. Emile beholds the spectacle of humanity from the stands and will "… be afflicted at seeing his brothers tear one another apart for the sake of dreams and turn into ferocious animals because they do not know how to be satisfied with being men " (*Emile* 242).

This last point is of vital importance to Rousseau's project. Though Emile pities every individual man he encounters, and out of this pity would seek to help him, he remains, at best, a likeable foreigner and a stranger of society. Emile has no reason to involve himself in public life. He will not sacrifice his life for his country. For if he has the means, why would Emile not be fully willing to pack his bags --which will undoubtedly be very light-- and leave the moment a society in any way hinders his needs? Merely from love of fellow man, Emile is a person that is good for himself but not good for society. The one thing Rousseau sees that will change this situation is Emile's impending sexual desire.

His sexual desires will come soon. Friendship arose from a love of self that extended to others through pity. In other words, from the sentiment of existence arose *amour-de-soi* and then *amour propre*. Sexual desire will follow the same genesis; it will be founded on the same sentiments. But it will be intensified. It is in man's sexual desire that *amour propre* takes its fullest, most powerful form: the love of the impossible. Rousseau states that "amour propre, which makes comparisons, is never content and never could be, because this sentiment, preferring ourselves to others, also demands others to prefer us to themselves"(*Emile* 213). The inherent impossibility brought forth by amour propre makes it *always*, even when used correctly, liable to produce misery (since, as we have discussed, our misery deals directly with what is possible and what is impossible). Nonetheless, the way to control amour propre is to use it, and not suppress or ignore it. This is accomplished through the correct use of the imagination.

The moment that Emile exhibits the first signs of bubbling sexual desire, Jean-Jacques takes him hunting. Rousseau is careful to hide his real reasons for having chosen the act of hunting and leaves much of his argument up to us. Rousseau does, however, alluding to his sexual desire and the activity of hunting, say that hunting is chosen "...so that he will listen to me cooly when I speak of it and I will have time to depict it without exciting it" (*Emile* 321).

That statement is enough for the judicious reader to imagine exactly what Rousseau has in mind. In their hunting expeditions, Emile will have observed the lively interplay of the mating rituals among the animals of the forest. He surely would have observed that, almost invariably, and most distinctly among mammals, the females flee and the males pursue. The stag, for instance, though boisterous and physically imposing, is also frenzied and desperate.

The hind, on the other hand, is smaller in size, much more delicate in features, and witty. Pursued by the stag, she *seems* to flee. But sometimes, when the stag loses his way or begins to tire of the chase, the hind will surprisingly halt her flight and once again approach the stag until he is once more interested. Finally, after chases and apparent refusals, the two will mate. In the natural order of things, the hind has full command of copulation during mating season. This is obvious to any serious student of the animal kingdom.

Emile will recognize himself and his new desire as he observes the game of life. Shocked by the fit of passion that overtakes the males, and intimidated by the lack of discernment this delirium seems to introduce, Emile will turn to his tutor Jean-Jacques and seek his help. Jean-Jacques, having foreseen his reaction, will establish a contract with Emile that gives him full authority over his choice of mate (*Emile* 325-326*)*. Emile trusts his tutor and agrees.[6]

After the contract, Jean-Jacques' main responsibility is to shape Emile's imagination so that his sexual desire will bring him happiness (ie. thereby retaining his naturalness), and make him good for society. Jean-Jacques does this by carefully depicting a woman whose virtue, temperance, and modesty make her desirable to Emile. This is not difficult to do, seeing as Emile is already disposed to temperance and modesty himself.

The figure that Jean-Jacques depicts for Emile is at once real and imaginary. In an elucidating piece of text, Rousseau says that "..It is unimportant whether the object I depict for him is imaginary; it suffices that it makes him disgusted with those that could tempt him; it suffices that he everywhere find comparisons which make him prefer his chimera to the real

[6] Rousseau goes from the mention of hunting (pgs 320-321) to the establishment of the "mating contract" (pg325) with not much explanation in between, only scattered hints. The stories of the stag and hind (both this mention and the one later on in the paper) are my own attempts at filling the gap in Rousseau's argument.

objects that strike his eye" (*Emile* 329, 1). He does, however, say that he does "...not want to deceive a young man by depicting for him a model of perfection which cannot exist... But if he does take pleasure in the image, he will soon hope that it has an original" (*Emile,* 329).

