Political Pity: A Sentimental Account of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Moral and Political System

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Abstract

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My dissertation seeks to restore the sentiment of pity to Rousseau's moral and political system. Rousseau scholarship tends to offer a proto-Kantian interpretation of Rousseau's concepts of moral liberty and the general will. I argue that these readings neglect Rousseau's own definition of virtue as the product of an individual's pity moderating rational self-interest (*amour de soi*). I offer an account of Rousseau's moral liberty dependent on this concept of virtue that incorporates the sentiments. I then argue that pity must perform a similar role in the general will because it is through the general will that people express their moral agency. To do so, I explore how Rousseau's account of pity as a social sentiment is more expansive and active than standard interpretations allow, and thus it is better described as expanded pity or sympathy.

Understanding pity's role in the general will also affects Rousseau's accounts of equality and individuality. Because virtue demands that pity moderate impulses to excess, the general will that arises from a virtuous citizenry will tend toward distributive equality. A state then best achieves equality by cultivating virtue through private institutions like education and public institutions like civil religion. Finally, I argue that Rousseau's account of pity alleviates the perceived conflict, first posed by Judith Shklar, between the individual life of man and the homogenized life of citizen. In its expanded form, pity motivates individuals to care about others' pursuits of their own personal interests while also maintaining a separation between self and other. Exploration into Rousseau's pity thus has important implications for the kind of political emotions we should look to revitalize in modern democratic society.

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Introduction

When the eighteenth century is recounted as a story of sentimentalists versus rationalists or Enlightenment versus Counter-Enlightenment figures, Rousseau can get lost in the shuffle for not fitting squarely within one camp.[1] The lure of these dichotomies has produced a strong inclination among contemporary interpretations of Rousseau to read him through a Kantian and more rationalist lens, and thus a general tendency to ignore the importance of the sentiments to Rousseau's moral and political thought. In closely examining the nature of Rousseau's man and Rousseau's general will, I aim to reclaim the significance of one sentiment in particular—pity—from a tradition of interpretation that left it out. Doing so will create a space for Rousseau to exist between dichotomies and open fruitful avenues for moral and political engagement.

First examining the sentimentalist versus rationalist dichotomy allows us to see Rousseau's complicated position within the other dichotomies as well. A contemporary method of clearly distinguishing between the two schools contrasts their accounts of political and moral autonomy: rationalists view moral and political autonomy as self-governance by reason alone while sentimentalists view self-governance as the result of reflecting on one's sentiments.[2] Insofar as rationalism takes emotions into account, they are not part of the reflective process and

[1] A note on citations: All citations to the Cambridge translations of Rousseau by Victor Gourevitch will include references to the standard French editions of Rousseau's works in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Oeuvres Complètes*, eds. B. Gagnebin and M. Raymond (Paris, Pléiade, 1959-1995). I follow Gourevitch's standard for cross-referencing his translations by noting the volume and page number (and paragraph number when applicable). For example, OC III 219 [1] refers to page 219, paragraph 1, of Volume III in the Pléiade *Oeuvres Complètes*. I provide further reference to Books and Chapters for the *Geneva Manuscript* and the *Social Contract.* For example, OC III 416 SC III 8 [8] is page 416 of volume III in the Pléiade *Oeuvres Complètes,* Book III, Chapter 8, paragraph 8 of the *Social Contract.*

[2] Michael L. Frazer, *The Enlightenment of Sympathy: Justice and the Moral Sentiments in the Eighteenth Century and Today* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). Frazer offers a thorough account of this distinction with a particular focus on defending further exploration of historical sentimentalist accounts, though I will briefly discuss the shortcoming of Frazer's account as it relates to Rousseau.

should instead be "ruled over" by reason in a strict hierarchy of reason over passions. Sentimentalism, on the other hand, has no such hierarchical account of the components of the mind; no part—reason or emotion—rules over the other. Instead, moral and political standards are determined by emotions refined by reflection, by a sort of *balance* of the mind as a whole.

Even this dichotomy itself is difficult to comprehend in Rousseau's case because he diverges from the standard eighteenth-century sentimentalist use of the term "sentiment." At the time, the standard use of the term "sentiment" had a reasoning element to it; the sentiments not only involved reactive affect, but also the higher order use of reason to reflect on one's passions.[3] Rousseau, however, occasionally uses the term *sentiment* interchangeably with *passion* to connote an *unreflective* emotion (though this unreflective nature does not in itself mean his use of the term has a negative connotation like common usages of "passion" did at the time).[4]

In fact, Rousseau's particular use of the term seems to reveal a sharper distinction between reason and the sentiments. This can have the consequence for interpreters of solidifying Rousseau's place within the rationalist tradition. For, it is a rationalist trend to strictly demarcate the distinction between reason and the passions, and a sentimentalist trend to see the passions and their reflective elements as essentially uncompounded.[5] However, I present an account of Rousseau that looks at the interaction of pity with reason and thereby recognizes elements of sentimentalism in Rousseau. While Rousseau's sentiments do not include the reflective element of other sentimentalists (and in some cases he does show evidence of a hierarchy between reason

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[3] Ibid., 6.

[4] Ernst Cassirer, *The Question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, trans. Peter Gay, ed. Peter Gay (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 110; Robin Douglass, *Rousseau and Hobbes: Nature, Free Will, and the Passions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 161. I will examine this ambiguity of language further in Chapter 1.

[5] Frazer, *The Enlightenment of Sympathy*, 4.

and certain sentiments), Rousseau's expectation that reason *balance* with the healthy sentiments to achieve moral and political autonomy maintains a place for Rousseau in the sentimentalist tradition.[6]

As recently as 2010, Rousseau has been denied a position within the sentimentalist tradition, even as authors acknowledge the pitfalls of valuing rationalism over sentimentalism. Michael Frazer, in *The Enlightenment of Sympathy*—a discussion of both Enlightenment politics and moral sentiments—describes the eighteenth century as "A Tale of Two Enlightenments:" the rationalist Enlightenment and the sentimentalist Enlightenment. As Frazer describes, "the heirs of the rationalist rather than the sentimentalist Enlightenment now dominate both philosophy and science" and the eighteenth century has resultantly been studied primarily as the "Age of Reason" as opposed to an age that considered reason as well as sentimentalism.[7] Whether it is true that the sentimentalist strain of the Enlightenment has been consigned to the shadows in History of Philosophy classes today, it is clear that the interpretation of Rousseau that began with Kant consigned an important part of Rousseau's sentimentalism to the shadows. Even Frazer excludes Rousseau from the narrative on sentimentalism because of a general reading of pity in Rousseau that interprets the sentiments as suppressed or disappearing with the introduction of reason.[8] Frazer, I believe, is correct in asserting that the Age of Reason won out, but Frazer himself then inherits this tendency to read Rousseau in light of his Kantian,

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[6] I will continue to use the term "sentiment," as Rousseau does, to refer to the emotions he takes as significant to reflectively balance in his moral and political system (namely, *amour de soi* and pity). Despite Rousseau's sentiments lacking a reflective element, I use this term to highlight the sentimentalism in Rousseau. There are a limited number of emotions that Rousseau counts as *natural* sentiments and they are distinguished because they are an integral part of Rousseau's holistic picture of the autonomous individual's mind. The translations I use of Rousseau likewise translate *sentiment* as sentiment.

[7] Frazer, *The Enlightenment of Sympathy*, 5.

[8] Ibid., 48, 189-190n20. See also Chapter 1, fn. 24-25.

rather than Smithian, legacy. Kant inspired the Enlightenment shift that reason, not reflection on feelings, was foundational to moral and political thought. I intend to construct a reading of Rousseau that demonstrates that a Kantian interpretation is not sufficient to fully explain Rousseau's thought. It is necessary to reclaim a role for pity in Rousseau and to understand that, through this sentiment, Rousseau's moral and political system indeed straddles the sentimentalist/rationalist dichotomy in significant ways.

Given the tendency to equate rationalism with the Enlightenment, highlighting Rousseau's positions on emotion may seem to make him a Counter-Enlightenment figure. It is unsurprising, then, that the reading of Rousseau that places him back with the Enlightenment thinkers is the one that strips pity from its rightful place within his works. More confusing still are his obvious Counter-Enlightenment themes, e.g., the idea that nature is not to be mastered and a general suspicion of *philosophes* and of the scientific advancement they prize. It is important to understand, however, that Rousseau does not eliminate the faculty of reason, he simply thinks it must function in concert with the sentiments, most particularly pity: reason functions neither as the slave to nor the ruler over pity, but in cooperation with the sentiment. Though Rousseau does make reason, in principle, separable from the sentiments, by emphasizing their mutual necessity, instead of a Counter-Enlightenment position, what we find is a position that seeks to subtly transform the Enlightenment from within. The Enlightenment trend that Rousseau is skeptical of is one that obscures original sentiments by the valorization of pursuits that inflame the desire for esteem, e.g., modern attitudes toward the sciences and the arts. If, however, we take seriously Kant's characterization of the Enlightenment as a form of human maturation through the use of reason, we see that Rousseau similarly proposes that the interdependent workings of reason and sentiments is the height of human maturity. While

politics and morality require reason, it is necessary to the humanity of their agents that these systems maintain the original sentiments as well.[9]

Dichotomous categories of sentimentalist/rationalist, and Counter-Enlightenment/ Enlightenment are useful for identifying conceptual trends in the history of philosophy. However, carving the history of philosophy in such a way leads to categorizations of historical thinkers that limit interpretations of their work. In the study of the history of philosophy we should attend to the philosophical possibilities that these binaries obscure. With Rousseau, as I will demonstrate, the limited interpretations have involved the obfuscation of an interesting interaction between the sentiments and reason in individual and political life.

My project centers around a famous footnote to the *Discourse on Inequality*:

> [*Amour propre*] and [*amour de soi-même* are] two very different passions in their nature and their effects, [and they] should not be confused. [*Amour de soi*] is a natural sentiment which inclines every animal to attend to its self-preservation and which, guided in man by reason and modified by pity, produces humanity and virtue. [*Amour propre*] is only a relative sentiment, facticious and born in society, which inclines every individual to set greater store by himself than by anyone else, inspires men with all the evils they do one another, and is the genuine source of honor.[10]

This footnote is usually cited for drawing the distinction between *amour de soi* and *amour propre* and for pointing out the evils of the latter. What is overlooked is the definition of virtue

[9] I further see Rousseau's defiance of the sentimentalism/rationalism dichotomy as fundamental to the way in which Rousseau undermines the natural law tradition as it relates to social contract theory from within as he intersperses the *Social Contract* with republican elements. This at times also contributes to illiberal readings of Rousseau. See, for example, Ronald Beiner, *Civil Religion: A Dialogue in the History of Political Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 73-83. Through Rousseau, however, scholars have worked to bridge the gap between liberalism and republicanism. See, for example, Maurizio Viroli, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the Well-Ordered Society*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

[10] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men or Second Discourse*, in *Rousseau: The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings*, trans. Victor Gourevitch, ed. Victor Gourevitch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 218nXV. OC III 219 [1].

that Rousseau embeds in the description of the self-interested drive of *amour de soi*.[11] I want to highlight and emphasize this moment in the footnote as by far Rousseau's clearest definition of virtue. Virtue is the proper balance of reason, *amour de soi*, and pity such that pity moderates one's pursuit of rational self-interest.[12] It is important here to emphasize the role of the sentiments in the generation and exercise of man's moral agency. In defining virtue as the proper balance of reason, *amour de soi*, and pity, Rousseau explicitly argues for an examination of moral behavior that not only highlights the sentiments, but also promotes the sentimentalist idea that reflection on and balance of the sentiments with reason is necessary to achieving moral agency.

Pity, as Rousseau first defines the term, is the natural repugnance at the suffering of others.[13] I will argue, however, that while the sentiment has an originally negative definition—in the descriptive rather than pejorative sense—to prevent one from causing pain, it functions positively in Rousseau's philosophical works to cause one to act in another's interests, to desire another's happiness. Both the negative and positive functions of pity make the sentiment a dynamic aspect of Rousseau's political and moral thought.

Considering pity's role more closely reveals both its limitations and its value. Pity, as I shall explore in more detail, requires a similarity and immediacy of its object, thus limiting

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[11] Ryan Patrick Hanley, for example, who surveys the Rousseau literature and notes the difficulty in identifying Rousseau's definition of virtue, none of which reference this passage (see Ryan Patrick Hanley, "Political Economy and Individual Liberty," in *The Challenge of Rousseau,* ed. Eve Grace and Christopher Kelly (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 51-2.

[12] I will occasionally refer to *amour de soi* as self-interest or self-preservation in order to point to the idea that *amour de soi*, particularly as distinct from pity, is the pursuit of individual well-being, narrowly construed. I follow Marks's way of differentiating a narrow conception of *amour de soi* as "self-love which causes human beings to consider their good in isolation from the good of others," (Jonathan Marks, "Rousseau's Discriminating Defense of Compassion," *The American Political Science Review* 101, no. 4 (Nov. 2007), 728n5).

[13] Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality,* 152. OC III 154 [35].

Rousseau's political systems to small populations that share some form of commonality. Its focus on loving others' particularity is precisely what keeps it from universalization, as well. However, pity also functions uniquely in the state and individual to create stability, happiness, equality, and a space for individual autonomy. It leads to the stability of the political system: not only might there be a self-interested reason for preserving the state, but a sympathetic bond of pity among citizens creates a second ground for promoting the state's interests. Furthermore, pity becomes a key element in the promotion of others' happiness: contributing to others' wellbeing provides happiness to the pitier. Identifying the purpose of a legitimate state as promoting its citizens' happiness was a significant departure from the attitude of the Ancien Régime, when Louis XIV reportedly claimed "l'etat c'est moi." This view that the state should satisfy desires based on pity as well as *amour de soi* makes for a more robust view of individuals' and citizens' happiness. Citizens who act out of both drives (pity and *amour de soi*) use them as counterbalancing forces. Pity counterbalances the drive to exceed one's means and prevents one's actions from negatively impacting others. In such a way, it helps aim the system at a basic level of equality. Lastly, the concept itself allows for the distinction between self-oriented desires and other-oriented desires, acknowledging the importance of individual autonomy while promoting the interests of the state.

I realize that for attentive readers of Rousseau, the picture I have painted here may seem overly rosy. Rousseau's equal, free society was in fact more exclusive than such a description would suggest. Not only did Rousseau believe his political recommendations should be adopted only by certain cultural groups, but he also limited who, within those groups, could be granted the status of citizen. Rousseau follows Montesquieu in judging a people's capacities based on their geographical location. From reading reports of other travelers to the Caribbean, he judged

the people there to have underdeveloped reasoning abilities to the extent that they had no foresight.[14] At first glance, and without a history of the idea of the 'noble savage,' such a position may not have obvious racial implications because of Rousseau's specific focus on geographical effects. For example, he states that generally because of "the effect of climate[,] despotism suits warm countries, barbarism cold countries, and good polity intermediate regions."[15] However, such geographical concerns provide permission for those so inclined to find in Rousseau a sympathetic ally for racist exclusions. In fact, the system's reliance on an expanded form of pity could exacerbate an issue with systemic racism because one of pity's shortcomings is that it most readily applies to those deemed most similar to us.[16] What is unavoidable in Rousseau's texts is an othering account of nations in various stages of human and social development. People deemed to be less developed, he thought, lacked the reasoning required to enter a social contract.

Furthermore, it was such a basic assumption that no women could be citizens (in the full participatory sense of the term) that Rousseau never explicitly states in the *Social Contract,* outside of his gendered language, that citizens must be men. In opening the *Discourse on Inequality,* Rousseau explicitly excludes women from his discussion of citizens and notes that their influence is rightly a domestic one, solely "exercised [within the limits of] conjugal union

[14] Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, 143. OC III 144 [21].

[15] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Of the Social Contract*, in *Rousseau: The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings*, trans. Victor Gourevitch, ed. Victor Gourevitch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 102. OC III 416 SC III 8 [8].

[16] Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality,* 152-153. OC III 154-155; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on Political Economy*, in *Rousseau:* The Social Contract *and Other Later Political Writings*, trans. Victor Gourevitch, ed. Victor Gourevitch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 15. OC III 254. See also, Chapter 1, Section VI.1, for a broad discussion of this idea among Rousseau's contemporaries, and the Conclusion.

alone."[17] His treatment of women throughout the *Discourse on Inequality* and *Émile* makes it clear that he does not think they are capable of the very same virtue that men aspire to, and that they should instead merely support men's development and maintenance of virtue. This appears mainly due to the fact that Rousseau does not find women's reasoning sufficient to enable them to balance their own sentiments. He also considers their desires from self-love (*amour propre*) to develop differently than men's. This leads Rousseau to outline a strict separation of gender roles from childhood education culminating in heteronormative relationships and the segregated duties they involve. While I will address these gendered differences when they are relevant to my overall interpretation, it is necessary to note that when I write about the nature of men in Rousseau, I mean the gendered idea of men. I keep my terminology gendered to underscore the intentional exclusivity in Rousseau.

These exclusions are obviously problematic. For my own part, I assume that women and men, people of different cultures, and people of any sexual orientation are equally capable of balancing reason and the sentiments. If I thought Rousseau's political project were inseparable from such exclusions, there would be little worth resurrecting from the role he gives to pity. Although further work needs to be done to see how far pity can be removed from these systems of exclusion, there are two main reasons I think it is worth considering the role of pity in Rousseau's political and moral philosophy even despite his shortcomings.

First, if we assume that pity, and this balance of reason and sentiment are something everyone is capable of, we have a potential model for a liberal emotional approach to politics and morality. This model would then allow anyone in principle to realize the benefits of Rousseau's theory (moral liberty, happiness, equality, etc.). Therefore, I approach this project from the

[17] Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, 122. OC III 119 [20].

hopeful stance that more inclusive thinkers can find applications for some of what Rousseau says about deliberately acting on pity.

Second, I think it important to situate Rousseau as part of the canon that reclaims a role for the sentiments to work alongside reason. There is a history of the feminization of emotion, and consequently a denigration of it on that basis by misogynistic thinking. We can see this tendency in some of the most foundational texts of Western philosophy. At the moment of Socrates' death, Plato has Socrates chastise the men by his side for crying, stating that he sent the women away to avoid tears.[18] By acknowledging and even valorizing the sentiments in men, Rousseau—in spite of his misogyny—provides a possible avenue for rehabilitating political emotions in a way that benefits all. Rousseau's project is to help men know themselves better, to remain in touch with their nature in order to be complete and happy. When political structures enable this result for all their participants, those individuals qua individuals and qua citizens flourish. With the emotions no longer relegated to a devalued feminine sphere, men can regain their full humanity while women, as both rational and emotional beings, are elevated to a status equal to men in realms from which they were previously excluded. It is with this optimism in mind that I think it is particularly important to do a close examination of this sentiment of pity that I take to be a broadly inclusive one.

My project, of reasserting pity's significant role in moral and political life, relies on a methodological assumption that Rousseau's most central philosophical works, published from 1750 to 1762, form a unified, political, moral, and social project. The specific works I take to be systematic are the three discourses—the *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts*, the *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men*, and the *Discourse on Political*

[18] Plato, *Phaedo*, trans. David Gallop (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 117e.

Economy—along with *Émile* and *On the Social Contract*.[19] The three main texts I focus on within this system of thought are the *Discourse on Inequality*, *Émile*, and the *Social Contract*.[20] This is not to say that the texts contain no inconsistencies, nor to argue that none of his other works illuminate or complexify what I take to be the main political writings. I note the inconsistencies where they arise, as subtle differences between the texts are often revealing of Rousseau's philosophical refinement or confusion. For the most part, however, I see these primary texts as exemplifying Rousseau's developmental process for his own overall coherent project.

In his later work, *Rousseau: Judge of Jean-Jacques*, completed in 1776, Rousseau repeatedly emphasizes that we should evaluate his principle works as a coherent system. These claims come from the character of the Frenchman, who determines that society has misunderstood and misjudged Rousseau's earlier writings (no doubt a reaction to the banning or

[19] The *Discourse on Political Economy* is commonly referred to as the "Third *Discourse*" and frequently compiled with the first and second discourses in translations of Rousseau's political writings. I refer to it as such for expediency. It is nevertheless important to acknowledge its publication history. The essay was originally written as the entry for "*Economie, morale et politique*" in Diderot's *Encyclopédie* (Volume V) in 1755, and was only reprinted in Geneva as a standalone pamphlet three years later under a title that Rousseau may not have chosen but continued to authorize himself in future editions (Hanley, "Political Economy and Individual Liberty," 34n3; David Wootton, Introduction to *Discourse on Political Economy* in *The Basic Political Writings*, Second Edition, trans. Donald A. Cress, ed. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2011), 122). On this basis, as I explain in the following footnote and when relevant in this dissertation, my usage of the text recognizes that it is most helpful in the ways in which it introduces ideas that are later fully developed in the *Social Contract*, but its history and intended audience may account for discrepancies between concepts in the two texts.

[20] I take the *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts* and the *Discourse on Political Economy* to be the precursors to the *Discourse on Inequality* and the *Social Contract* respectively as the two formers rehearse broad ideas and practical suggestions that Rousseau later hones and reintroduces in greater detail and clarity in the latter. In the *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts*, Rousseau laments the social forces that cause the arts and sciences to distract men from maintaining and developing their original goodness, a theme he will continue in an admittedly far less muddled way in the *Discourse on Inequality*. In the *Discourse on Political Economy*, Rousseau rehearses before the *Social Contract* such ideas as the importance of patriotism and inspiring virtue in citizens, the notion of the general will, and the significance of a basic level of equality to the functioning of a legitimate state.

burning of his works in multiple countries).[21] The Frenchman self-describes coming to this discovery because Rousseau's basic works (referring to the first two discourses, *Émile*, and the *Social Contract*) all contain a common principle: they argue for the natural goodness of man and the dangers of corrupting social forces. Similar claims are made by Rousseau, speaking in his own voice, e.g. in letters rebutting published criticisms. However, such claims, from the author himself and an unreliable character in a text written with marked agitation, do not themselves suffice as proof of the system's unity. What is essential is that the theme Rousseau's Frenchman identifies as his works' main principle does in fact permeate all his works.

The Frenchman's claim implicates a number of topics we find in Rousseau's works: 1) The natural goodness of man involves the study of original man and his innocence. 2) If society is corrupting, we must investigate the source of that corruption (as misdirected desires for esteem). 3) Men by nature have the tools to prosper and orient themselves toward virtue instead of corruption. 4) That man's free will allows him to either stray from his original nature or stay in touch with his original sentiments, and thereby remain happy. These four subtopics are found in various combinations in the texts I take to constitute Rousseau's system.

In his second *Discourse*, Rousseau explores man's goodness in the state of nature, identifying the original sentiments of *amour de soi* and pity as well as man's underdeveloped capacities for free will and perfectibility. He then outlines precisely that fall described earlier into the corrupt civil society of his day through the inflammation of *amour propre*. However, even in such a pessimistic text about man's fall from innocence, his prefatory Letter to Geneva

[21] See, for example, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques*: *Dialogues*, trans. Judith R. Bush and Christopher Kelly, eds. Roger D. Masters and Christopher Kelly (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1990), 209, 212. It should be noted that Rousseau considered the first and second discourses, *Émile*, and the *Social Contract* part of his system. See fn. 19.

extolls the nation (regardless of how embellished this account of the nation is) for maintaining the virtue of its citizens by having established a legitimate republic. While the first two *Discourses* present the problems of a society that enshrines the inflammation of *amour propre*, the *Social Contract* presents the political solution. It harkens back to the *Discourse on Inequality* in describing the shift from the state of nature to society. But instead of a descent to corruption, the *Social Contract* builds on the ideas presented in the *Discourse on Political Economy* and describes the nature of legitimate legislation and government and the means to achieve a virtuous citizenry that freely wills the general will. Likewise, *Émile* too is proposed as a happy alternative to the descent into inflamed *amour propre* from the *Discourse on Inequality*. However, *Émile* is the domestic solution through individual education. While Book V of *Émile* incorporates a political education at the cusp of adulthood, the bulk of *Émile* focuses on an education that would retain the boy's original good nature, with his sense of *amour de soi* and pity, and cultivate it until the child becomes a free, morally responsible adult.

Since the 1969 publication of Judith Shklar's *Men and Citizens*, much Rousseau interpretation does not take the supposition of compatibility for granted and in fact, most particularly in the case of *Émile* and the *Social Contract*, denies the compatibility I assume throughout Chapters 1 and 2. However, it will become clear in the following chapter descriptions that I identify and build up an account of pity in Chapters 1 and 2 while Chapter 3 addresses how exactly my interpretation works to solidify the coherence of the works often thought to be incompatible.

In Chapter 1, I introduce the definition of virtue from Rousseau's footnote, discussed earlier. I take this definition of virtue, and the role of pity therein, as a roadmap for understanding an individual's vote for the general will. I argue that an expanded form of pity is

central to the motivation, formulation, and obligation of the general will. Furthermore, examining the role of expanded pity in the general will solves some issues of interpretation that a Kantian line cannot avoid. Because pity is a limited sentiment, a general will based in part on pity cannot be universalizable (much unlike Kantian formulations of the general will that ultimately look strikingly similar to categorical imperatives). This reading however fits much more coherently with Rousseau's writings wherein he explicitly denies the possibility of a universal general will.

Chapter 2 then focuses on a specific aspect of the general will that is often ambiguously defined: its tendency toward equality. I take equality here to be distributive, but the main focus of the chapter is to understand what is meant by 'tendency'. Having a tendency toward equality does not mean that the general will must or even should explicitly enforce equality. Rousseau allows for and even encourages certain types of inequalities based on merit, but he warns against extreme levels of inequality. It is important to note that Rousseau does not advocate direct intervention in correcting extreme inequalities; if such measures are necessary, the basic institutions of society have already failed. Furthermore, focusing directly on enforcing equality inflames *amour propre* because it emphasizes comparisons of wealth, power, and status and makes them appear as worthy pursuits. Instead, equality should be the natural result of the virtuous functioning of the general will (one that balances *amour de soi* and pity). To ensure such a tendency toward equality, Rousseau proposes several institutions (both public and private) that focus citizens on cultivating their *amour de soi* and pity and channeling their *amour propre* in virtuous ways.

So far, I have emphasized the role of pity in man qua citizen, as found in the *Social Contract*. However, as I alluded to earlier, there is a long-standing concern among Rousseau

scholars since Shklar's groundbreaking text, *Men and Citizens,* that Rousseau's account of the citizen is incompatible with the account of man qua individual that he puts forth in *Émile*. Chapter 3 demonstrates how my account of pity in Rousseau bridges the gap between these two seemingly incompatible lives. By ignoring the role of pity, scholars over-emphasize the role of reason and self-interest in their accounts of willing as a citizen. It would appear then that citizens lose their individual interests when they have to will the common interest. However, an account of the citizen that explains their actions not merely from reasoned self-interest, but also from pity, can overcome this problem. Rousseau names both pity and *amour de soi* as the two central drives of the individual; therefore, being interested in the good of others is itself based on an individual drive. In fact, Rousseau's explicit differentiation between the two drives of *amour de soi* and pity expressly leaves room to pursue individual interests while remaining motivated to allow others the same pursuit.

I will conclude this dissertation with reflections on the limitations of pity in Rousseau specifically as they apply to his treatment of women and non-Europeans. In both cases, further work is needed to determine if exclusivity is a necessary part of Rousseau's project. For his concepts of liberty, equality, and moral agency to be in any way practically meaningful today, Rousseau's pity would have to be more expansive than its historical application in Rousseau's texts.

Chapter 1: Restoring Pity to Rousseau's General Will

I. Introduction

Rousseau summarizes the goal of his *Social Contract*, and arguably his system of writing on educational, political, and social institutions, when he says that he aims to "[take] men as they are and laws as they can be."[1] Scholars generally agree that Rousseau's goal as stated here is to study men's psychology and morality and identify what kind of political institutions would best fit man's nature.[2] But beyond this general interpretation, what it means for Rousseau to take man as he is, and how this undertaking leads to more ideal institutions, is greatly disputed despite its centrality to appreciating Rousseau's project. Current available interpretations vary in regard to both Rousseau's moral psychology and his use of the general will as his ideal foundation for valid law. I aim to demonstrate that they have a common tendency to ignore the importance of one of the sentiments to Rousseau's goal. This tendency could be seen in part as a product of an influential Kantian line of interpretation (which I will examine in the works of John Rawls, Judith Shklar, and Ernst Cassirer) that emphasizes the role of reason without pity in generalizing a political will. In closely examining the nature of Rousseau's man and Rousseau's general will, I aim to reclaim the significance of the sentiments—most particularly that of pity—from a tradition of interpretation that left them out. Only with pity taking its proper role, can we understand what it means to take men as they are and the general will as it should be.

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[1] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Of the Social Contract*, in *Rousseau: The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings*, trans. Victor Gourevitch, ed. Victor Gourevitch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 41. OC III 351 SC I [1]. See the Introduction for a brief discussion of the texts I view as part of Rousseau's main political and moral system.

[2] John Rawls put this most articulately when he claimed that Rousseau's introduction to the *Social Contract* "refer[s] to [identifying] persons' moral and psychological natures and how that nature works within the framework of political and social institutions" in John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples with "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited"* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 7.

II. Taking Men as They Are

There are two obvious options for taking men as they are: man in contemporary society and man in the original state of nature. It is important to see that neither of these is what Rousseau has in mind with this phrase because in seeing what they lack, we generate the criteria for man as he is. In the Preface to his second *Discourse*, Rousseau draws a captivating analogy between the condition of modern man and the statue of Glaucus that demonstrates the difficulty of the project of finding man as he is:

> Like the statue of Glaucus, which time, sea, and storms had so disfigured that it less resembled a God than a ferocious Beast, the human soul, altered in the lap of society […] has, so to speak, changed in appearance to the point of being almost unrecognizable; and instead of a being always acting on certain and unvarying Principles, instead of the Celestial and majestic simplicity its Author had imprinted on it, all one finds is the deformed contrast of passion that believes it reasons and the understanding that hallucinates.[3]

This is the fate of the modern man whose history of poor decisions and descent into the current corrupt state is outlined in the *Discourse on Inequality*. Modern man's nature has been corroded through the development of an inflamed sense of *amour propre. Amour propre* is a sentiment of self-love that causes man to both desire esteem and to evaluate himself relative to others.[4] With inflamed *amour propre*, men seek power, wealth, and esteem at the expense of others because society has developed in such a way that these are the most valued possessions.[5] This is clearly

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[3] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men or Second Discourse*, in *Rousseau: The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings*, trans. Victor Gourevitch, ed. Victor Gourevitch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 124. OC III 122 [1].

[4] Ibid., 218nXV. OC III 219 [1].

[5] The idea of inflamed *amour propre* comes from Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile, or On Education,* trans. Allan Bloom, ed. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1979), 247; but the concept was popularized following Nicholas Dent's examination of it in N. J. H. Dent, *Rousseau: An Introduction to his Psychological, Social and Political Theory,* (New York: Basil Blackwell Inc., 1989), 56-58. It is now pervasive in Rousseau scholarship. For

not the man we are to take as a model for valid laws. Rousseau describes what happens when men with these values model a social contract on themselves: the rich perpetuate a scam upon the poor. All agree to protect the arbitrary property rights of the rich in the hopes that one day they will be just as esteemed and in equal need of securing their position in society. With inflamed *amour propre,* "all ran toward their chains in the belief that they were securing their freedom."[6] This false social contract cements a conventional inequality that is unrelated to natural inequality and, consequently, illegitimate.[7] Thus it is evident that, when inquiring into basing a legitimate civil system on man's nature, Rousseau does not have the modern man in mind as his intended model.

We might, then, take the statue of Glaucus analogy to imply that we should take man as he is in the state of nature—original man—as our model for laws. However, the "invariable principles" and "majestic simplicity" that make up the original man's nature make him an impossible model for a civil system. These two interrelated aspects of original man's nature allow us to discount him as Rousseau's target: first, original man is so unsophisticated that he is, for the most part, bound by the laws of nature that govern the behavior of all animals and thus has no need of artificial laws. Second, the original man is incapable of the kind of reasoning required to submit himself to a social contract.

Let us briefly examine these points in order. In discussing original man's qualities, Rousseau establishes that original man shares with animals the same primary impulses that guide his actions: *amour de soi*, i.e., a drive to self-preservation, and *pitié* (translated interchangeably

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a full appraisal of the varieties of *amour propre*, see Frederick Neuhouser*, Rousseau's Theodicy of Self-Love: Evil, Rationality and the Drive for Recognition,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[6] Rousseau*, Discourse on Inequality,* 173. OC III 177 [32].

[7] Ibid.*,* 188. OC III 193-194. I will explore what this means in Chapter 2.

as pity or compassion), i.e., the natural pain felt at the suffering or death of a fellow sentient creature.[8] In this way, man feels the same impetuses that "nature commands [of] every animal."[9] None shall harm another creature except in the rare circumstance where one's own survival is at stake. Because the original man is asocial and nature provides sufficient resources without requiring regular interactions, he is able to abide by the two simple principles of his nature without the need for further governing laws.

Rousseau does, however, differentiate man from other animals by two extra qualities that other species lack: freedom of will and perfectibility. Freedom of will allows man to treat his natural impulses more as suggestions than imperatives.[10] Animals must *instinctively* obey those commands of nature (*amour de soi* and pity) to which man and animal alike are impelled.[11] Perfectibility, meanwhile, allows man both as a species and as an individual to develop from his experiences.[12] The ability to use tools, for example, is a quality an individual man can develop. Language, meanwhile, is a skill that the species as a whole can use and develop for self- and

[8] Ibid., 127. OC III 125-126 [9].

[9] Ibid., 141. OC III 141 [16].

[10] Ibid., 140. OC III 141.

[11] I should note here that Rousseau at this point also differentiates between human free will and animal necessity by referencing animals' instincts to self-preserve (for example, to only eat a particular kind of food) and man's lack of such instincts (Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality,* 140. OC III 141). While he does not wholly deny the possibility of human instincts (see ibid., 141, 146, 161. OC III 141, 148, 164), Rousseau does conclude that man, through his freedom, is capable of ignoring any instinct-like drive and claims he cannot find any instincts particular to man, only "appropriate[d]" instincts" (ibid., 135. OC III 135 [3]). At times in the remainder of the *Discourse on Inequality* and once in the *Social Contract* he refers to both pity and *amour de soi* as instincts. It is still clear, however, that in these references Rousseau intends to imply that these drives are felt strongly and not deliberated upon with developed reason, so they are *almost* instincts, though man could disobey them, unlike animals (see for example ibid., 150, 166. OC III 152, 170; Rousseau, *Social Contract,* 53. OC III 364 SC I 8 [1]). Rousseau also calls *amour de soi* and pity in man faculties, impulses, natural sentiments, and passions, among other descriptors, underscoring that while they may be "implanted in him by nature," man may nevertheless choose to ignore them, usually to his detriment (Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, 140. OC III 141). These terms are direct translations from the French *l'instinct, les facultés, l'impulsion, le sentiment naturel, les passions.* See also the Introduction.

[12] Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, 141. OC III 141.

species-improvement. As a quality, perfectibility is not meant to necessarily carry the good connotation of self-betterment. Modern man, as described above, has developed an inflamed sense of *amour propre* and consequently seeks esteem due to his species' and his own perfectibility.

Though over time these qualities would differentiate man from other animals in his approaches to problem-solving, man's free will and perfectibility remain underdeveloped in the state of nature.[13] Instead, original man passes his time in the same way the lion does: whatever time he does not allot to his natural impulses (self-preservation and pity), he spends sleeping.[14] Original man does not have knowledge that he does not need.[15] As such, he does not possess the skills to reason, have foresight, or use language, all abilities involved in forging and maintaining civil order. These he gets from developing and acting upon his capacities for perfectibility and free will. In the state of nature, man simply possesses the talents needed to live by himself in the moment.

In such an underdeveloped state, original man would be unable to understand, let alone submit himself to, the social contract. To advocate a system based around keeping or returning man to the state of nature would instead be to advocate for the destruction of societies. Rousseau laments, in a passionate and often ignored footnote, that anyone who advocates for such a conclusion has not heard or understood "the celestial voice" but instead "recognize[s] no other

[13] I say underdeveloped here because Rousseau does seem to allow the use of tools by original man and the accumulation of different skills mimicked from animals, but, as original man is not social, any possible use of free will or perfectibility in the state of nature dies with him (see, for example, ibid., 135-136; OC III 135-136).

[14] Ibid., 140. OC III 141.

[15] Ibid., 194nVI. OC III 199-200.

destination for [our] species than to end this short life in peace."[16] For Rousseau, man's destiny is neither the one back in the forest nor the one where the rich abuse the poor. He hints at man's destiny when he claims that his critics have failed to see that from the qualities God gave original man come the capacity to develop his *true* humanity, his "calling."[17]

What, then, gives man his humanity? What is the psychological nature of man that we can take to distinguish him from animals and allow him to be a model around which we mold laws? Rousseau answers these questions in the *Social Contract* when he states explicitly that it is man's development of *moral liberty* that transformed him from "a stupid and limited animal" into "an intelligent being and a *man.*"[18] Man is no longer an animal because he is no longer primarily driven by his immediate impulses, *amour de soi* and pity. Instead, he is driven to act after using his reasoning to understand why he should make the choices he does. Moral liberty, Rousseau says, is the ability to act according to the laws one has set for oneself.[19] Reason allows man to self-govern in this way and thus is an important part of his humanity. Furthermore, we can see how reason is a necessary quality of the man we are to take as he is because he is now not only able to choose to submit himself to a social contract, but, as we shall see, the new freedom he has through creating laws for himself provides us with a model for political bodies.

However, it is crucial to realize—and many do not—that reason must be moderated to give man his humanity. In a footnote in the second *Discourse*, Rousseau identifies *amour de soi* as vital to the production of humanity and virtue specifically when it is "directed in man by

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[16] Ibid., 203nIX. OC III 207 [14]. It is this footnote, too, as Neuhouser notes, that demonstrates there can be redeeming qualities of *amour propre* (Neuhouser, *Rousseau's Theodicy of Self-Love*, 124).

[17] Ibid., 203-204nIX. OC III 207 [14].

[18] Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 53. OC III 364 SC I 8 [1]. Emphasis added.