I had observed that at the onset of puberty, the image of *Robinson Crusoe* had become inadequate. Its replacement is the image of Sophie, which, like *Crusoe,* is an extension of Emile and thus an outgrowth of his natural sentiments. The image of Sophie is solidified as Emile learns and develops. Sophie is thus fitting of her name, for Emile, by means of his sexual desire and with the careful guidance of Jean-Jacques, will learn to be a lover of wisdom without even realizing it. This constraint to his imagination is through an image. In doing this, Emile's happiness is ensured because his needs are constrained.

But this use of the imagination to restrain itself stands on shaky ground. In perhaps one of the strangest passages of the book, Rousseau expounds on the importance for Emile to not masturbate. He goes as far as to address the tutor directly and says, "..He can protect himself from everything else, but it is up to you to protect him from himself. Do not leave him alone, day or night. At the very least, sleep in his room" (*Emile* 333).

Rousseau's adamant warning against masturbation serves to further enlighten us about the image of Sophie. Sophie, as an image, is fueled by Emile but it is controlled by Jean-Jacques. The tutor uses it to incline his pupil towards moderation, thereby avoiding the danger of society's imaginary needs. Thus, if Emile were to let his imagination loose in his own time, the image might get away from Jean-Jacques. Further, Rousseau imagines this danger to be part of society, not inherent in human beings. The mastubatory instinct[7] "...is good as long

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[7] Rousseau is never as explicit as I am on this subject, but it is clear what he is talking about.

as it acts by itself; it is suspect from the moment it operates within man-made institutions" (*Emile* 333).

A second reason Emile's sexual imagination must not be left up to him is because Sophie is not merely an image. As I already mentioned, she holds a dual nature, since she is both a product of Emile and Jean-Jacques' imagination, and an actual person. This dual nature is true even after Emile meets Sophie and eventually marries her. A strong implication from these observations is that Rousseau believes all beloveds, from friends to spouses, are both real people and products of our imagination. This is compatible with Rousseau's natural sentiments and goes at least as far back as Pascal and his own observations about love and *amour propre.*

But since Sophie is, at least in part, a real person, who is she? How is she educated?

Sophie: Rousseau's *Real* Project

Book V is the description of Sophie and is, on the surface, the most incendiary part of the book. With a cursory glance at it, one may rightly dismiss it as, at best, ridiculous, and at worst, offensive to our modern sensibilities. The book espouses outdated social mores for women such as household chores, a removal from academic and public life, and a care for dolls, dresses, and chastity. In certain passages, Rousseau even fetishises Sophie's small feet and insists that she will, just like himself, be a lover of dairy. Creepy. These surface criticisms notwithstanding, I think a correct understanding of Sophie and Emile's marriage constitute Rousseau's real project and his most subversive thought.

The fact is, Rousseau seems to believe there is no inherent difference in men and women's intellectual potential. Nor does he think that their relative physical weakness or size

alone disqualifies them from any part of public life. In an intellectual environment in which pseudoscientific theories abounded, and women were put into servile positions that robbed them of their most basic human dignity[8], Rousseau states that "in everything unconnected with sex, woman is man. She has the same organs, the same needs, the same faculties"(*Emile* 357). In other words, the main difference between the sexes is their differing sexual psychology: what they desire and how they desire it.

Women's sexual desire, just like men's, is fundamentally shared with the animal kingdom. We should believe that just as Emile would have recognized himself in the stag, Sophie will recognize herself in the hind. She calls man's attention by *appearing* weak and keeps his attention by carefully wavering between indifference and flirtatiousness. She is the subtle tyrant of the sexual encounter, for "...her own violence is in her charms. It is by these that she ought to constrain him to find his strength and make use of it. 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" (*Emile* 358).

In other words, she will continue the mating game until it pleases her to stop. We had observed that a hind will often subject the stag to multiple rounds of the chase. She does this to inflame her mate's *amour propre* and perhaps because it simply pleases her. Perhaps one may argue that does this only to guarantee suitability of her potential mate, but even if this explanation has some evolutionary-biological basis, it is not what is happening in the individuals' subjective experience.[9] She relishes in the control. Rousseau says that man has

[8] Unfortunately, this intellectual environment is not as foreign from us now as we would like.
[9]The second mention of the stag and hind is another instance of me trying to fill in Rousseau's gaps in his argument: he asserts women's high sexual desire but does not provide evidence for it.

unlimited inclinations but woman has unlimited desires (*Emile* 359)[10]. Compared to men, women have the more intensified libido. Again, Rousseau flips popular opinion on its head: *a woman* has the more complex sexual apparatus; *she* is more capable of pure desire, while he, though having some pure desire, is mostly exercising his *amour propre*.

Where does this leave Sophie ? What must a woman do to and with her man?

Sophie: An Empress, a Philosopher, God herself.