[19] Ibid., 54. OC III 365 SC I 8 [3].

reason and modified by pity."[20] Though this footnote (footnote XV) is often cited because it goes on to draw the distinction between the natural sentiment of *amour de soi* and the artificial sentiment of *amour propre*, it is often overlooked in its emphasis on the role of the sentiments in generating man's moral agency.[21] We must not ignore the fact that man achieves his humanity by developing reason in such a way as to balance his two natural sentiments of self-preservation and pity. Man can no longer simply act on his impulse to preserve himself because he can reasonably foresee the consequences of his actions. Moral man is thus able to use his pity and his reason to prevent himself from acting unnecessarily harmfully while promoting his own survival. It is when man utilizes his pity in concert with his *amour de soi* in the process of self-governance that he is truly acting virtuously and demonstrating his humanity.[22]

In addition to ignoring the pity component of footnote XV, many common readings of Rousseau overtly reject this idea that pity is intimately involved in taking men as they are and as models for the law. Many contemporary interpretations (that follow the Kantian line) claim that pity exists as a principle of human action in the state of nature, but that it disappears or is significantly muted once man enters civil society. They often reference a particular passage

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[20] Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, 218nXV. OC III 219 [1]. The full first paragraph of the footnote is cited in the Introduction. The sentence I refer to here is "[*Amour de soi*] is a natural sentiment which inclines every animal to attend to its self-preservation and which, directed in man by reason and modified by pity, produces humanity and virtue."

[21] See, for example, John McHugh, "Pursuing Sympathy without Vanity," in *Adam Smith and Rousseau: Ethics, Politics, Economics,* eds. Maria Pia Paganelli, Dennis C. Rasmussen, and Craig Smith (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 121; Samuel Fleischacker, *A Short History of Distributive Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 59; and Nicholas Dent, *Rousseau,* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 70, who even mentions pity when he makes a reference to the distinction between *amour de soi* and *amour propre*, but cuts entirely the passage about pity modifying *amour de soi*.

[22] Note here that while reason guides (or rules over) *amour de soi* in a manner that aligns with the rationalist account presented in the Introduction, pity *moderates* that rationally guided *amour de soi*. Rousseau's sentimentalist tendencies are most prevalent when he discusses the "mutual relationship" between reason and pity such that there is no evident hierarchy between the two components of the mind, but instead moral agency should be a product of the reflective balance of the sentiments. The sentimentalist elements of the relationship between reason and pity are most prevalent in *Émile* (see, for example, Rousseau, *Émile,* 203, 219, 235).

from the *Discourse on Inequality* wherein Rousseau directly contrasts original man's pity with the severe diminishment of the sentiment as observed in contemporary society:

> [Pity may be] nothing but a sentiment that puts us in the place of him who suffers, a sentiment that is obscure and lively in Savage man, developed but weak in Civil man […] Indeed, commiseration will be all the more energetic in proportion as the Onlooking animal identifies more intimately with the suffering animal: Now this identification must, clearly, have been infinitely closer in the state of Nature than in the state of reasoning. It is reason that engenders *amour propre*, and reflection that reinforces it; reason that turns man back upon himself; reason that separates him from everything that troubles and afflicts him: It is Philosophy that isolates him; by means of Philosophy he secretly says, at the sight of a suffering man, perish if you wish, I am safe.[23]

Interpreters refer to this mournful observation to note that laws molded on social men—men who have developed reason and *amour propre*—cannot therefore be based on pity because *amour propre* weakens that sense too much for it to be an active element of civilized man.[24] They find further evidence of the need to replace pity's role in civil society from a claim in Chapter VIII of the *Social Contract* that notes that the civil state, in order to be legitimate, must "substitut[e] justice for instinct" and replace "physical impulsion," like the gut impulse of pity, with "the voice of duty."[25] So, one common reading, then, is that civil society replaces the weakened (and

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[23] Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality,* 153. OC III 155-156 [37]. The translator uses "obscure and lively" for the original <<*obscur et vif*>> in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*, ed. Jean Starobinski (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), 85. I take the reference to obscurity to be a reference to the sentiment's closeness to an instinct (as opposed to proximity to reason, or enlightenment). *Vif* I take as vigorous, and to thus contrast the strength of the instinctual sentiment in nature to its weakness in developed, corrupt man.

[24] See for example, McHugh, "Pursuing Sympathy without Vanity," 111-2; Christel Fricke, "The Role of Interpersonal Comparisons in Moral Learning and the Sources of Recognition Respect," in *Adam Smith and Rousseau*, 74; Charles L. Griswold, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Adam Smith: A Philosophical Encounter* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 103; Pierre Force, "Rousseau and Smith: On Sympathy as a First Principle," in *Thinking with Rousseau: From Machiavelli to Schmitt,* eds. Helena Rosenblatt and Paul Schweigert (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 125-6; Richard A. Barney and Warren Montag, Introduction to *Systems of Life: Biopolitics, Economics, and Literature on the Cusp of Modernity* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019), 26-7; Makus, "Pity, Pride, and Prejudice," 237n4-5.

[25] Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 53. OC III 364 SC I 8 [1]. For the arguments that state that pity is replaced or simply not involved in the justice created by the social contract, see, for example, Judith Shklar, *Men and Citizens: A Study of Rousseau's Social Theory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 20-21; Arthur Melzer, *The Natural*

possibly lost) sense of pity with duties and an artificial system of laws that must take others into account.

This reading mistakes the scope of both of the passages involved. While it is true that there may be no escaping *amour propre* in civilized society, the passion is only really harmful when inflamed. It is specifically this inflamed sense of *amour propre* that so weakens pity as described in the second *Discourse.* This inflamed *amour propre* is what we saw in the earlier examination of corrupt man. For some, the corruption of *amour propre* destroys pity so thoroughly that it cannot be resurrected.[26] For others, it is perhaps because of the fear of the dangers of *amour propre* that they forget pity.[27] Instead, they focus on what they view as the urgent problem of how to modify *amour propre* so that it does not undermine the sentiment of self-preservation (*amour de soi*). For, when the system is so rife with inflamed *amour propre* that the poor eagerly submit to the fraudulent social contract that protects the rich at the former's expense, the poor alarmingly neglect the satisfaction of their *amour de soi* in the hopes of satisfying their *amour propre.*

In pursuing either project, these authors recognize that inflamed *amour propre* can be

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Goodness of Man: On the System of Rousseau's Thought (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 115; Richard Boyd, "Justice, Beneficence and Boundaries" in *The General Will: The Evolution of a Concept,* ed. James Farr and David Lay Williams (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 253-4; Jonathan Marks, "Rousseau's Discriminating Defense of Compassion," *The American Political Science Review* 101, no. 4 (Nov. 2007), 728. I will address Marks further in Section VI for his extensive examination of compassion and firm distinction between Rousseau's conceptions of pity and of justice.

[26] See fns. 24 and 25.

[27] See, for example, Robin Douglass, *Rousseau and Hobbes: Nature, Free Will, and the Passions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), particularly Chapter 4, pp. 149-166, which focuses on aligning *amour propre* with *amour de soi*; David Lay Williams, "The Substantive Elements of Rousseau's General Will," in *The General Will: The Evolution of a Concept,* ed. James Farr and David Lay Williams (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 237. This focus on a general will that triumphs over the dangers of *amour propre* often follows the redemption arc for *amour propre* outlined in Neuhouser, *Rousseau's Theodicy of Self-Love.* However, I will demonstrate in Chapter 2 that Neuhouser's particular redemption of *amour propre* is consistent with my reading of the general will here.

corrected so as not to corrupt *amour de soi*. However, they fail to note that such a correction could also preserve pity. The disappearance of pity goes hand in hand with the corruption. The man who is to serve as a model for the laws is not, however, corrupt. Pity need not disappear with the appearance of reason and civilized society; it *must not* disappear in order for that society to have good people and good laws. Rousseau recognizes this in footnote XV when he acknowledges that reason, *amour de soi*, and pity work together to create man's humanity.[28]

Furthermore, if we read the full passage from the *Social Contract*, part of which we have seen out of context, we see that it too leaves room for pity even as duty replaces instincts:

> [The] transition from the state of nature to the civil state produces a most remarkable change in man by substituting justice for instinct in his conduct, and endowing his actions with the morality they previously lacked. Only then, when the voice of duty succeeds physical impulsion and right succeeds appetite, does man, who until then had looked only to himself, see himself forced to act upon other principles, and to consult his reason before listening to his inclinations.[29]

Rousseau here is not claiming that succeeding man's original instincts (of self-preservation and pity) with duty and justice means that these original sentiments have vanished and have been replaced with something artificial and stronger.[30] Rather, he is claiming that, upon entering into civil society, impulsive behavior becomes instead deliberative because one must now rationally consider and moderate one's own impulses. Duty and justice are now the principled versions of man's instincts after he reflects on them with reason. Acting on pity after such a deliberative

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[28] It is also notable that with the first appearance of *amour propre*, before corrupt civil society forms in the *Discourse on Inequality*, Rousseau notes that pity is still able to moderate *amour propre*. This not only demonstrates that the two sentiments can co-exist, but Rousseau further marks such a time of their coexistence as the happiest and longest lasting epoch (Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, 166. OC III 170).

[29] Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 53. OC III 364 SC I 8.

[30] Here is one place where Rousseau writes of original man having instincts, though he means to refer to the the arational actions of original man. For more on this, refer to fn. 11. Furthermore, it is notable most translations that argue for the disappearance of the original sentiments use translations with the word "replace" instead of "succeeds" which can occasionally alter the original meaning.

process, in fact, becomes all the more necessary because man in civilized society finds himself needing to take *others* (their interests and suffering) into account.[31] What it looks like for man to "consult his reason before listening to his inclinations" is precisely outlined in that overlooked component of the famous footnote XV and is the very method of implementation of man's moral liberty.[32] Duty is not some wholly artificial construct that replaces original instincts; it is the result of recognizing that one's *amour de soi* must now be "directed in man by reason and modified by pity."[33]

So, we have seen that there are four qualities of original man that are necessary to accounting for man's psychological nature. These qualities are the two sentiments of *amour de soi* and pity, and the two capacities for free will and perfectibility. Yet they are not sufficient to an account of the fully-formed moral men that we are to 'take as they are.' Man has to grow from this original state like a baby matures. He must develop his capacities for free will and perfectibility in order to slowly develop the power to reason and recognize his duties.[34] If man can maintain his original sentiments of *amour de soi* and pity and use his reason to consider his impulses to both, then, Rousseau believes, he is finally a man.[35] To be a man is to be a moral

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[31] Pierre Macherey, "Rousseau: Vital Instinct and Pity" in Systems of Life: Biopolitics, Economics, and Literature on the Cusp of Modernity (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019), 83.

[32] So, while my reading of moral liberty is controversial because it involves pity, this *Social Contract* passage I have been reinterpreting leaves room for pity and immediately precedes the introduction of moral liberty. I will discuss moral liberty and its relation to both the general will and the individual self further in Chapter 3.

[33] Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, 218nXV. OC III 219 [1].

[34] Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, 140-150. OC III 141-152. There, he explores man's growth from his original state through Rousseau's exploration of the development of language, and thus memory and foresight. The proper path for original man's growth will be explored and developed further in the following chapter.

[35] As I have discussed in the Introduction and fn. 22, this is a much more reciprocal relationship between the sentiments and reason than is standardly seen in a rationalist account of moral agency. Though he discusses reason reflecting on and balancing man's drives, and separately discusses reason's role in guiding *amour de soi*, Rousseau himself did not draw firm distinctions between reason's practical and theoretical roles, so I do not intend to

agent and thus to recognize that, through self-moderation, one has obligations one has created for oneself.

III. The Basics of the General Will

Now that we have seen man as he is, how does that give us a model for laws as they should be? Rousseau's concept of the general will—the will of the people, as sovereign, aimed at the common good—is meant to answer this question.[36] In this section, I will lay out the least controversial elements of the general will. Then, in Section IV, I will examine a common (Kantian) interpretation of the general will that I hope to challenge (in Section V) insofar as it ignores pity as a source of the motivation and obligation to follow the general will. While my paper mainly focuses on the Kantian line of interpretation that excludes pity from an account of man's moral and political motivations and obligations, I will also look briefly at a line of theorizing about pity in Rousseau that admits its motivational function but denies its role in duty or justice. As I believe this tendency in the pity literature is influenced by the Kantian interpretation, I will address it in Section VI after addressing the Kantian account.

However, among all these accounts, it is generally granted that the man of moral liberty is the model for the general will. Not only is he the person who would agree to the social

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reconstruct one for him beyond the text. I do not think it is a coincidence, however, that Rousseau allows reason to guide *amour de soi* but has pity, in a sense, guiding reason. Rousseau found pity far less dangerous and in need of moderation than he found any form of self-love (see, for example, Marks, "Rousseau's Discriminating Defense of Compassion," 738). For a recent work further examining the relationship between reason and pity, see Ingrid Makus, "Pity, Pride, and Prejudice: Rousseau on the Passions," in *Bringing the Passions Back In: The Emotions in Political Philosophy*, eds. Rebecca Kingston and Leonard Ferry (Toronto: UBC Press, 2008), 147.

[36] Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 57. OC III 368 SC II 1. While we will see shortly that the idea of the common good is contested, we can acknowledge that the common good means the good of all the citizens, not just a subset (or single individual) among them. See David Lay Williams, "The Substantive Elements of Rousseau's General Will in *The General Will,* 225.

contract, but the language surrounding the body politic and its relation to the general will mirrors the language of the individual with moral liberty:

> The body politic [is] a moral being that has a will; and this general will, which always tends to the preservation and the well-being of the whole and of each part, and which is the source of the laws, is, for all the members of the state, in relation to one another and to it, the rule of what is just and what is unjust.[37]

From this description, the body politic appears as an amplified version of the individual man: the people as a whole create legislation that they then will themselves follow for the common good. The general will is the body politic's instrument of self-legislation. This description is Rousseau's brief introduction to the idea of the general will in his *Discourse on Political Economy*, a work in which he drafted many of the ideas he would develop more thoroughly in the *Social Contract.*

We must now turn to the *Social Contract* to understand key features of the general will that allow it to function in such a way as to aim at the common good. First, the general will must "issue from all."[38] That is, a key factor in maintaining the generality of the general will is ensuring that every member has an equal say in determining its direction. Not only does this mean that every person's views must be counted, but this statement also requires that no one person's interests get counted for more than they should.[39] For, "either the will is general or it is not; it is either the will of the body of the people, or that of only a part."[40]

In order to ensure that each voice is counted equally and for no more or less than it

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[37] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on Political Economy*, in *Rousseau:* The Social Contract *and Other Later Political Writings*, trans. Victor Gourevitch, ed. Victor Gourevitch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 6. OC III 245 [12].

[38] Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 62. OC III 373 SC II 4 [5].

[39] Ibid., 58n. OC III 369n SC II 2.

[40] Ibid., 58. OC III 369 SC II 2 [1].

should, Rousseau relies upon informed, private deliberation. Deliberation must be about one's own self-interest because if one consults with others before voting for the common interest, one might be persuaded to vote for a factionalized interest. Factions prevent the general will from coming from all because they affect the diversity of voices contributing to the calculation for the general will. Partial interests can sway voters to vote in blocks and thus not only reduce the number of interests considered, but also outnumber the interests of those who choose not to factionalize. The result of factionalized voting is thus not the common good (because the goods identified by each individual were not considered equally) but instead the partial good (of the largest faction).[41] Instead each citizen must make up his own mind, and "state only his own opinion."[42] So long as one votes in one's self-interest alone, the votes for the common interest can be tallied as the "sum of the differences" in private wills, and the general will successfully "derives from all."[43]

The general will, in order to be general, also must "apply to all."[44] In order for the general will to allow its members to self-legislate, not only must all members create the laws, but those resulting laws must then apply to all the members as well. The laws thus need to serve as a

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[41] Rousseau calls this calculation one for the *will of all.* While it is clearest to see general derivation of the law from the way in which Rousseau explains voting procedures and the procedural way in which he differentiates the will of all from the general will, I should note that the general will appears in Rousseau as not merely a result of regular, actual voting. Paradoxically, Rousseau outlines voting procedures for the general will throughout the *Social Contract* but also takes the phrase "derives from all" to allow for the general will to derive from tacit consent or a general "silence" on the laws (ibid., 109. OC III 424 SC III 11 [4]). Thus, while it is expeditious to use the language and procedure of voting to understand the laws to which all would consent, it should be noted that the notion that the laws derive from all appears to be more of a normative ideal of laws to which all would consent, not a consistent formal process. See, for example, Frederick Neuhouser, "Freedom, Dependence, and the General Will," *The Philosophical Review* 102, no. 3 (1993), 390; Dent, *Rousseau,* 136-8; David Lay Williams, "The Substantive Elements of Rousseau's General Will," 225.

[42] Ibid., 60. OC III 372 SC II 3 [4].

[43] Ibid., 60, 62. OC III 371 SC II 3 [2], OC III 373 SC II 4 [5].

[44] Ibid., 62. OC III 373 SC II 4 [5].

guide for each of the state's members. This general application also requires that the laws do not single out any individuals for special treatment—positive or negative. So, the sovereign cannot bestow particular benefits or punishments on specified individuals. The sovereign can only legislate which kinds of actions deserve credit or penalty, so that they are applied to all subjects alike.[45]

We can now appreciate some of the most critical elements of the general will: it is the collectively determined source of the body politic's self-legislation, aimed at the common—and commonly applied—good. To be sure, another important characteristic of the general will is that it "tends toward equality."[46] I will address the complex issues regarding interpretation of tending toward equality, and its relation to the common good, in the next chapter.

IV. Contemporary View of the General Will

As I have noted in this chapter's introduction, however, there is an important twentieth-century account of the general will that does not include pity in its consideration of what makes the general will just and, thus, capable of creating valid laws and binding obligations. It is to this account with widespread influence today that we must now turn. This is an interpretation with roots in Kant's reading of Rousseau but involves what I believe to be a problematic reconfiguration of one of Rousseau's passages about the general will. The passage in contention goes as follows:

> The commitments which bind us to the social body are obligatory only because they are mutual, and their nature is such that in fulfilling them one cannot work for others

[45] It is the government, acting as the executor of the sovereign's general will, that can apply the general laws to particular cases and individuals (ibid., 82. OC III 395 SC III 1).

[46] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du contrat social*, ed. Bruno Bernardi (Paris: Flammarion, 2001), 61. OC III 368 SC II 1 [3]. Translation mine.

> without also working for oneself. Why is the general will always upright, and why do all consistently will each one's happiness, if not because there is no one who does not appropriate the word *each* to himself, and think of himself as he votes for all? Which proves that the equality of right and the notion of justice which it produces follows from each one's preference for himself and hence from the nature of man.[47]

The reading I want to challenge starts by assuming from such phrasing that the self-legislating process is just because everyone would reasonably assent to a general will that works in their own self-interest (as a part of the whole). This assumption relies on highlighting two elements from the passage above: i) it interprets the requirement for mutuality as nothing more than a requirement for an equality of application to all those recognized as part of the body politic, and ii) it suggests that the right general will derives from nothing more than *rationalized self-interest.* Pity, notably, is entirely missing from this account. I shall examine these elements as they appear in several influential interpretations including that defended by Rawls, in his *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy,*[48] and in the works of Judith Shklar and Ernst Cassirer.[49] Rousseau scholarship has converged, as a result of these kinds of interpretations, on overlooking

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[47] Ibid., 61-62. OC III 373 SC II 4 [5].

[48] John Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy,* ed. Samuel Freeman, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

[49] I am highlighting these three authors because of their influence on Rousseau's placement in Enlightenment and political philosophy canon, as well as their influence on how Rousseau's works were or were not systematized. Cassirer, in his contextualization of Enlightenment ideas of reason, firmly places Rousseau as Kant's direct and persuasive predecessor. Rawls not only takes Cassirer's genealogy of the canon for granted in terms of Rousseau's connection to Kant (see Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy,* 200), but also saw himself as continuing the tradition founded by Rousseau and culminating in Rawls's own veil of ignorance (See, for example, John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 233; Sheldon S. Wolin, "Liberal Justice and Political Democracy" in *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought,* Expanded Edition, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 524-556). Shklar, meanwhile, would likely dispute her inclusion in what I call a Kantian line of interpretation (see Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, 73), however, as we shall see, the main components of her interpretation of the general will are ultimately in line with the political components of the Kantian interpretation. Outside of her interpretation of the general will, there are elements of Shklar's interpretation that are decidedly not Kantian and provide more nuance on Rousseau's location in the canon. One of these central non-Kantian claims will be examined in Chapter 3.

the full role of pity in the general will. I call this line of interpretation the Kantian interpretation for reasons I will review after examining the elements of the interpretation itself.

Rawls gives a fitting summary of the centrality of rationalized self-interest to this formulation and justification of the general will when he states:

> Rousseau answers the problem [of maintaining one's freedom while justifiably uniting with others into a general will] roughly as follows: given the fact of social interdependence, and the necessity for and the possibility of mutually advantageous social cooperation, the form of association is to be such that it would be reasonable and rational for equal persons, moved by both forms of love of self, to agree to it.[50]

From this passage we can see that Rawls identifies reason, *amour de soi,* and *amour propre* reimagined as a drive toward equality[51] as central for maintaining individual freedom and justifying the general will. Essentially, Rawls is claiming that the general will is justified because any reasonable person—one who sees the benefits of society to one's individual self-preservation as well as sees the need to be treated as equal to his fellow men in the pursuit of his self-preservation—would see that his fellow men share these concerns as well. Given that all members have these fundamental interests, they thus have a *common good.* For Rawls, the general will is just because it is derived from our nature (of self-love) and, most importantly, is rationally understood as such.[52] The general will allows us to have moral freedom, which, under a Rawlsian interpretation is not only following self-given law, as was noted above, but following

[50] John Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*, 220.

[51] Rawls refers to this "drive toward equality" as the proper manifestation of the second form of self-love, *amour propre* (Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy,* 222). This idea is called *egalitarian amour-propre* and will be addressed in the subsequent chapter.

[52] Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*, 232. This interpretation also seems to accord with Nicholas Dent's account of what good reasons for assenting to the general will are, as well as the equality that obliges one to the general will (Dent, *Rousseau*, 138-9, 149). Though Dent does at times imply that pity could be involved in motivation through his discussion of what he calls "the importance of the social spirit" (Dent, *Rousseau*, 139).

"namely, the laws enacted from the point of view of the general will and properly based on citizens' fundamental shared interests [derived from self-love]."[53]

This definition of moral liberty differs in key respects from the one I offered earlier. It neglects pity as a fundamental uniting aspect of the citizens and thus as a main component of the general will. In fact, it explicitly does so because there is a vested interest under a Kantian interpretation in not allowing pity into a conception of self-interest; ergo, pity is not involved in motivating or justifying the general will. Rawls makes this clear in *A Theory of Justice*, when he states that emotions—most particularly the sympathy and benevolence that, to him, threaten the stability of Humean and Smithian accounts of justice—should be replaced with the more "realistic" and stable account of "reciprocal advantage" that he also attributes to Rousseau and Kant as part of his account's heritage.[54] As a result of Rawls's influence, many contemporary interpretations rely on this definition of moral liberty without pity in justifying the general will.

It is uncontroversial for Rawls to state that the general will is justified because it maintains man's moral liberty. The problem is that when moral liberty is defined without pity, the obligatory nature of the general will solely derives from a rationalized understanding (and then a free self-imposition) of man's *self-interest*. Other Rousseau scholars have generally agreed with this statement, although they exhibit varying ideas of what exactly is in man's best interest. For instance, Rawls's point about the nature of man's *amour propre* extending to a drive toward equality is not a generally accepted element of Rousseau interpretation.[55] Yet,

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[53] Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*, 235. See also, ibid., 230.

[54] Rawls, *Theory of Justice*, 155.

[55] Because of its contentious nature in Rousseau scholarship, we will look into this element further in the next chapter. Some, like Neuhouser in *Rousseau's Theodicy of Self-Love*, reject this formulation of man's self-love, and require us to formulate a conception of the general will that allows for a self-love that aims at inequality. Others, like Shklar, collapse the desire to avoid inequality into self-interest, as we shall see.

despite this difference, central elements of Rawls's interpretation can be found in Judith Shklar and Ernst Cassirer.

Judith Shklar incorporates into her depiction of man's self-interest a general interest in preventing inequality. It is in man's interest to avoid inequality because man's drive to preserve himself makes his main interest to live securely and comfortably, and Shklar argues that the peasant can realize that these two goals cannot be achieved in a state of severe inequality.[56] Thus, Shklar defends her interpretation, that "for Rousseau the general will pursued nothing but hard personal interest, even if it was an interest that citizens shared."[57] In her development of this last point, Shklar differs from the typical Kantian line that takes the general will to be a mode of individual self-expression instead of an expression molded by public education.[58] This departure led Shklar to firmly distinguish the nature and agency of Rousseau's man and citizen and will be the topic of Chapter 3.

Despite this departure from what I've called the Kantian line of interpretation, Shklar's version of Rousseau's general will is determined in much the same way as Rawls's: the citizens recognize that they all have a common interest based on their common nature. Moreover, her justification of the general will follows the same pattern as Rawls's: the general will is deemed just when the populace recognizes the common interests, and thus sees how their actions in their own self-interest can be guided by reason. Shklar omits fellow-feeling from her definition of a

[56] Shklar, *Men and Citizens,* 166, 169. I should note that while Rawls sees man's self-interest as rationalized *amour de soi*, Shklar sees *amour de soi* as existing only in natural man, not social man. As we will discuss in Chapter 3, she sees the citizen as molded into something new and his self-love as no longer based on the original sentiment.

[57] Ibid., 169.

[58] Ibid., 17.

just general will: it is "only well-understood, expanded, and properly directed self-interest."[59] Reason and self-interest again combine in Shklar's interpretation of the general will and thus, on their own, allow the individual to self-govern in a justified manner.

At first glance, Cassirer's formulation differs from Rawls's in that he claims that man's common interest—that happiness he seeks and votes for by his nature—is, in fact, the happiness of self-mastery and true freedom, what Cassirer calls "the highest happiness."[60] But Cassirer still follows the same formula as Rawls: rational self-interest brought men together under the general will, and likewise man's *amour de soi* guided by reason leads him to his duties.[61] Cassirer is not to be outdone in the extent to which he identifies Rousseau and Kant; he expressly replaces fellow-feeling with reason as the faculty that makes man consider his relationship toward others and how man eventually locates his greatest happiness through the general will.[62] When examining the general will, Cassirer notes:

> This goodness [of the general will] is grounded […] in man's capacity for self-determination[, …] in the recognition of an ethical law to which the individual will surrenders voluntarily. Man is 'by nature good'—to the degree in which this nature is not absorbed in sensual instincts but lifts itself, spontaneously and without outside help, to the idea of freedom. For the specific gift that differentiates man from all other natural beings is the gift of perfectibility.[63]

Cassirer emphasizes man's perfectibility because it is this faculty that allows man to develop

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[59] Ibid., 175.

[60] Ernst Cassirer, *The Question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, trans. Peter Gay, ed. Peter Gay (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 116.

[61] Ibid., 125-126.

[62] Ibid., 100-107. Cassirer rightly denies sympathy as an originally social sentiment (in natural man) for Rousseau. However, that it therefore never plays a role in man's moral nature is where we diverge. Cassirer focuses on the Savoyard vicar as an example of Kantian reason over social sentiment, but I will demonstrate the significance of the sentiments to the vicar in Chapter 3.

[63] Ibid., 104-105. This is what Barnard calls "investing freedom itself with morality" (F. M. Barnard, *Self-Direction and Political Legitimacy: Rousseau and Herder,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 275).

reason and thus guides his will and orders his world. It is this faculty that allows him first to see that it is in his self-interest to agree to the social contract because it would work to his benefit if everyone else were bound by it.[64] Eventually, Cassirer says, "the universal can be discovered only when every man follows his own insight and recognizes, in and by virtue of this very insight, a necessary solidarity between his will and the general will[, an act that] requires reason."[65] Cassirer here talks about Rousseau as the precursor to Kant, identifying how men come to oblige themselves by reasoning through categorical imperatives.[66]

It is no coincidence that Kantian vocabulary arises in these descriptions of how to access and justify the general will because this line of thought is Kantian in origin. Those who interpret Rousseau in this way owe their interpretation in part to accrediting Kant as Rousseau's best interpreter.[67] Rawls most comprehensively reads Kant's ideas back into Rousseau by starting with Kant's account of self-legislation (that is more formulaic and less rhetorically expressed than what we find in Rousseau) and making that Kantian account the means to moral behavior.

Rawls has written that his own project in *Theory of Justice* was inspired by Kant because "Kant sought to give a philosophical foundation to Rousseau's idea of the general will."[68] Cassirer, too, claims that Kant identified the key to Rousseau's system: that the general will gives man's actions a freedom and morality that they could not have had before.[69] And it is

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[64] Cassirer, *The Question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau,* 101.

[65] Ibid., 124.

[66] Ibid., 96.

[67] See, for example, Cassirer, *The Question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau,* 127; Barnard, *Self-Direction and Political Legitimacy*, 125, 145.

[68] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 233.

[69] Cassirer, *The Question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau,* 127.

difficult not to see this method of justifying Rousseau's general will in Kant himself when he writes in *Toward Perpetual Peace*:

> What is of paramount importance in organizing the state well…is that the state directs the forces [of individuals' selfish inclinations] within it against each other in such a way that the one hinders or nullifies the destructive effects of the other. Thus, the result for reason turns out as if neither existed and the human being, if not exactly a morally good person, is nonetheless forced to be a good citizen.[70]

Kant writes here of pitting individual self-interests against each other to achieve, in the remainder, the common interest. Thus, he writes of a rational calculation for the right way to organize society. We saw this stance reflected in each of the above interpretations of self-interest: when man becomes conscious of his common interest, he becomes conscious of the right organization of the general will. From this each thinker then concludes that to voluntarily self-direct in accordance with the general will is to be that morally good person that was not necessary for the mere calculation of the general will.[71]

In the interpretations of Rawls, Cassirer, and Shklar, as in Kant's formulaic interpretation, we can also see the abstract character of the reasoning process that makes it universalizable.[72] Everyone could abstract general rules from the basis of the common goal everyone shares of acting in their own self-interest. The general will that results from interpreting this reasoning process in such a way is a general will that could easily become

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[70] Immanuel Kant, "Toward Perpetual Peace," in *Toward Perpetual Peace and Other Writings on Politics, Peace, and History,* trans. David L. Colclasure, ed. Pauline Kleingeld (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 90.

[71] This is in line with what Cassirer notes about the formulation of the categorical imperative. Cassirer claims that the first two formulations of Kant's categorical imperative (the condition of acting only on maxims one would will as universal law and the condition of treating all people including oneself only as ends) combine Rousseau's notion of general will with his notion of acting for one's best interest (Ernst Cassirer, *Rousseau Kant Goethe: Two Essays,* trans. by James Gutmann, Paul Oskar Kristeller, and John Herman Randall, Jr. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1945), 32).

[72] See, for example, Cassirer, *The Question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau,* 124.

cosmopolitan in nature. This consequence is one we will review after looking more carefully at the two main building blocks Kant, Rawls, Cassirer, and Shklar used to reformulate the general will according to their interpretations: reason and self-interest.

V. The Missing Element and its Components

Can this reasoned, self-interested picture allow us to understand what makes the general will a moral one, a will that obliges not simply out of interest but also from *duty?*[73] For, recalling footnote XV highlighted in Section II, Rousseau's recipe for virtuous action did not simply include the self-interest of one's *amour de soi* and reason. Duty requires the principled reflection on both *amour de soi and* pity. These accounts have all discounted the "natural virtue," pity, which Rousseau says acts as "the cause of the repugnance to evil-doing which every human being would feel even independently of the maxims of education."[74]

For the purposes of this paper, I will use the general terms "expanded pity" or "sympathy" to flag what pity becomes in ideally socialized people. For, once man has fully developed reason, pity is not just repugnance anymore. Even in the *Discourse on Inequality* where the notion of pity is introduced, the concept expands beyond Rousseau's initial description of that natural, unavoidable repugnance at others' suffering. It is true that in the state of nature the concept of pity is principally a reactive idea: a simple reaction to the cries of pained beings. Pity as repugnance is merely a reaction that comes *after the fact*. Yet, even in the state of nature

[73] Rousseau claims that for contributing members to the general will, "duty and interest alike obligate" (Rousseau, *Social Contract,* 52. OC III 363 I 7 [4]).

[74] Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, 154. OC III 156 [38]. As I will examine in Section VI, even contemporary accounts that carve out a space for pity in Rousseau take a Kantian view of duty in Rousseau instead of including pity in the definition of duty as I have done.

as Rousseau wrote it, we can see the beginnings of an expanded pity that allows people to anticipate the response of repugnance and avoid the action that would cause it. This is how pity in the state of nature causes man to avoid harming others: "pity [is w]hat will keep any sturdy Savage from robbing a weak child or an infirm old man of his hard-won subsistence."[75] Furthermore, according to Rousseau's initial descriptions, once someone is able to anticipate the repugnance reaction, it drives even original man to take action to create a positive situation in place of the anticipated negative one, even if such action involves endangering himself.

Rousseau makes this point in several ways. For instance, he refers to the role of pity in making mothers willing to take on dangers not for themselves but to protect and feed their young.[76] He also discusses an important scene in Mandeville's *The Fable of the Bees*, a story of an imprisoned man who must witness a beast ripping a child from its mother. The man feels anguish not only because of the suffering he witnesses but also because he is unable to help despite the grave danger such an offer would have caused him.[77] Rousseau was not the only thinker to cite Mandeville's fable as evidence that even egoistic authors had to recognize a natural sense of pity. David Hume and Adam Smith also turned to the story to provide grounds for citing the sentiment of *sympathy* against those who believed men were naturally brutal.[78]

It is also important that Rousseau's discussions of the sentiment of pity consistently

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[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid., 145-146. OC III 147. It is interesting to note that Rousseau allows this limited form of expanded pity to animals, too. He not only mentions the reactive repugnance cattle and other animals have to seeing their own kind suffer, but also attributes animal mothers' tenderness for their young to pity, as well as the anticipatory repugnance that horses have to the idea of trampling a living being (ibid., 152. OC III 154).

[77] Ibid., 152-153. OC III 154-155. It is this example that causes Ingrid Makus, too, to differentiate between what she calls passive (and I call reactive) and active forms of pity (Ingrid Makus, "Pity, Pride, and Prejudice," 146-147).

[78] Pierre Force, *Self-Interest before Adam Smith: A Genealogy of Economic Science* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 18.

suggest the broad, and not merely reactive, interpretation of the concept. In his initial formulation of pity, Rousseau alternatively describes man as "compatissant et sensible" (compassionate and sensitive) and having "la tendresse" (tenderness) in the original state because of this guiding sentiment.[79] This use of "compassionate" as an alternate description of pitying is important because "compassion" originates from the Latin word for *sympathy*, "compassio," which means "to feel with."[80] Moreover, "fellow-feeling," and "humanity" were often used as English language equivalents to "sympathy" in the eighteenth century.[81] Rousseau, himself, attributes the social virtue of "l'humanité," to "pity applied to…the [human] species in general."[82]

At the point where pity takes on this more general quality, however, it must become "a social virtue," for original man only experiences pity temporarily, and mostly in reactive cases (as the term "repugnance" suggests) inspired by others' pain, because original man is not in constant enough contact with his fellows for pity to fix regularly onto a particular being or to the species in general. In fact, it is notable that Rousseau's descriptions of even the impermanent relationship of motherhood in the state of nature appear much more like a social form of pity: the mother is first described as reactively nourishing her children but eventually caring for them because they have endeared themselves to her.[83] In this regard, when man becomes social, pity

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[79] Rousseau, *Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité*, 84. OC III 154-155.

[80] Eric Schliesser, "On Sympathy," in *Sympathy: A History,* ed. Eric Schliesser (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 3.

[81] Michael L. Frazer, *The Enlightenment of Sympathy: Justice and the Moral Sentiments in the Eighteenth Century and Today,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 18.

[82] Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality,* 153. OC III 155 [37].

[83] Ibid., 145-146. OC III 147. This is why, in the previous sentence, I say the initial cases are 'mostly reactive' because Rousseau does refer to the tenderness of mother to child in some cases as creating at least a temporary incentive based on a positive sympathetic bond, but not one that is expected to create a permanent relationship.

takes on a more positive or active role: it leads to generosity, mercy, benevolence, and friendship because, as Rousseau asks rhetorically: "what else is it to wish that someone not suffer, than to wish that he be happy?"[84]

Rousseau's question helps us understand the plausibility of an expansive reading of the concept of pity. I take it to show that Rousseau did in fact view pity as less limited than many interpreters allow when they disregard evidence of the positive elements of the sentiment.[85] This reliance on an expanded concept of pity is especially important when discussing the role of pity in inspiring positive actions and thoughts (e.g., acting benevolently, or desiring that someone be happy) rather than merely reactions to negative situations (e.g., soothing another after hearing them cry out in pain).[86]

Jonathan Marks maintains, without evidence, that this example was a mistake of Rousseau's and that the sentiment must remain negative in its formulation (Marks, "Rousseau's Discriminating Defense of Compassion," 729). It is also neglected in Merle Perkins, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: On the Individual and Society,* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1974), 209-10. I disagree and think the limited association mothers have with children that Rousseau describes in the state of nature is consistent with how Rousseau sees pity eventually expanding in society.

[84] Ibid., 153. OC III 155 [37]. I also want to note here that I believe there to be an explanatory gap in this claim of equivalence between wanting others not to suffer and wanting others to be happy, though Rousseau makes this leap both here in the *Discourse on Inequality* and in *Émile* (Rousseau, *Émile,* 80).

[85] Some interpreters in fact go to great lengths to deny that the sentiment expands in society beyond the original repugnance. Griswold, in his efforts to deny that pity expands in Rousseau's social man, cites the larger passage cited in fn. 84 but intentionally removes the mention of benevolence and friendship from the list of pity's social manifestations. Instead, for Rousseau he focuses on pity applied to the weak and guilty, applications that would maintain a more limited and negative sense of pity (Griswold, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Adam Smith*, 104). He reserves his discussion of positive incarnations of fellow-feeling for his examination of Smith's sympathy instead. Richard Boyd, too, denies the expansiveness of the same quotation cited in fn. 84, and rests his entire argument on pity not expanding but limiting individual action (Richard Boyd, "Pity's Pathologies Portrayed: Rousseau and the Limits of Democratic Compassion" *Political Theory* 32, no. 4, (Aug 2004), 519, 537). See also Marks, "Rousseau's Discriminating Defense of Compassion," 728-31. While Marks does allow for pity to inspire some active beneficence in *Émile*, strangely, as I will discuss in Section VI, he distinguishes between benevolence and compassion to demonstrate the limits of the latter in Rousseau (731). See also fn. 83.