Because she desires to be chased, but only as long as she controls the chase, Sophie must be a student of man and of society. Insofar as she does this to satisfy her true needs and desires, Sophie is as natural as Emile. In fact, "Nature wants [women] to think, to judge, to love, to know, to cultivate their minds as well as their looks. These are the weapons nature gives them to take the place of the strength they lack and to direct ours" (*Emile* 364). Sophie has her naturally nimble mind and her wit. Her "..wit alone is the true resource of the fair sex--not the stupid wit which the social world values so highly and which is of no use for making women's lives happy, but the wit which suits their position and consists in an art of exploiting man's position and putting our particular advantages in her use" (*Emile* 371-372).

Emile is fully Sophie's to mold and control. We had mentioned that Sophie was for Emile both an image and a real person. This is just as true for Sophie, except that she is in full control of her image-person hybrid. This is true love. In Book V, Rousseau states that there is

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[10] Rousseau's idea of correct sexuality for women eschews both extreme carnal libertinism and religious repression, and eschews a body-positive middle:
"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. 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.."(Emile 393)

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"...no true love without enthusiasm, and no enthusiasm without an object of perfection, real or chimerical, but always existing in the imagination" (*Emile* 391).

This passage should sound familiar. It is almost an exact reflection of the passage highlighting the chimerical nature of love for Emile. Except this passage has a most important addendum. In what *seems* like merely a rhetorical flair, Rousseau, continuing on love's mixed nature, asks "So what of it? Does the lover any **less sacrifice all of his low sentiments to this imaginary model**?.. **Where is the true lover who is not ready to immolate himself for his beloved, and where is the sensual and coarse passion in man who is willing to die?"** (*Emile, 391)[emphasis added].*

Let us take this suggestion seriously. If Sophie can *actually* make Emile sacrifice and immolate himself for her, Emile is no longer a stranger to society; he is no longer the likeable nomad he was in his teenage years. The project is complete, for now, under her command, he is ready to fulfill a nation's highest duty. He is ready to go to war. This seems to be what Rousseau has in mind. Only a couple of pages later, and seemingly out of place, Rousseau says that Sophie's noblest ambition ought to be "...the ambition of the woman of Sparta, which was to command men....she sends her lovers with a nod to the end of the world, to combat, to glory, to death, to anything she pleases." (*Emile* 393). Thus, the project Rousseau set out to do at the beginning of the book, to make a person that is good for himself and also good for society, only becomes complete when understood within the nucleus of the family unit. Rousseau's two hypothetical human beings, Emile and Sophie, never become good for themselves and society until they have each other. If my argument is sound, there are some very deep implications in the entire book.

Let us remember to whom Rousseau addresses the book. In the very first sentence of the preface, Rousseau states that the book "…was begun to gratify a good mother who knows how to think" (*Emile* 33). And in page 37, just in case we missed it the first time, he says, "it is to you that I address myself, tender and foresighted mother" (*Emile*, 37).

But in book II through IV, Rousseau seems to change addressees. He now talks to the people who wish to become tutors themselves, presumably by following the example of Jean-Jacques. He calls these budding tutors "young masters" and guides them through Emile's education, mentioning them by name exactly four times. In the first, Rousseau implores them: "…young masters, think, I beg you, about this example, and remember that everything in your lessons ought to be more in your actions than in your speeches" (*Emile* 99,3). Then he encourages him: "young master, you are now on your way. These examples ought to suffice for you to teach the celestial sphere very clearly while taking the earth as the earth and the sun as the sun" (*Emile*, 170). The third time, he warns him about the child's first movement of vanity, saying , "Young master, spy out this first movement with care, If you thus know how to make humiliation and disgrace arise from it, be sure that a second movement will not come for a long time" (*Emile* 175).

One conventional and convincing interpretation of the two addressees is that Rousseau is, in one book, talking to both the mother who wishes to educate her child, giving her practical advice and a model to imitate, and to the young student of the human condition who wishes to understand the foundational sentiments of human beings. In other words, books I and V might be for the mothers, books II and IV for students like myself. This might

be true, but what if the mother who knows how to think *is* the careful student of the human condition?

Jean-Jacques raises and educates Emile for her own pleasure. She accompanies baby Emile from birth and is personally invested in his games, interests, and acquaintances. She shapes his heart and directs his personality with actions rather than speeches so that he may become a good man. She shows him the truth of the natural world with clarity. When vanity comes, she is sure to use shame and disgrace to make sure a second movement does not come for a long time.