[86] For one such development of the positive form of pity through friendship in *Julie, or the Nouvelle Héloise*, see, John M. Warner, *Rousseau and the Problem of Human Relations* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015), 144-149.

1. *Expanded Pity is a Limited Sentiment*

Understanding the role of sympathy here in inspiring positive, virtuous actions also helps us to understand why Rousseau's general will is not, strictly speaking, a universal will. As was mentioned earlier, a general will based on reason and self-interest is cosmopolitan in nature because both reason and self-interest are universalizable. Even the role of self-interest becomes essentializing as it gets distilled down to the self-interest that we all have in common, like personal security. This conception of a universal general will was also around before Rousseau published the *Social Contract*: Diderot wrote about the general will of the human species in his *Encyclopédie* article, "Droit Naturel."[87] However, Rousseau's first draft of the *Social Contract* (the *Geneva Manuscript*), expressly refuted Diderot's conception of a universal general will by claiming that this universal general will that "reason[s] in the silence of the passions" would fail because at its core it is the sentiment of pity that plays a central role in motivating and obliging man to act out of duty and follow the general will.[88] This failure is a direct result of the fact that it is man's pity that inclines him to desire the happiness of others and see how their happiness can be his own.[89]

Thus, expanded pity is not only the missing moral element in the general will, but it is also an explanation for how the general will cannot, by its nature, be easily universalizable: pity is a limited sentiment. The concept of fellow-feeling has always involved the caveat that to

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[87] Denis Diderot, "Droit naturel," in *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, etc.,* eds. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert. University of Chicago: ARTFL Encyclopédie Project (Spring 2013 Edition), ed. Robert Morrissey, http://encyclopedie.uchicago.edu/.

[88] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "From the early version of the *Social Contract* known as the *Geneva Manuscript*," in *Rousseau:* The Social Contract *and Other Later Political Writings*, trans. Victor Gourevitch, ed. Victor Gourevitch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 157. OC III 286 GM I 2 [14].

[89] Ibid., 156-158. OC III 285-287 GM I 2.

sympathize with another, one must be *like* the other.[90] Rousseau's contemporaries knew this well. Hume, for example, notes that while we can by our natures sympathize with any human, as we bear many general likenesses, our sympathy is piqued with stronger resemblance and contiguity. In fact, Hume observes that the moral sentiment is strongest "where the general resemblance of our natures is accompanied by any special similarity in our manners, or character, or country, or language."[91] Like Adam Smith compared the relative weakness of our compassion for Chinese victims of a deadly disaster to the heightened care for more local misfortunes, Rousseau, too, recognized this limitation of even expanded pity.[92] Rousseau writes that "the sentiment of humanity dissipates and weakens as it spreads to the whole earth, and that we cannot be as touched by the calamities of Tartary or Japan as we are by those of a European people."[93] Because of this limitation, Rousseau stipulates that the nation—particularly the small nation—is the most apt locus for the general will. He states that the general will can only belong to states small in size because "commiseration must in some way be constricted and compressed in order to be activated."[94] Thus, using expanded pity as a moral component of the general will limits it to individual countries because the sentiment itself is strongest when its scope is limited.

This is not to say that Rousseau denies a kind of cosmopolitan commiseration. In fact, Rousseau uses the term "humanity" to discuss pity applied to people regardless of national

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[90] Schliesser, "On Sympathy" in *Sympathy: A History*, 7.

[91] David Hume, *A Treatise on Human Nature* (Urbana, Illinois: Project Gutenberg, 2012) Retrieved January 15, 2016, from http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/4705, II.I.XI, III.III.I.

[92] Adam Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments,* ed. Knud Haakonssen (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 157.

[93] Rousseau, *Discourse on Political Economy*, 15. OC III 254 [30].

[94] Ibid.*,* 15. OC III 254 [30]. Rousseau could be translated as saying commiseration must be "limited and restrained," as well. This idea is also repeated in Rousseau, *Social Contract,* 73-74. OC III 386-387 SC II 9.

origin.[95] He even allows for actions motivated from a "cosmopolitan soul" that would promote humanity's interests and prevent its pain (such is even his description of the moral man: he is the man with humanity).[96] Unfortunately, it is unclear whether or how Rousseau ultimately would have argued for the creation of international federations, as he destroyed the text—*Institutions Politiques*—where he would address such a subject. The topic is widely debated among Rousseau scholars.[97] There are clear signs, however, in the *Geneva Manuscript* that if man were to somehow succeed in achieving a true and lasting love of humanity, it would have to be kindled through a more local love: "We conceive of the general society in terms of our particular societies; the establishment of small Republics leads us to think of the large one."[98] Thus Rousseau underscores across his texts that "the essential thing is to be good to the people with whom one lives."[99] Despite the occasional sincere references to cosmopolitans, Rousseau has

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[95] See for example, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts or First Discourse,* in *Rousseau: The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings*, trans. Victor Gourevitch, ed. Victor Gourevitch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 11. OC III 12 [24]; Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, 153-154. OC III 155-156; Rousseau, *Émile*, 27, 220.

[96] Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, 174. OC III 178 [33].

[97] See for example, Helena Rosenblatt, "Rousseau, the Anticosmopolitan?" *Daedalus* 137, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 59-67; Saccamano, "'Savage Patriotism,' Justice and Cosmopolitics," 284-312.

[98] Rousseau, "From the early version of the *Social Contract* known as the *Geneva Manuscript*," 158. OC III 287 GM I 2 [15].

[99] Rousseau, *Émile,* 39. While Chapters 2 and 3 will explore *Émile* in depth, I want to briefly address the text here regarding the limits of compassion. *Émile* is a complex text for this issue primarily because the boy is raised in a world where it is acknowledged that there is no general will among any people. At its conclusion, Émile is told that he has a particular duty to love his countrymen because of the care they have given him (ibid., 473). The text itself has statements in favor of an ideal cosmopolitan extension of pity across the world (ibid., 252-3), while also acknowledging the difficulties in expanding sensitivity across the globe (both in terms of the pains that can cause an individual (Marks, "Rousseau's Discriminating Defense of Compassion," 730 cf. Rousseau, *Émile,* 83), and in terms of national prejudices that lead people to prefer their countrymen, which Rousseau says is a drawback that is "inevitable but not compelling" (Rousseau, *Émile,* 39). The text furthermore discusses Émile's humanity mostly as applied to acts for his neighbors (and only briefly suggests international care but particularly through fostering specific friendships with foreigners so as to combat his own national prejudices). Ultimately, despite the ambiguous international implications, the text's inclusion of an education in the *Social Contract*, and Émile's fostering of compassion on a local level with the expectation of expansion to his nation make the text appear consistent with Rousseau's call for limiting compassion to keep it active and focus on local duties. Émile is ultimately told to settle

the most faith in the sentiment functioning at the national level: the feeling of "humanity, concentrated among fellow-citizens, acquire[s] added force."[100]

Rousseau uses expanded pity and its limitations both in the formation and the continuation of the nation's general will. Before a country can self-legislate, Rousseau states that, among other requirements, it needs to be a country whose people have a shared history and an environment in which "every member can be known to all."[101] These elements allow a people to note their similarities and better relate to each other. Once a people is suited for legislation, Rousseau also lays down requirements for sustaining sympathy within the state and maintaining a stable general will among its countrymen thereafter. As I will examine in Chapter 2, he does so in part by recommending patriotic institutions that allow countrymen to make a "habit of seeing one another" so that they may commiserate with each other's pains.[102] The next chapter will explore how Rousseau promotes love of one's countrymen, so that citizens will "cherish one another as brothers," feel pity when other countrymen are pained, and be more willing to support them by following the general will that benefits them all.[103]

2. *Expanded Pity is a Disinterested Sentiment*

In addition to being a limited sentiment, it is important to understand that the eighteenth-century concept of sympathy was considered a disinterested sentiment. One does not desire the

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in the country and be a model for his fellow countrymen, not only in his care for them, but even in enacting some of the public festivals that we will review in Chapter 2 are meant to foster pity among citizens (ibid., 474).

[100] Rousseau, *Discourse on Political Economy*, 15. OC III 254 [30].

[101] Rousseau, *Social Contract,* 77. OC III 390 SC II 10 [5]. See ibid., 77-78. OC III 390-391 SC II 10.

[102] Rousseau, *Discourse on Political Economy,* 16. OC III 254 [30].

[103] Ibid., 21. OC III 261 [37].

happiness of another because it is in one's own self-interest, but when one experiences fellow-feeling, one desires the other's happiness for the sake of the other. Indeed, Pierre Force has argued that Rousseau's goal in using the *Fable of the Bees* analogy—specifically Rousseau's reference to the prisoner's desire to help "'out of no personal interest'"—prompted Adam Smith's discussion of the disinterested nature of sympathy in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* when Smith writes "'there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it.'"[104]

Rawls notes that this way of thinking about the consequences of the disinterested nature of sympathy was well-known in the eighteenth century, citing Bishop Joseph Butler's argument against psychological egoism. In the second of his *Sermons*, Butler identifies the fallacy of conflating the fact that we derive pleasure from fulfilling any of our desires with the idea that all our desires must therefore aim at this pleasure. As Rawls explains this argument, Butler is claiming that the *objects* of our desires are not always our self-interest.[105] Rawls quotes a claim from Butler that could easily have been seconded by Rousseau or Smith, and was in fact directly addressed in Hume's *Enquiry into the Principles of Morals*:

> We should want words to express the difference, between the principle of an action, proceeding from cool consideration that it will be to my own advantage; and an action, suppose of revenge, or of friendship, by which a man runs upon certain ruin, to do evil or good to another. It is manifest the principles of these actions are totally different, and so want different words to be distinguished by: all that they agree in is, that they both proceed from, and are done to gratify an inclination in a man's self.[106]

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[104] Force, *Self-Interest before Adam Smith*, 16; cf. Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, i.i.1.1. See also Makus, "Pity, Pride, and Prejudice," 146-7 for the significance of disinterestedness to this reading of Rousseau's pity.

[105] Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy,* 443.

[106] Ibid., 444, cf. Joseph Butler in *Sermon II*.

We may derive pleasure from fulfilling our drive toward sympathy, but the drive itself remains a disinterested one.

This passage suggests that we can definitively differentiate between drives from *amour de soi* and drives from pity. Because pity is essentially a disinterested sentiment, we can see that no amount of tinkering with the Kantian interpretation is going to work. If the Kantian interpretation relies solely on reason and self-interest, we cannot just expand the notion of self-interest to include pity because the concept of pity was introduced as an intentionally separate drive. This difference is critical to understanding Rousseau's view, since he relies on the idea that, through reasoning, we can strike a balance between self-interest and pity that allows man to act morally. In the next section, I reexamine the concept of the general will in light of this limited and disinterested concept of expanded pity.

VI. The General Will in Action

What is the general will if it is not merely a product of rationally guided self-interest, as was supposed by the Kantian line of Rousseau scholarship? To answer this question, we need to reexamine the contentious passage about the obligatory nature of the general will and offer a reevaluation.

Consider Rousseau's initial claim that "The commitments which bind us to the social body are obligatory only because they are mutual, and their nature is such that in fulfilling them one cannot work for others without also working for oneself."[107] As I noted earlier, this statement has generally been taken to be the depiction of political union on rational, self-

[107] Rousseau, *Social Contract,* 61-62. OC III 373 SC II 4 [5].

interested grounds: the general will is obligatory because acting in one's own self-interest is a common goal that can best be achieved through uniting with others. True, the mutual nature of man's commitments makes them obligatory, but on this reading, the mutuality of men's commitments comes only from mutual self-interest, rationally understood. Instead, following my argument above that moral liberty arises from balancing that self-interest with pity, it is left to demonstrate that the mutual nature of man's commitments also arises from pity.

If we look back to Rousseau's description of humanity, benevolence and friendship all as "the products of a steady pity focused on a particular object," we can see how this notion of obligation-via-mutuality might be reimagined.[108] Pursuing the common good becomes a political duty because those who have fixed a constant pity upon each other desire a common good: that each other be happy. Therefore, the idea that working for one's fellow men cannot be done without working for oneself can be construed as acting on one's own desires. Rousseau's pitying man can be seen to be acting on his own drive of pity, which can now be interpreted as a desire that his fellow man be happy.

Yet recall that when discussing the nature of the general will in the passage about obligation, Rousseau goes on to ask:

> Why is the general will always upright, and why do all consistently will each one's happiness, if not because there is no one who does not appropriate the word *each* to himself, and think of himself as he votes for all? Which proves that the equality of right and the notion of justice which it produces follows from each one's preference for himself and hence from the nature of man.[109]

It is important to note here that on this reading emphasizing the role of expanded pity, self-interest certainly does not go away. Morality is the reasonable balance between self-preservation

[108] Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality,* 153. OC III 155 [37].

[109] Rousseau, *Social Contract,* 61-62. OC III 373 SC II 4 [5].

and pity. Self-preservation *has* to be a key factor. However, once we recognize that pity has to be a factor as well, our understanding of what it means to 'think of oneself as one votes for all' includes considering the drive for pity, and how to fulfill one's wishes in that regard. For example, the man in the *Fable of the Bees* is certainly miserable in his situation *because* he cannot act on his pity, and thus would reason that he should submit to a general will that relieved the suffering he sees, the suffering that would be in the others' self-interest to avoid. When pity "tempers [the] ardor [he has for his own] well-being with an innate repugnance to see[ing] his kind suffer,"[110] acting upon it can still be seen as acting from a preference he gives to himself (he acts to avoid his own repugnant feeling), as well as acting from his own inherent nature (one of his two natural guiding principles).[111] Preferring oneself need not only mean a preference for the self-interest involved in self-preservation.

Rousseau repeatedly calls the general will an "admirable agreement between interest and justice"[112] or of "duty and interest" to make just this point.[113] Interest, as he describes thoroughly in the *Social Contract* and *Discourse on Inequality*, is what brought men into contact in the first place: at some point man's obstacles became so great that he had trouble surviving on his own, and he sees he could benefit from the help of others in overcoming them.[114] Here he is

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[110] Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality,* 152. OC III 154 [35].

[111] Though he does not believe pity plays any role in the *Social Contract*, Griswold offers a thorough exploration in the literature of how Rousseau's sentiment of *pitié* comes from a "selfish" desire—not to be confused with the self-preservation of *amour de soi* but simply selfish because it involves a deep, avoidant desire of the self upon feeling the pain of the pitied (Griswold, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Adam Smith*, 106). Marks makes a similar point but argues he thinks there may be more of a connection to self-love here than Rousseau originally admits (Marks, "Rousseau's Discriminating Defense of Compassion," 728-9). See also Boyd, "Pity's Pathologies Portrayed," 521.

[112] Rousseau, *Social Contract,* 62. OC III 374 SC II 4 [7].

[113] Ibid., 52. OC III 363 SC II 7 [4].

[114] Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality,* 162-163. OC III 165-167; Rousseau, *Social Contract,* 49. OC III 360 SC I 6.

referring to the consideration of man's *amour de soi* in determining the general will. But man is confronted with his duty when he must consider the pain as well as happiness he can potentially cause others by acting on his impulse of *amour de soi*. Recall that one is not doing one's duty if one simply uses one's reason and self-interest alone because duty requires using pity to moderate one's rational self-interest. Taking others into account is the compassionate moderation of one's own rational self-interest. The combination of reason, *amour de soi,* and pity produces the law that one must impose on oneself to be a free, moral agent.

As I noted in Section II, a Kantian reading of the general will neglects the interaction of pity with *amour de soi* and reason as fundamental to a conception of both moral and political obligation. I briefly explained how many interpretations that follow this reading neglect pity out of concern that inflamed *amour propre* weakens or annihilates pity in civil society. In addition to these accounts that neglect or deny pity's role in civil society, even interpretations that focus on pity in Rousseau scholarship have not worked out in enough detail what role pity should play.

Upon examination, this uncertainty likewise appears the result of the lasting impact of the Kantian interpretation even on authors focusing on pity in Rousseau's moral and political thought. Clifford Orwin, for example, at first sidesteps the issue of determining pity's role in a legitimate moral and political system by primarily focusing on pity's use in an already corrupt society. There it simply functions to make the rich acknowledge the suffering they inflicted on the poor. When investigating Rousseau's ideal systems of morality and politics, however, Orwin claims that the extent to which pity, if at all, constitutes an "affective basis" of Rousseau's morality is "up in the air."[115]

[115] Clifford Orwin, "Rousseau and the Discovery of Political Compassion," in *The Legacy of Rousseau,* ed. Clifford Orwin and Nathan Tarcov (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 308.

Pity's relationship to morality remains unclear in Rousseau, according to Orwin, because on the one hand, Rousseau seems to require "a compassionate morality to supplement the coldness of reason," while on the other hand Rousseau needs "a rational one to restrain the impulsive warmth of compassion."[116] Significantly, Orwin concludes his thoughts on the matter not by arguing for the necessary interaction between both the sentiments and reason as I have claimed, but by directing readers to Kant's critical response to *Émile* wherein Kant "suggests that the more general morality becomes, the less compassion supports it."[117] Orwin then proceeds to read Kant's ideas back into Rousseau by recontextualizing Rousseau's concerns about cosmopolitanism: he claims that Rousseau's statements about compassion weakening over large populations and requiring small populations to be active is evidence instead of pity's political irrelevance. He concludes by claiming that these issues drove Kant to reject pity's moral value, acknowledging reason as the appropriate ground for morality, and by extension, for Rousseau, the general will. Ultimately, for Orwin, pity is the recourse for societies that lack a legitimate general will. Its "imperfect" justice is such a society's only available alternative to the reasoned guidance from the general will available to a healthy society.[118]

In an attempt to address the uncertainty Orwin and others raise in the literature on pity in Rousseau, Jonathan Marks claims that the solution is to firmly separate pity from the foundations of justice. Pity, he reiterates throughout the paper, is neither equivalent to nor a replacement for justice, as pity is not a part of the grounds of obligation.[119] Marks sees obligations instead

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[116] Ibid.

[117] Ibid.

[118] Ibid., 309.

[119] Marks, "Rousseau's Discriminating Defense of Compassion," 727, 728, 734.

arising much the way they were described in the Kantian line: all freely and rationally submit to follow the general will by consenting to a contract they believe to be to their own advantage.[120] Ultimately Marks positions himself as having resolved the pity literature's uncertainty about pity's role in moral and political action by claiming that it only serves as an "ally" to justice, and then only alongside two other social virtues: benevolence and friendship.[121] I have already addressed where Rousseau counts both friendship and benevolence as extensions of pity applied in different situations.[122] Regardless, all three sentiments (which I simply take to be expanded pity) are seen to act only as motivations not as the grounds of obligation.

While Rafeeq Hasan focuses on *amour propre* instead of pity, Hasan has recently pushed back against this kind of attempt to distinguish between man's sentiment-based motivations and the grounds of moral and political obligation:

> As an interpretation of Rousseau, insisting on this strict separation between the ground of obligation and our moral psychology is odd. For Rousseau, justifying our moral and political obligations involves demonstrating that acting from them involves forms of motivation that are continuous with, express and develop essential capacities of human nature.[123]

To make these claims, Hasan looks to how the *Social Contract* and *Émile* both ground their

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[120] Ibid., 734-5.

[121] It should be noted that not all pity literature takes pity to be motivational, as Marks does and as I aim to demonstrate in this dissertation. For those who raise doubts about its motivational role, see for example John McHugh "Pursuing Sympathy without Vanity," 110; Boyd, "Pity's Pathologies Portrayed," 519-546. For another argument that allows pity to be motivational, see Joshua Cohen, *Rousseau: A Free Community of Equals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 122-124. As I noted, the literature is not clear on the role of pity. Saccamano, for example, alternates between discussing justice's and the law's necessary replacement of pity, arguing for pity's motivational capacity, and claiming pity's cosmopolitan limitations (Saccamano, "'Savage Patriotism,' Justice and Cosmopolitics," 289, 291, 301-2).

[122] It is noteworthy as well that while Marks distinguishes between benevolence and compassion to demonstrate the limits of the latter in Rousseau, he curiously defines benevolence as "fellow-feeling," which, as I have discussed, is also the definition of compassion (Marks, "A Discriminating Defense of Compassion," 731).

[123] Rafeeq Hasan, "Rousseau on the Ground of Obligation: Reconsidering the Social Autonomy Interpretation" *European Journal of Political Theory* 17, no. 2 (2018), 235.

respective political and moral obligations in moral psychology. He notes the various places in the *Social Contract* where it is said that the general will no longer binds when the sentiments that motivate it become muted and thus "motivationally inert," a claim that flips on its head the earlier Kantian one Orwin made about the failure of a universal will.[124] Moreover, Hasan attributes the failure to consider the connection between motivation and obligation to the same Kantian tendency in Rousseau interpretation that I have identified as neglecting the full moral and political role of pity.[125] Instead, he claims that "the very same psychological processes that explain why we can bring ourselves to do what we ought to do (i.e. our motivations to be rational agents) also determine the content of what in fact we ought to do."[126] He elaborates this point by arguing that our obligations are binding in part because fulfilling them satisfies our desires in a healthy way. For Hasan, *amour propre* as a drive to be recognized informs people of what reason demands of them: to recognize others.

Although Hasan picks out *amour propre* as his particular point of interest, what is crucial here is that he finds a necessary link between our moral obligations and our moral psychology of which pity is an undeniable part for Rousseau. I agree that there are sentiments that ground our obligations, and that more research should be done into where *amour propre* is among them.[127] I would supplement this account with a more robust discussion of pity, which I believe also strikes a more substantial balance with reason than Hasan finds between reason and *amour propre*. I

[124] Ibid., 238.

[125] Ibid., 233-234.

[126] Ibid., 240.

[127] In fact, I believe an interesting future project would involve exploring the origins of *amour propre*, as the pity literature in places takes *amour propre* to be an extension of pity, while the literature that tends to neglect pity takes *amour propre* as an extension (and sometimes corrosion) of *amour de soi* combined with reason.

have argued that the content of morality for Rousseau lies in the balance of the drives that also motivate us to act from duty. Thus, as Hasan argues, I agree that through the sentiments there is a bridge between motivation and obligation in Rousseau.

In fact, Hasan's argument could be strengthened by considering footnote XV as an explanation of both human drives *and* the elements foundational to moral agents. For, he notes that it is for a future project to discover precisely "why and how acting from our obligations expresses our human nature," and I believe this dissertation works to answer that question by examining the balance of natural drives and reinserting pity into Rousseau's obligations.[128]

We can see the role of pity in obligation more clearly when Rousseau first discusses the process by which the general will combines interest and duty. Here, Rousseau says:

> As soon as this multitude is thus united in one body, one cannot injure one of the members without attacking the [whole] body, and still less can one [harm] the body without the members being affected [and feeling it]. Thus duty and interest [equally] obligate the contracting parties to help one another, and the same men must strive to combine in this two-fold relation all the advantages attendant on it.[129]

This passage highlights the fellow-feeling that connects the members of the body politic. Feeling the pain of others is sympathizing with them. Indeed, this passage recalls the historical development of the concept of sympathy. The Greek word *sympatheia*, or fellow-feeling, was introduced in Stoic writing as a metaphysical concept used to refer to the idea of people (among other organisms) as members of one 'body' who resultantly bear sympathetic relations to all members of the whole.[130] While Rousseau does not wish to take on the metaphysics with which

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[128] Hasan, "Rousseau on the Ground of Obligation," 242.

[129] Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 52. OC III 363 I 7 [4]. I add the notion of all members "feeling it" when one is harmed because of Rousseau's language that <<on ne peut offenser un des members sans…que les members s'en ressentent>> (Rousseau, *Contrat Social*, 55).

[130] Eyjólfur K. Emilsson, "Plotinus on Sympatheia," in *Sympathy: A History,* ed. Eric Schliesser, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 39-40.

the concept of sympathy originated, his reference to the fellow-feeling of beings within one body can be traced as remnants of the ancient description of such a concept.[131]

Having shown that the general will works by combining interest and duty—involving *amour de soi*, reason, and pity—what is next is to consider how this combination could work in practice, say during an assembly of the sovereign people, when the only instructions for deliberation Rousseau gives are i) that men are expected to vote according to the preference each person gives to himself[132]; ii) men must not have any communication with each other before deliberating according to their interests[133]; and iii) the general will results from removing the clashing elements of men's private wills ("if, from these same [private] wills, one takes away the pluses and the minuses which cancel each other out, what is left as the sum of the differences is the general will").[134]

It should be clear, first, that man is expected to voice what his *amour de soi* dictates. Enforcing man's non-communication with others is a way to guarantee that man does not vote according to another's interest. Thus, votes of sympathy with another's wishes, along with votes that factionalize society, are prohibited.[135] However, as we have established, even original man

[131] The Stoic/Platonist conception of sympathy can be tracked through Plotinus and Augustine and into the seventeenth century where its first connection to the concept of the general will occurs. For more on the history of the metaphysical account of sympathy, see Eric Schliesser, ed. *Sympathy: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015). Connecting the themes from the sympathy anthology with the history of the general will is productive for seeing the remnants of the metaphysical concept of sympathy. For more on the history of the concept of the general will, see Patrick Riley, *The General Will before Rousseau: The Transformation of the Divine into the Civic,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

[132] Rousseau, *Social Contract,* 61-62. OC III 373 SC II 4 [5].

[133] Ibid., 60. OC III 371 SC II 3 [4].

[134] Ibid., 60. OC III 371 SC II 3.

[135] As a reminder here, while I write of voting, the general will is more of a normative ideal in Rousseau, as it can be expressed also through tacit consent and silence (see fn. 41).

did not wish to harm others when he acted according to his *amour de soi*. This trait preserves man's natural goodness in the state of nature, and is supposed to continue, guided by reason, in the state of society. Thus, if morality requires man to desire others' happiness, and every man in the body politic sympathizes with the pain of every other, what makes the general will moral is that it is self-imposed by the sympathetic desire to have one's vote calculated against all others' and one's wishes reigned in when they could cause harm. When man votes in his self-interest so that any dangerous "pluses and minuses" of his will get cancelled out by others' needs, he is acting according to a balance of his *amour de soi* and his sympathy with others' desires. Pity is what guides the cancellation.

To demonstrate this, let us place one of the moral men, armed with reason, *amour de soi*, and pity, in contact with a community. Let us pretend our example man would be happiest fishing (though his immediate survival does not ultimately demand it, as he could subsist via other means). If this does not harm or deprive anyone to his knowledge, then his individual will demonstrates partiality to fishing and his moral reasoning allows him to fulfill this act. Thus, were we to imagine this man to voice a vote for general consideration, he would vote in his interest to fish. In submitting his vote, he expects the general will to only forbid his fishing if it were to harm or deprive others. In such a case, the general will is the law he would impose upon himself because, as a pitying man, it is assumed that if he could learn about the deprivation, his own moral consideration of the balance between his interest and his pity would likewise forbid him from fishing. However, since an individual is the only one who has access to their own internal desires, the individual must express their own individuality in order for the general will (out of the moderation achieved from a mutual sympathy for each other's interests) to take all desires and deprivations into account. Rousseau states this point explicitly when he claims that,

in order to have a good articulation of the general will, "it is [therefore] important…that every Citizen state only his own opinion," having made up his mind on his own.[136] Therefore, man's vote expresses his particular self-interest, but placing this vote under the guidance of the general will is an act of sympathy with his fellow man; it is the expression that he does not want his self-interest to cause harm to others but instead wants what will make everyone happy (and satisfy both his drives with a reasonable balance).

When moral man votes his act is an act of expanded pity because he desires that the general will forbid any act based on an interest that would harm others. Pity therefore motivates the initial submission of one's vote to a general will and includes in the general will an interest in balancing pity with *amour de soi*. Recognizing that balance as reasonable and originating in one's will then obliges one to follow the limitations imposed by the general will's determination.

Rousseau claims that all the private individuals need to do in civil society is "to conform their wills to their reason"[137] because "each [person, while] uniting with all, nevertheless obey[s] only himself."[138] To obey only oneself is to follow one's own drives of *amour de soi* and pity. Thus, aligning one's will with the common good is a way to show that one desires to balance one's natural impulses in the most virtuous way.

VII. Conclusion

The sentiments, thus, play a crucial role in 'taking man as he is and laws as they might be.' Providing an outlet for man's expanded pity and self-interest is essential to aligning man

[136] Rousseau*, Social Contract,* 60. OC III 371 SC II 3 [4].

[137] Ibid.*,* 68. OC III 380 SC II 6 [10].

[138] Ibid.*,* 49-50. OC III 360 SC I 6 [4].

with his human nature and making him moral. Man's pity and *amour de soi* are not only key elements in motivating virtuous behavior, but each in their own way are key to giving the general will an obligatory nature. Interpreting the general will in this way allows us to understand a sentiment-based conception of Rousseau's ideal political society. It also has interesting implications for what it means when Rousseau claims that the general will "tends, by its nature, … to equality."[139] This will be the subject of the next chapter.

[139] Ibid., 57. OC III 368 SC II 1 [3].

Chapter 2: Virtue Tends the General Will toward Equality

I. Introduction

We saw in the previous chapter how an ideal political society would form a general will based on expanded pity and self-interest. One of the qualities of the general will that we have yet to examine is its tendency toward equality. In Book II, Chapter XI of the *Social Contract* Rousseau states that the "two principal objects" that ought to be the aim of the general will must be liberty and equality: liberty, because moral and civil liberty are the motivation for entering the state; "equality, because [liberty] cannot subsist without it."[1] In his attempt to describe what he means by equality, Rousseau cannot help but note that such a state presupposes a particular disposition on behalf of the people: the rich should not desire to be tyrants but should desire moderation, and the poor should not desire to be in place of the rich.[2] Though most interpreters of Rousseau move straight to the exploration of equality, neglecting the dispositional explanation, I take Rousseau's suggestions about dispositions to be key to understanding how Rousseau expects to achieve the objective of equality that he proposes.

Taking the dispositions seriously is at least partly motivated by the fact that even earlier works foreshadowed the emphasis on the virtuous disposition. For example, in the *Discourse on Political Economy*, instead of discussing two principal aims of liberty and equality Rousseau omits a discussion of equality entirely and advances straight from the principal object of liberty to the virtuous disposition: "[A country] cannot endure without freedom, nor freedom without

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[1] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Of the Social Contract*, in *Rousseau: The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings*, trans. Victor Gourevitch, ed. Victor Gourevitch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 78. OC III 391 SC II 11 [1]. Moral liberty was defined in Chapter 1 as obeying laws one sets oneself. Civil liberty is the freedom to do anything not prohibited by the general will (ibid., 54. OC III 365 SC I 8 [2]).

[2] Ibid., 78. OC III 391-392 SC II 11 [2]. See also, ibid., 78n. OC III 392n SC II 11.

virtue."[3] Rousseau proceeds to discuss the importance of educating citizens in expanding their pity for one another in order to achieve a general will and thus avoid the mass inequalities to which contemporary societies fell prey. But how exactly does this emphasis on individual dispositions aim at equality?

Before we can begin to answer this question, we should first understand what is meant by "aim." It is notable that apart from this one mention in the *Social Contract*, Rousseau avoids talk of "aiming" at equality.[4] Elsewhere, Rousseau speaks of equality as a tendency.[5] He expressly presents equality as a tendency in contrasting the general will with individuals' wills: "the private will tends, by its nature, toward having preferences, and the general will toward equality."[6] I argue on this basis that it is important to distinguish two senses of "aim": while the general will may have the *goal* of achieving equality, Rousseau believes this goal is *best* achieved when it is not the direct target of legislation.[7] Instead, following the lead of the *Discourse on Political Economy*, I argue that equality is best achieved by cultivating what Rousseau calls "good citizens" by inspiring in them virtuous dispositions.[8]

Now it remains to be seen how the cultivation of right dispositions—i.e., virtue—among

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[3] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on Political Economy*, in *Rousseau:* The Social Contract *and Other Later Political Writings*, trans. Victor Gourevitch, ed. Victor Gourevitch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 20. OC III 259 [36].

[4] See, for example, Rousseau, *Social Contract,* 61-62. OC III 373, SC II 4; 121. OC III 437, SC IV 1 [1].

[5] Ibid.*,* 57. OC III 368 SC II 1 [3]; 79. OC III 392 SC II 11 [3]. Rousseau again refers directly to this tendency in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile, or On Education,* trans. Allan Bloom, ed. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1979), 463.

[6] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du contrat social*, ed. Bruno Bernardi (Paris: Flammarion, 2001), 61. OC III 368 SC II 1 [3]. Translation mine.

[7] This is consistent with Rousseau's word choice of <<la fin>>, or end, often translated more ambiguously as "aim" (ibid., 86).

[8] Rousseau, *Social Contract,* 150. OC III 468 SC IV 8 [31]. See also Rousseau, *Discourse on Political Economy,* 15. OC III 254 [29].

citizens promotes the goal of equality. Recall that the body politic and individuals have the same description of what it means to be virtuous. As stated in the footnote that began this project, virtue is the product of the proper balance of *amour de soi* and pity. Specifically, virtue is the product of *amour de soi,* "directed in man by reason, and *moderated* by pity."[9] This chapter unpacks that concept of virtue to demonstrate that the balance of these sentiments produces the tendency toward equality. Taking seriously pity's role as the moderating factor in virtue underscores its role as the moderating factor that tends the general will toward equality. Furthermore, if we can achieve a clearer understanding of what work equality does in an ideal society, we can use Rousseau's ideal system to reflect on the failings of contemporary society, as well as to indicate the valuable pursuits toward which society should orient itself. This chapter has two main parts; in the first part, I explore how and why the tendency toward equality is achieved by focusing citizens on virtue instead of on equality itself. In the second part, starting at Section V, I look into the institutions Rousseau recommends for fostering virtue in citizens.

1. *The Ambiguity of "Equality"*

There is considerable disagreement about what sense of equality Rousseau had in mind, no doubt fueled by his own vague statements on the subject. The *Social Contract*, for example, broadly references two kinds of equality: legal equality and distributive equality.[10] By legal equality I mean the view that all persons should receive equal respect and equal treatment under the law. Distributive equality refers to the distribution of goods and property, but it can also

[9] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men or Second Discourse*, in *Rousseau: The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings*, trans. Victor Gourevitch, ed. Victor Gourevitch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 218nXV. OC III 219 [1]. Emphasis added.

[10] I would call the former "moral equality" by contemporary terminology but because Rousseau has a definition of moral equality that I will explain later, I will use the phrase "legal equality" for clarity.

refer to more abstract goods like power and status. For each of these kinds of equality, there are scholars who argue it is the tendency of the general will. Even among those who agree that it aims at distributive equality there is disagreement about what precisely that means.

It is important to acknowledge the claim that the general will tends toward legal equality. Contemporary proponents of this view, that Frederick Neuhouser calls "*egalitarian amour propre*," are concerned with man's *amour propre*, which is man's desire to receive recognition of their greatness.[11] Such a drive can lead to drastic economic inequalities. Proponents of this view believe that if the social contract establishes that all men are recognized as equal and worthy of moral respect, this should be enough to satisfy the desires of *amour propre* and the issues of distributive inequalities that accompany the inflamed drive.

However, I do not think that systematizing legal equality is the key to satisfying this desire. There are two main reasons that I reject this view that the general will *tends toward* legal equality. Both points hinge on definitions. First, legal equality is *constitutive of* the general will. The general will must regard citizens as legal equals in its derivation of the law and its application of the law, for this is what it means for the will to be *general*.[12] The general will cannot tend toward something that is built into its very foundation. The second point hinges on the concept of *amour propre*. As Neuhouser points out, *amour propre* is not merely a drive for respect or recognition of one's moral status but a desire for esteem, for recognition of one's

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[11] For a more robust description of the two sides of the argument, see Frederick Neuhouser, *Rousseau's Theodicy of Self-Love: Evil, Rationality and the Drive for Recognition,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)*,* 59-70. Neuhouser argues that Rousseau's system requires much more than legal equality to satisfy *amour propre*; a proper cultivation of *amour propre* is necessary. For proponents of *egalitarian amour-propre,* see Joshua Cohen, "The Natural Goodness of Humanity," in *Reclaiming the History of Ethics: Essays for John Rawls,* eds. Andrews Reath, Barbara Herman and Christine M. Korsgaard (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 102-139; Nicholas Dent, *Rousseau.* New York: Routledge, 2005, 144-152; John Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy,* ed. Samuel Freeman (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 198; Christel Fricke, "The Role of Interpersonal Comparisons in Moral Learning and the Sources of Recognition Respect: Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Amour Propre* and Adam Smith's Sympathy," in *Adam Smith and Rousseau: Ethics, Politics, Economics*, 61.

[12] Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 62. OC III 373 SC II 4 [5]. See Chapter 1, Section III.

greatness; it is also men's drive to outdo each other. From this, it becomes evident that simply establishing legal equality would not be enough to satisfy the personal drive toward first position that individuals seek relative to each other.[13] It is instead distributive equality, then, that is not already contained within the definition of the general will and properly addresses the concerns about *amour propre.*

Rousseau, frustratingly, gives no detailed or direct definition of the distributive equality towards which the general will tends except to insist that it involves a level of moderation, so that the state avoids both extremes of excessiveness and deficit. Even the secondary literature reflects that fact, as many describe Rousseau's ultimate aim in terms that acknowledge its nebulousness—calling his system one that has "approximate equality,"[14] "a degree of economic equality,"[15] or is "equal (enough)."[16] Most scholars are content (or in some cases resigned) to work with Rousseau's vague description of distributive equality. In doing so, they reference Rousseau's only attempt at a definition of equality, which appears in Book II, Chapter XI of the *Social Contract*. There, Rousseau's hasty clarification of the term is that he does not mean by "equality" that all distribution of goods, property, and even political ranks and favors be "absolutely the same" among all citizens but that "no citizen should be so rich as to be able to

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[13] For further development of Neuhouser's claim that *amour propre* needs addressing beyond satisfying equal moral respect, see Robin Douglass, *Rousseau and Hobbes: Nature, Free Will, and the Passions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[14] Norman Barry, "Hume, Smith and Rousseau on Freedom" in *Rousseau and Liberty*, ed. Robert Wokler (New York: Manchester University Press, 1995), 40.