Talking of the mother, Rousseau tells us that the first education belongs to *her*. Not only because she is in a natural position to care for the child (she gave birth to it after all), but also because she must take a special interest in the child's success, since "most widows find themselves almost at the mercy of their children" (*Emile* 37, footnote). If Jean-Jacques is Emile's mother, what will happen when she, in her old age, is at his mercy?

Emile, after a long and highly romantic courtship (in which Jean--Jacques, as expected, was very heavily involved), marries Sophie (Book V). The book ends with the news of Sophie's pregnancy. Emile enters Jean-Jacques' room, embraces her, and says:

> My master, congratulate your child. He hopes soon to have the honor of being a father. Oh, what efforts are going to be imposed on our zeal, and how we are going to need you! God forbid that I let you also raise the son after having raised the father. God forbid that so holy and so sweet a duty should ever be fulfilled by anyone but myself, even if I were to make as good a choice for my son as was made for me. But remain the master of the young masters. Advise us and govern us. We shall be docile. As long as I live, I shall need you. I need you more than ever now that my functions as a man begins. You have fulfilled yours. Guide me so that I can imitate you. And take your rest. It is time.(*Emile* 480)[11]

[11] This speech also contains the fourth and final mention of the term "young master".

Sophie is Jean-Jacques and Jean-Jacques is Sophie. Rousseau's real project is not about the education of a single person, but a reinterpretation and reestablishment of the family unit, to be set in motion and maintained by the women of the modern liberal society. Rousseau, a lover of the classical world, repurposes the Greek *oikos* and the Roman patriarchy for his project. But though repurposing Greek and Roman ideas, he differs from them in important ways. He disagrees with Plato's *Republic*, for instance, in replacing *thumos* for *eros* as the backbone of society. Though his project has the social structure of the Roman patriarchy ,it is a patriarchy inspired by his reading of Plutarch's *Lycurgus.* It is a patriarchy in name only, for it is women who have the real power. These women will be images and real people. Wives, mothers, and empresses. What about philosophers? The mother is named Jean-Jacques, after all.

We had mentioned that women had naturally nimble minds. Nature equips her with this mind because her passion makes all women, by nature, desire to know. Rousseau says, talking of Sophie, that "She must...make a profound study of the mind of man...she must learn to penetrate their sentiments by their words, their actions...she must know how to communicate to them.." (*Emile* 387). This sounds exactly what Rousseau himself does in his books. But before one rushes to say Rousseau makes Sophie (and thus most women) philosophers, we must remember that Sophie is never called a philosopher. Emile is not a philosopher either. They both have common minds, and a philosopher is not a common

mind.[12] Rousseau's connection of women and philosophy seems to be slightly different but no less striking.

Rousseau believes that the philospher, with himself as prime example, is one whose prodigious, conjoined, androgynous mind can join the speculation of man with the reflection of woman. "From this conjunction", Rousseau says, seemingly in passing, "results the clearest insight and the most complete science regarding itself that the human mind can acquire-- in a word, the surest knowledge of oneself and others available to our species. And this is how art can constantly tend to the perfection of the instrument given by nature" (*Emile* 387). Rousseau thinks that a woman is a mother, an empress, and at least half of the prodigious, philosophic mind. Might she be *even more*?

We had mentioned that after the hunting scene, Emile gives Jean-Jacques full rights to choose his future spouse. Emile only does this because Jean-Jacques had revealed how she has been controlling nearly everything around him to ensure his happiness. Emile responds: "Oh my friend, my protector, my master...defend me from all the enemies who besiege me, and especially from those whom I carry within myself and who betray me. Watch over your work in order that it remain worthy of you. I want to obey your laws, I want to do so always." (*Emile* 325).

Jean-Jacques sounds like God. More accurately, Jean-Jacques and Sophie together seem to function as God for Emile. It is he who thinks he acts, wills and commands. But it is *she* who shapes and controls. Emile owes his mother and wife his happiness, his moderation, his goodness, and his experience of the sublime. She will form him and then step back to say

[12] Talking of Emile: "If I could choose, I would only take a common mind, such as I assume my pupil to be". (53) and talking of them both: "I shall never repeat enough that I am leaving prodigies aside. Emille is no prodigy, and Sophie is not one either" (Emile 393)

that "it is good". This is Rousseau's full invitation to the women of his perverse society. Woman is a mother. A wife. A thinker. A tutor. An empress. She is God herself.[13]

Works Cited:

1) Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, and Allan Bloom. *Emile or On Education*. Basic Books, 1979.

[13]I do not know the extent to which Rousseau is criticising Christianity in making God obsolete for Emile, though I have some strong suspicions. This will be my second essay.