[15] Steven T. Engel, "Rousseau and Imagined Communities," *The Review of Politics* 67, no.3 (Summer 2005), 532.

[16] Chris Pierson, "Rousseau and the Paradoxes of Property," *European Journal of Political Theory* 12(4), 422. Rosenblatt comments that any critical search of Rousseau's distributive ideas needs to understand that "Rousseau's treatment of economic matters here, as elsewhere, was not that of an economist, but rather that of a moral and political thinker" (Helena Rosenblatt, *Rousseau and Geneva: From the* First Discourse *to the* Social Contract, *1749-1762* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 196.

buy another, and none so poor that he is compelled to sell himself."[17]

Even this definition is not a positive one, of what equality in fact is, but a negative one, of what it is not. Frederick Neuhouser acknowledges its resulting lack of clarity, but remarks that such a negative definition is nevertheless helpful in demonstrating what an ideal society is meant to avoid:

> Even if Rousseau's principle does not yield a fully determinate picture of laws and institutions a free society should aim at, it succeeds in defining a major problem to be addressed and in providing a basic orientation for thinking about the forms of economic inequality that must be avoided if the social contract's ideal of freedom for all is to be realized.[18]

What the definition tells us is that an ideal society will avoid not just poverty, but having relatively less than others in such a way that affects the social dynamics between the haves and the have nots.[19] While the definition may appear to be a reference to slavery, with its parameters around buying and selling people, it is in fact meant to be broader than a proscription on the legal status of slave.[20] Instead, equality is connected back to liberty by proscribing any kind of economic disparity that would lead to dependence on others' wills.[21] This then includes, as

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[17] Rousseau, *Contrat Social*, 87. OC III 391-392 SC II 11 [2]. Translation mine.

[18] Frederick Neuhouser, "Rousseau's Critique of Economic Inequality" *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 41, no. 3 (Summer, 2013), 209-210.

[19] Ibid., 211. See also Pierson, "Rousseau and the Paradoxes of Property," 411; "David S. Siroky and Hans-Jörg Sigwart, "Principle and Prudence: Rousseau on Private Property and Inequality," *Polity* 46, no. 3 (July, 2014), 400, 400-1n81.

[20] In fact, Neuhouser states that Rousseau is not interested in cases of pure coercion (Neuhouser, "Rousseau's Critique of Economic Inequality," 202-3n16). This lack of reference to actual slavery taking place in the eighteenth century is further corroborated by the literature that maintains his references were meant metaphorically. See, for example, Madeleine Dobie, *Trading Places: Colonization and Slavery in Eighteenth-Century French Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010), 2; Fayçal Falaky, "Reading Rousseau in the Colonies: Theory, Practice, and the Question of Slavery," *Small Axe* 19, no. 1 (March 2015), 7; Sue Peabody, *There are No Slaves in France: The Political Culture of Race and Slavery in the Ancien Régime* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 96. I will return to this topic in the Conclusion.

[21] See also, Pierson, "Rousseau and the Paradoxes of Property," 411, 421.

Neuhouser points out, the economic disparity between laborers and their employers because of the more urgent comparative needs of the former. Workers in this case are dependent on their bosses' wills as the former's greater needs require them to labor according to the wages and terms their bosses determine, a condition that therefore violates Rousseau's prescription for equality.[22] Thus, it is generally understood that the imprecise definition of equality is so because the conditions that lead to such a state of dependence are contextual.[23] Nevertheless, it is this contextual notion of distributive equality toward which the general will tends.

There are other interpreters who take Rousseau's distributive equality as a kind of absolute equality, where each person's goods are taken to be completely equal to every other's.[24] This line of interpretation sees the social contract as establishing absolute equality because, through it, each person equally gives themselves and all their possessions to the state. Such an interpretation further derives from Rousseau's grim declaration at the beginning of Part Two of the second *Discourse* that decries the establishment of private property as having led to "crimes, wars, murders… miseries and horrors" when the first person "enclosed a piece of land, took it upon himself to say *this is mine*, and found people stupid enough to believe him."[25] This theory of radical redistribution (or dispossession) will be addressed in the next chapter, as it relies on a conception of the self to which, I argue, Rousseau does not subscribe. For now, I will note that

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[22] Neuhouser, "Rousseau's Critique of Economic Inequality," 204. This example also demonstrates how coercive contracts like the false contract outlined in the *Discourse on Inequality* would be illegitimate.

[23] See also, Siroky and Sigwart, "Principle and Prudence," 386, 400-4.

[24] Ryan Patrick Hanley, "Political Economy and Individual Liberty," in *The Challenge of Rousseau,* eds. Eve Grace and Christopher Kelly (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 36 cf. C. E. Vaughan, *The Political Writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (New York: Wiley, 1962), vol. 1, 5, 59, 231–5; cf. 48, 54, 81, 111; Charly J. Coleman, "The Value of Dispossession: Rethinking Discourses of Selfhood in Eighteenth-Century France," *Modern Intellectual History*, 2, no. 3 (2005), 299-326.

[25] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*, ed. Jean Starobinski, (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), 94. OC III 164 [1]. Translation mine.

the definition of equality Rousseau offers regarding avoiding extreme disparities contains within it clear signs that Rousseau is not doing away with private property or inequality altogether, a point we will discuss further in terms of the kinds of inequalities Rousseau allows in Section IV.[26]

This general outline of the outer bounds of distributive equality in Rousseau should be enough to allow us to examine how a state tends toward equality in Rousseau without theorizing beyond the text. It is all the more evident that Rousseau had distributive and not legal equality in mind as the tendency of the general will when Rousseau contrasts it with individuals' private tendencies toward their own preference.[27] This kind of equality is the most appropriate counterforce toward such private tendencies: while an individual will, without consideration of others, would tend toward its own excesses, the general will tends toward a more equal distribution.

2. *What is a Tendency?*

Interpreters focus so much on the ways in which the general will might promote equality that they neglect an important set of considerations about what it means to "tend toward" it. It is my argument that when Rousseau says that the general will tends toward equality, he means to emphasize that equality is a result of a properly functioning (i.e., virtuous) general will. As we have examined in the previous chapter, acting virtuously is a matter of acting on the right balance of self- and other-regarding attitudes; specifically, it involves having one's pity moderate

[26] For developed arguments for private property in Rousseau, see Siroky and Sigwart, "Principle and Prudence," 390; Pierson, "Rousseau and the Paradoxes of Property," 42.

[27] Rousseau, *Social Contract,* 57. OC III 368 SC II 1 [3].

one's reasoned self-interest. I also demonstrated how the properly functioning general will is one that pursues virtue: it acts as a nationwide, reasoned balance of the people's *amour de soi* and pity.

Rousseau states in Book III, Chapter IV of the *Social Contract* that the ideal state has virtue as its guiding principle no matter its type of government.[28] This statement contrasts with Montesquieu's popular view at the time—that different states with different types of governments are best moved by different principles. For example, Montesquieu claimed that virtue was the principle of a democracy whereas moderation was the principle of aristocracies.[29] Rousseau expressly denies Montesquieu's claim and instead argues that all states—even aristocracies and monarchies—must be guided by virtue. "A famous Author attributed virtue to Republics as their principle," Rousseau says, referencing Montesquieu, "For all these conditions [social spirit, simplicity of mores, reduced luxury, and a degree of equality in rank and fortune] could not subsist without virtue: but [Montesquieu] failed to see that since Sovereign authority is everywhere the same, the same principle [of virtue] must obtain in every well-constituted State."[30] For Rousseau, because the people are the sovereign no matter the type of government that executes the people's general will, if that government is to achieve the goods of social spirit, simplicity, and relative equality, the people must be guided by virtue.

Pursuit of the ideal state, then, means aiming at maintaining the right kinds of attitudes

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[28] Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 91-92. OC III 405 SC III 4 [6]. By principle, here, Rousseau is using Montesquieu's definition: a state's principle is "that by which it is made to act" (Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws.* Trans. Anne M. Cohler, Basia C. Miller, and Harold S. Stone. Eds. Anne M. Cohler, Basia C. Miller, and Harold S. Stone (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), Book III, Chapter I, 21).

[29] Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws,* Book III, Chapters III and IV, 22-25.

[30] Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 91-92. OC III 405 SC III 4 [6]. Rousseau here is critiquing Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws,* Book III, Chapter III, 22-24.

among citizens. The right kinds of attitudes then result in maintaining the right distribution of goods. I argue that rather than having to actively redistribute resources against the particular wills of the citizens, the ideal state achieves equality more passively, through the cultivation and maintenance of pity among the citizenry. Neglecting the role of pity creates a need to enforce equality on a rational basis, which although possible, would simply stifle rather than satisfy the drive of *amour propre*. However, when self-interest is moderated by pity in a virtuous general will, equality would be an inevitable result, and the state could create new outlets for *amour propre*.

While I stated earlier that the more popular view of distributive equality in Rousseau does not involve a completely equal distribution but merely involves avoiding extreme excesses and deficits, it is *how* they believe the general will tends toward this equality that is in contention. There is a general focus on equality that must be actively and directly enforced, rather than sought through the dispositions of individuals prior to legislation.[31] But because these theories have overlooked the central role of pity in Rousseau, they are unable to explore how equality would be an inevitable result of the way that pity functions in the general will.

II. How Virtue Tends toward Equality

I am now in a position to defend the central claim of this chapter: that fostering virtuous dispositions does the work of aiming the general will at equality through the moderating effects of pity. Though this specific form of moderation is never claimed as the explicit purpose of

[31] See, for example, David Lay Williams, "The Substantive Elements of Rousseau's General Will," in *The General Will: The Evolution of a Concept*, ed. James Farr and David Lay Williams (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 232; Siroky and Sigwart, "Principle and Prudence," 400; Michael Sonenscher, "Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the Foundations of Modern Political Thought," *Modern Intellectual History* 14, no. 2 (August 2017), 322-323; Flieschacker takes this reading as the standard reading of Rousseau on distributive justice (Samuel Fleischacker, *A Short History of Distributive Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 56.

virtue, one of virtue's effects is that cultivating and acting upon the proper balance of drives keeps the society from desiring things that would lead to extreme disparity. *Amour de soi*, when used in conjunction with reason, makes a person pursue their own well-being. Having this kind of self-interest is meant to motivate an individual not only to survive for now, but also to prevent having too little to survive later.[32] We saw how this drive is necessary to the general will in Chapter 1. Pity, of the two drives, is the main moderating force. It pains a person when others suffer. In the state of nature, it was this sentiment that prevented someone from stealing or harming another to procure something they could acquire elsewhere. In civil society, pity is able to fix on the same subjects for a longer period of time, and that instantaneous moderating effect from the state of nature becomes longer lasting.

Since the balance of *amour de soi* and pity leads to moderation, it is the corrosion of both of these natural drives that leads to inequality and oppression in corrupted society. In fact, Rousseau most heartily condemns this failure of dispositions in his prefatory letter at the beginning of the *Discourse on Inequality*. Although he mentions neither *amour de soi* nor pity by name, his description of the corruption of society makes it clear that the people's lack of virtue is intimately tied to their state of inequality: "In considering human society from a tranquil and disinterested viewpoint, it seems firstly to reveal nothing but the violence of powerful men and the oppression of the weak; the mind revolts against the harshness of the former; one is inclined to deplore the blindness of the latter."[33]

This observation addresses the corrosion of both *amour de soi* and pity, and we should

[32] Jonathan Marks says this secondary function leads to an active principle of expanding one's powers primarily described in *Émile* (Jonathan Marks, "Rousseau's Discriminating Defense of Compassion," *The American Political Science Review* 101, no. 4 (Nov. 2007), 730).

[33] Rousseau, *Discours sur l'inegalité*, 57. OC III 126-127 [12]. Translation mine.

examine each in turn. The weak are condemned for their blindness. This blindness is an inability to correctly identify the necessary conditions of their self-preservation. The rich and powerful proposed a system (the false social contract) that was favorable only to themselves and that, in fact, ran contrary to the "natural right" that the poor had to freely sustain themselves.[34] Instead of seeing this system for what it was—a con—the poor and weak were eager to "chain themselves" to their present condition believing it in their self-interest.[35] Their self-interest was thus distorted, and while they once pursued self-interest from the drive of *amour de soi*, it was in fact a different drive (*amour propre*) that guided them.[36] First they "[became] poor without having lost anything," but the final loss was the alienation from key components of their natural sentiment of *amour de soi*, and an inability to recognize the original drives that would guide them right.[37]

While the failure on the part of the oppressed was one of self-interest, for the perpetrators of this system of alienation the failure is one of pity. Later in the *Discourse,* Rousseau speaks of modern corrupt men as so indifferent that, "at the sight of a suffering man, [they would say,] perish if you wish; I am safe."[38] But the men characterized in the "Letter to Geneva" are beyond indifferent; they are cruel, actively oppressing the weak. These are men like those who proposed the false contract, and their desire to be above everyone has given them

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[34] Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, 172. OC III 176-177.

[35] Ibid., 173. OC III 177 [32]. Note that Rousseau has no difficulty blaming victim and perpetrator alike.

[36] I will address *amour propre* in Section III.

[37] Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, 171. OC III 175 [28].

[38] Ibid., 153. OC III 155-156 [37].

a new "tendency" to desire the harm of others for their own gain.[39] His disdain for the corrupt extends to dehumanizing them for having done away with their natural repugnance at human pain: "The rich, for their part ... using their old Slaves to subject new ones... [are] like those ravenous wolves which once they have tasted human flesh scorn all other food, and from then on want to devour only men."[40] The system of vast and harmful inequality would not have been cemented if these men maintained their original sentiment of pity.

There is a second unique function of the statement about the powerful men that further invokes that original sentiment they lack. While Rousseau spends the *Discourse* writing of the loss of pity and the state of inequality that results, we have in his prefatory letter a sort of plea to the reader's pity. The weak, and their mistreatment by the powerful, trigger our (the readers') sense of pity. That feeling of revolt against the cruelty of powerful men is precisely pity, the repugnance at others' suffering. If we were to act on that compassion, we would be revolting against harmful inequality and the evils it produces.[41]

However, it is not only through these examples of what is lacking that we can see that the balance of natural sentiments is key to Rousseau's ideal society of moderation and equality. To further cement the connection between virtue and equality, Rousseau also provides examples of pity's moderating effect on excess. It is this moderation specifically by pity of *amour de soi* in the state of nature that Rousseau credits with the "mutual preservation of the entire species."[42]

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[39] Ibid., 170-171. OC III 174-175.

[40] Ibid., 171. OC III 175-176 [28].

[41] Orwin argues that this goal to trigger the reader's pity is in fact the goal of the entire second *Discourse* (Clifford Orwin, "Rousseau and the Discovery of Political Compassion," in *The Legacy of Rousseau,* eds. Clifford Orwin and Nathan Tarcov (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 301).

[42] Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality,* 154. OC III 156 [38].

Rousseau then makes the bold claim that when man becomes social, all social virtues derive from pity, effectively turning pity into a panacea.[43] Most important of these social virtues, for our purposes, is generosity, described as "pity applied to the weak."[44] Rousseau explores the individual drive of generosity in *Émile*, his text on education that narrates the fictional tutelage of a boy eponymously named Émile. It is this emotion that inspires the boy, despite already living in times of mass inequality and corruption, to care about his neighbors' conditions to the extent that he considers it an obligation to help them through illnesses or financial woes. This compassion for others even overrides *Émile*'s own self-interest, e.g., as he parts with his excess resources to provide for his neighbors, and as helping those in need causes him to miss pre-arranged engagements with his love interest.[45] What's more, pity, Rousseau states directly, "makes the wise man always moderate": it makes Émile acknowledge what excesses he does not need and what is truly important.[46]

Not only does pity operate on the individual level, it is also built into Rousseau's assumptions about effective political functioning. Most generally, it is the expectation of expanded pity that creates a "reciprocal sensitivity" among the people in the state such that if any

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[43] This is the charge levied against Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality* by Warner who ultimately doubts its coherence with Rousseau's picture of "strong" natural man (John M. Warner, *Rousseau and the Problem of Human Relations*, University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015), 61). However, as I will show, while pity accounts for the social virtues, Rousseau's "panacea" needs the maintenance of *amour de soi* and the theodicy of *amour propre.*

[44] Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, 153. OC III 155 [37].

[45] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile, or On Education,* trans. Allan Bloom, ed. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1979), 435-6, 438, 440-1. As we will see later, Émile's future wife sees his compassion for the poor as a sign that he does not overly value his wealth (ibid., 441).

[46] Ibid., 446. Marks notes this feature of pity as a strength not previously recognized by the pity literature but does not connect it directly to economic inequality or the active elements of pity to help others in need (Marks, "A Discriminating Defense of Compassion," 730).

of the citizens are harmed, the pain will inspire a change in laws and customs.[47] This includes actually feeling what humanity owes to the less well off. One example that I will return to later is that pity for the suffering attaches us to our fellow citizens and motivates us to willingly pay taxes.

If we recall the general will and fishing example from the previous chapter, I can demonstrate the practical and political effects of moderation through virtue. Recall that a person submits their particular interest as their vote to the general will; in this case, the particular interest is to fish in the nearby pond. This person, as specified, did not need to fish for immediate survival because he had other means by which he subsisted. If we add to the scenario that those who live around the pond survive as fishermen, without the means to get their food or livelihood elsewhere, we can see both the workings of pity and *amour de soi* in the determination of the general will as well as how the result tends toward equality. In this scenario, the prosperous man is submitting his interest to the general will with the desire not to harm anyone in his choices. The resulting difficulties for the fishermen, however, would cause the man to moderate his *amour de soi* with his pity and recognize that he should not in fact fish in that pond. The result thus keeps the man from excess while simultaneously protecting the fishermen from destitution.

It is worth noting that in such an example, the man who desires to fish is made aware of the difficulty it would cause to the nearby fishermen. The most virtuous and free nations are those that are small and near their governments so they can see the effects of their contribution to the public utility.[48] These are the people who do not demand that "money circulates," but instead

[47] Rousseau, *Discourse on Political Economy*, 6. OC III 245 [11].

[48] Rousseau, *Social Contract,* 101. OC III 415-146 SC III 8.

"that the people have bread."[49] Maintaining a people's expanded pity will maintain their interest in their fellows' well-being and provide those who suffer with a claim to goods they would not necessarily have if self-interest alone prevailed. This is expressly because pity expands in civil society, and when it is fixed for a long period of time on one's countrymen, one comes to "readily want [or will] what the people [they] love want [or will]."[50] In fact, Rousseau believes that the virtuous person would acknowledge that they should consent to give up all but the exact necessities for survival if there were such a time of others' great need and that humanity owes the poor more than his contemporaries would like to acknowledge.[51]

III. Rousseau's Focus is not on Equality

The means by which a society achieves equality is significant as a litmus test of its stability and legitimacy in that the most stable and legitimate society will be one in which the people more indirectly achieve equality through their focus on virtue. It is telling that when Rousseau writes of the necessary preparations for developing an ideal educational or political system in *Émile* or in the *Discourse on Political Economy*, he rarely mentions equality at all. Even as a prelude to the *Discourse on Inequality*, when Rousseau addresses the Genevan people about their near perfect state, he does not commend them on their equality, but their greatness.[52]

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[49] Ibid., 105. OC III 419 SC III 9 [3].

[50] Rousseau, *Discourse on Political Economy,* 15. OC III 254 [29]. Gourevitch suggests the alternatives to "want" as "will" and chooses to leave readers with both options.

[51] Ibid., 31. OC III 271 [60].

[52] Recall from the Introduction that this Geneva was more rhetorical than real, and perhaps meant more as a guide for the Genevan people to emulate than as an actual historical account. Despite these questions, the state as presented in its ideal form is still useful for analyzing the nature of equality in a legitimate state. See, Rosenblatt, *Rousseau and Geneva*, 84-87; Judith Shklar, *Men and Citizens: A Study of Rousseau's Social Theory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 17.

Focusing on equality would involve comparing individuals' relative advantages and disadvantages to ensure a balance or legitimacy in anything given to one at the expense of another. Instead, in the texts discussed, we can see that Rousseau conspicuously avoids such comparisons. We will see in Section IV that this is largely due to concerns about the role of *amour propre*. This section will now examine the ways in which Rousseau shifts focus from equality to virtue. These alterations of focus show us that equality should be a goal achieved by the collective will of virtuous citizens; as the general will is the will of the people, equality cannot be achieved without virtuous—that is *pitying*—citizens.

Émile is the most helpful tool for identifying this lack of focus on equality. Through the text we can understand that equality should remain in the periphery, rather than as a central lesson or guide to Émile's education. As Émile grows, his development involves several run-ins with opportunities for comparison. In such cases, instead of using these opportunities to discuss equality and inequality, the tutor conspicuously ignores them or changes the subject. Rather than equality, the tutor makes it clear that he intends to raise a *man*, someone capable of surviving under any circumstances.[53] Émile is thus raised to be flexible, rather than raised to achieve a certain societal status or prepared for one role or rank. Even the process of selecting a student avoids comparisons between the advantages of different ranks in society except to say that if the child is of noble birth, his education will raise him as a man just the same.[54]

The tutor sees his role as offering a "negative education" for Émile. His job is not to actively impose a social or educational structure on Émile's life, but instead to essentially keep

[53] Rousseau, *Émile*, 42. See also ibid., 472.

[54] Ibid., 52. It is only relevant for the tutor to avoid or aim at educating a student from particular ranks because *Émile* is written to suggest an ideal form of education within an already-corrupted world. I will discuss more the difficulty this causes in interpreting Rousseau in the following chapter.

out 'unnatural' forces that could corrupt Émile's nature.[55] It is telling, then, that the tutor dismisses any conversation about equality or comparisons of advantages when they initially arise. The implication in doing so seems to be that they are not 'natural' topics of conversation for Émile, but instead would be outside, corrupting thoughts.[56] Rousseau supports this suggestion when he claims of the boy's development that he does not understand equality until he is asked to compare man's relative condition. He simply is preoccupied with his own condition, and in this preoccupation, he treats all men as equal without understanding what equality is.[57]

One striking example of deflection from equality occurs in the context of a children's race. The tutor sets up a series of races for Émile and the local boys to win a cake. Émile comes to learn that his tutor has rigged the races by selecting routes of unequal distance. When Émile confronts his tutor, he is not addressing any comparisons between himself and others about who deserves the dessert. Instead, Émile's takeaway from this ploy is that he should work to develop the ability to judge distances and thus better his chances at winning a cake.[58]

Émile learns about equality by way of observing inequalities once he develops and begins

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[55] Ibid., 41. I will discuss the concept of negative education in more depth in Chapter 3. For more reading on Rousseau's 'negative education,' see Judith Shklar, *Man and Citizen*, 148-50; Ernst Cassirer, *The Question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, trans. Peter Gay, ed. Peter Gay (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 124.

[56] Natural in this case does not mean native, innate, or unaltered, as only man's original state could be. In the case of this sentence and this dissertation in general, keeping man "natural" has a more Aristotelian content to it: it involves developing man into what he should properly be, a true (moral) man. Thus, any unnatural qualities or focuses would not be merely constructed ones (as constructed properties can, at the same time, be natural ones—i.e., there can be a natural use of reason and an unnatural one despite the fact that reason is not an original faculty of man). Unnatural qualities instead would be those that damage the fullness of our lives. For more about the uses of the term natural in Rousseau, see Dent, *Rousseau*, 96-101. This becomes an important distinction later, which I will discuss in Chapter 3.

[57] Rousseau, *Émile*, 160.

[58] Ibid., 141-143.

to consider his moral and social condition further in relation to that of his tutor. The instructor calls the student's first queries about his relative economic advantage "ticklish questions" that he skillfully answers while avoiding the comparative element of the question.[59] The instructor distracts Émile by not answering *how* he got his wealth and status. Instead, he directs Émile to consider that he gives back to society what he can:

> That is, dear Émile, an excellent question. I promise you to answer concerning my case when you give an answer with which you are satisfied concerning your own case. In the meantime I shall take care to give to you and the poor what surplus I have and to produce a table or a bench every week so as not to be completely good for nothing.[60]

When it comes time to recognize others, their ranks and roles, Émile is taught to pity those who find their ranks, roles, and privileges of the utmost importance. He does not wish to have any rank or privilege other than his own. Instead, he looks upon those who focus on such pursuits as pitiable because their "fate[s are] dependent on [others]."[61] We will examine this incident and the redirection of Émile's focus later in terms of how this educational institution orients the student to focus on developing virtue. It is significant for now that these passages are meant to underscore how the tutor repeatedly takes Émile's attention off of the subject of comparisons and inequalities.

Rousseau's "Letter to the Republic of Geneva," his dedicatory note in the *Discourse on Inequality,* is just as telling in the peripheral role it affords equality. The letter underscores the ways in which Rousseau sees his city-state of Geneva (whether real or imagined) as a paragon of

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[59] Ibid., 202. The phrase in the original French is <<des questions scabreuses>> (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile, ou, de l'éducation* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1877), 229).

[60] Rousseau, *Émile*, 203.

[61] Ibid., 244. See also ibid., 236-244.

a healthy society, with all the conditions he later outlines in the *Social Contract* as necessary for success and legitimacy. Rousseau spends the bulk of his address venerating the average citizen of Geneva. Each individual is valued simply by virtue of their participation in a happy, functioning system, and not by virtue of their leadership or individual exceptionalism. In fact, Rousseau spends a significant amount of time discussing his own father, a man who "was not outstanding among his fellow-citizens; he was but what they all are, and, such as he was, there is no Country where his society would not have been sought after, cultivated, and even profitably so, by the most honest people."[62] His father was a hardworking citizen who loved his country and worked his own craft for a living, and this is enough not only for Rousseau to venerate him, but for Rousseau to also claim that he would be so venerated in any good society. When Rousseau addresses the Genevan magistrates in his letter, it is in the same light of honoring the Genevan people. Instead of comparing the magistrates to the people by putting the people down, he raises both the people and the magistracy up: "the[people's] own merit adds further luster to [the magistrates']."[63]

The lack of focus on equality is due to the centrality of the value of virtue. It is necessary to cultivate pity first so that the children who grow up to be citizens have a natural preference for avoiding detrimental inequalities. To teach them first about equality, prior to instilling virtue, shifts the focus of their lives to material wealth and status. For reasons that will be explored further in the following section, such a focus is at odds with virtue, and even at odds with both of the fundamental human drives of *amour de soi* and pity.

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[62] Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, 120. OC III 118 [18].

[63] Ibid., 120. OC III 117 [16].

IV. Why the Focus is not on Equality

This section explores the consequences of seeking equality through the attitudes and behaviors of virtuous citizens, and in so doing, sheds further light on Rousseau's lack of direct focus on equality. One result of mobilizing the virtue of the citizenry is that it still leaves room for inequalities based on merit. Second, as alluded to earlier, Rousseau emphasizes virtue over a direct focus on equality because of the potential negative consequences the latter would have for people's feeling of *amour propre*.

1. *Maintaining a Place for Exceptionalism*

Returning to Rousseau's "Letter to Geneva," even without direct reference to the equality of its citizens, one might assume that a happy, functioning, legitimate society is one that enjoys a significant degree of equality. However, perhaps surprisingly, the only note in the letter referencing equality in Geneva comes in the form of praise for how it has properly instituted a system of inequality:

> How could I meditate about the equality nature established among men and the inequality they have instituted, without thinking about the profound wisdom with which both, happily combined in this [Genevan] State, [cooperate] in the manner most closely approximating natural law and most favorable to society, to the preservation of public order and to the happiness of [private] individuals?[64]

This message underscores the idea that a functional, happy society should rightly institute a degree of inequality. Surprising though it may be, it is no coincidence that Rousseau's "Letter to Geneva" praises the state for the way it has instituted inequality. The focus is on virtue instead of equality because this allows space for a discussion of the kinds of inequalities Rousseau thought a functioning society needs to have. In a virtuous society, those whose merits benefit the

[64] Ibid., 114. OC III 111 [1].

common good get their due, those less deserving are not excessively lauded, and pity demands additional resources be allocated to those most in need.

Rousseau ends the *Discourse on Inequality* with a decidedly Aristotelian message about the ways in which inequality should be instituted in a state by virtue of relative merit:

> It follows, further, that moral inequality, authorized by positive right alone, is contrary to Natural Right whenever it is not directly proportional to Physical inequality; a distinction which sufficiently determines what one ought to think in this respect of the sort of inequality that prevails among all civilized Peoples; since it is manifestly against the Law of Nature, however defined, that a child command an old man, an imbecile lead a wise man, and a handful of people [gorge themselves on] superfluities while the starving multitude lacks in necessities.[65]

Essentially, this is saying that the law cannot establish moral inequalities where no physical inequalities exist. By moral inequality, Rousseau means inequality instituted by political convention, like inequalities of wealth, status and power. Physical inequality refers to inequalities in natural human characteristics, such as age, strength, and intelligence. In the passage above, Rousseau points out that those with greater natural abilities should receive greater privileges. However, this disparity should not go so far as to excessively provide for one group at the expense of another.

It is clear in the *Discourse on Inequality* that Rousseau is continuing a theme in his texts wherein he provides for a system that encourages and rewards the talented. The wise, the experienced, and those best capable of rendering "real services" to the state should receive

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[65] Ibid., 188. OC III 193-194 [58]. Rousseau, like Aristotle, sometimes refers to this as another "sort of equality," in that advantages are given in equal proportion to merit and contribution to the common good (ibid.; Aristotle, *Politics,* trans. C.D.C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998), Book III, Chapter 9, 1280a10-15.) However, as Aristotle states, discussing justice will always involve discussing some form of equality (of who is owed what in virtue of what quality). Calling this equality here, instead of labeling it justice, is not useful to clarifying the ways in which Rousseau deems that inequality should in fact be instituted to an extent, and that the general will tends toward equality. When he discusses the general will as tending toward equality, he is speaking of a tendency toward equal distribution of goods, or a moderating limit on the accumulations of the people, no matter what roles and advantages society gives them. See, also, Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, 221-222nXIX. OC III 188nXIX.

greater advantages in return for their contributions. Rousseau's discussion of the ideal government in Book III, Chapter V of the *Social Contract* reflects the same line of thinking. Here, Rousseau states that the best kind of government is an elective aristocracy, the government that best exemplifies how conventional inequalities could be justified by natural inequalities.[66] The privileges and advantages of rulership should go to those with "probity, enlightenment, experience, and all the other reasons for public preferment and esteem."[67] Significantly, it is not a democracy, or a government that equally distributes advantages and powers, that Rousseau claims is the best government for man. For were there "a people of Gods, they would govern themselves democratically. So perfect a Government is not suited to men."[68] Gods all have equal and exceptional merit, whereas Rousseau acknowledges that men have varying degrees of merit. Rousseau's ideal system includes the desire to reward those who are unequalled in their talents.

We can see this desire to reward the exceptional emerging even in the *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts*. Given that this *Discourse* scorned the arts and sciences for leading to vice and masking those vices in a facade of virtue, it is noteworthy that Rousseau pauses to make an exception to his general scorn for men of genius. Rousseau explicitly tells "ordinary men," like his father, to simply concern themselves with their duties,[69] while he wishes that "learned men of

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[66] Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 93. OC III 406-407 SC III 5.

[67] Ibid., 93. OC III 407 SC III 5 [5].

[68] Ibid., 92. OC III 406 SC III 4 [8].

[69] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts* or *First Discourse,* in *Rousseau: The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings*, trans. Victor Gourevitch, ed. Victor Gourevitch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 28. OC III 30 [60].

the first rank find honorable asylum in [kings'] courts."[70] Rousseau specifically commends the achievements of Francis Bacon, René Descartes, and Isaac Newton as having "raise[d] monuments to the glory of the human mind," foreshadowing the desire he states explicitly in the *Discourse on Inequality,* that such people should have wealth, rank, and power according to their personal merit.[71] These men's accomplishments not only improve their own relationship with and understanding of nature but others' as well. For this reason, he states, they deserve status as advisors, so that they may continue "contributing [by their influence] to the happiness of the Peoples."[72] Because the general will tends toward equality by aiming everyone toward virtue, his comments on genius and greatness would align with this quality of the general will.

2. *The Dangers of* Amour Propre

However, even if Rousseau does desire a tendency toward equality with the provisions for more advantages for the meritorious, this does not fully explain why, for example, the tutor changes the focus when Émile discusses the disparity in their wealth. The danger that the tutor is trying to avoid is the direct comparisons between status, wealth, and power that give the student an external frame of reference by which to judge himself. This would inflame the student's *amour propre*, a comparative desire to be esteemed more than others.[73] This comparative desire would turn the topic of wealth into a zero-sum game because comparisons of this sort make the

[70] Ibid., 27. OC III 30 [59].

[71] Ibid., 27. OC III 29-30; Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, 183-184. OC III 188-189 [52].

[72] Rousseau, *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts*, 27. OC III 30 [59].

[73] Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, 218nXV. OC III 219 [1].

"many contenders run the same race," where one person's victory is another's defeat.[74] The discussion would then become focused for Émile on how he could get wealth, and this focus instead would lead society down a path to vast inequality. For, in a society where esteem comes from wealth, rank, or power alone, it only matters that you have more than others, not why you do.

Instead, the tutor turns the discussion of inequality specifically to how he promotes the common good (by giving to the poor and producing), and thereby benefits everyone through his wealth. The same tone is taken when Rousseau discusses the merits of the geniuses in the *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts*, as well as his commendations of the magistrates in the "Letter to Geneva": he reframes the discussions of merit to discuss esteem particularly in light of how these merits benefit the common good.[75] Thus, he avoids inflaming *amour propre*, which would occur if this desire for esteem were aimed at inappropriate goals like wealth. Note that this is importantly different from mollifying *amour propre* by simply focusing on the equal respect owed to all. Neuhouser emphasizes that this would not satisfy the desire for esteem created by *amour propre* as such a desire "involves a *positive appraisal* of the esteemed person's *particular* qualities or achievements."[76] Following this insight, we can see that rather than ameliorating *amour propre*, the tutor looks to give *amour propre* an outlet by channeling it into accomplishments for the interest of the people, and the ordinary people would too see the accomplishments of others in terms of the benefits to themselves.

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[74] Rousseau, *Discours sur l'inegalité*, 119. OC III 189 [52]. Translation mine.

[75] This form of discussing men of genius continues throughout the *Social Contract* as well, though there it is aimed mostly at political leaders, like Cato.

[76] Neuhouser, *Rousseau's Theodicy of Self-Love,* 62. Second emphasis added. We will discuss Neuhouser's ideas on cultivating *amour propre* and further ways certain institutions similarly provide this kind of outlet in Section V below.

In order for Émile to learn about equality in the distributive sense, he must analyze differences in wealth, social status, etc., but in doing so he would run the risk of inflating their importance to him. He must instead only consider ranks and wealth when he has sufficiently developed a balance between his own core sentiments of pity and *amour de soi*—as we will review in the education section below—before he can properly and healthily employ his *amour propre*.

An ideal state, then, would not frame the discussions of distributing wealth in terms that lead the people to compare advantages because it would not have been designed to focus on such comparisons in the first place. If the people did in fact make these comparisons in this way, they would have already been corrupted by an inflamed sense of *amour propre* (that would focus on the incorrect valuation of wealth, status, and power). Rousseau writes in the *Discourse on Inequality* that "since wealth, nobility or rank, Power and personal merit are generally the principal distinctions by which one is measured in Society, I would prove that the concord or conflict between these various forces is the surest indication of a well or a badly constituted State."[77] This is almost an exact restatement of the final lines of the *Discourse on Inequality,* as Rousseau is claiming again that moral inequalities (wealth, rank, and power) need to be proportionate to certain physical inequalities (personal merit). As we noted, however, it is the personal merit toward which one is supposed to aim directly, not the wealth, rank, or power. A state that directly aims at any of the alternatives instead of aiming at virtue has developed an association it should not have, creating avenues for illegitimate inequality to re-emerge.

Rousseau demonstrates this aversion to a direct focus on wealth, rank, or power disparities in his discussion of ideal tax policy in the *Discourse on Political Economy.* There,

[77] Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, 183. OC III 189 [52].

Rousseau does not advise setting tax laws to directly reduce wealth disparities; such a policy would aim directly at distributive equality. In place of direct redistributive tax laws, he proposes taxing luxury goods instead. Taxing luxury goods would effectively keep a society's focus on pursuits of real value to their survival (such as land and farming investments) and discourage a focus on luxury items that lack such value. Furthermore, Rousseau distinctly states that the administrative task has already failed if it reaches the point of needing to create distributive laws: "[Laws] are equally powerless against the rich man's treasures and the poor man's [wretchedness]; the first eludes them, the second escapes them; the one tears the web, the other slips through it."[78] Rousseau advises against directing economic laws at redistribution of wealth, claiming that such laws are only symptoms of having already failed at the business of governing. Instead, he says that the solution is to make the citizens virtuous, and that this can only be done by fostering the citizens' love of each other.[79]

It is important to note here, too, that even in the aristocracy aforementioned, Rousseau adds the caveat that such a system of providing the advantages of ruling to those with better ability only works when there is already "moderation among the rich and contentment among the poor."[80] Virtue is a necessary first step before comparisons of any kind can take place because only then will the citizens and magistracy understand that they do their jobs for the common good.

Amour propre, then, must arise at a particular point in the education of children and the maintenance of the state. It must arise in such a way that it is channeled by virtue toward the

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[78] Rousseau, *Discourse on Political Economy*, 19. OC III 258 [34].

[79] Ibid., 19-21. OC III 258-260. This will be discussed in the patriotic institutions portion of Section V below.

[80] Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 94. OC III 407 SC III 6 [9].

common good. A state that actively enforces distributive equality through the law is doing so to rectify a failure at channeling *amour propre*. A state that instead uses its institutions to aim at virtue and channel *amour propre* will be successful and happy.

V. Institutions to Aim at Virtue and Channel *Amour Propre*

Thus, it is left to see in what ways the institutions Rousseau recommends aim at virtue. For, in aiming at virtue, they will have the tendency toward equality we earlier discussed while also providing a virtuous channel for *amour propre* that will further the social bonds of the people and promote the interest of the state. The institutions I will examine here are private institutions, e.g., education and marriage, as well as patriotic public institutions. Rousseau recommends these institutions as political forces that will aim at reasonably balancing *amour de soi* and pity, and thus aim at virtue.[81]

1. *Private Institutions*

1a. *On Education*

The history of Émile's education parallels to a large degree the history of mankind.[82] Like mankind, "the child's first sentiment is [self-love];" the second is "love of those who come near him."[83] The goal of the book, however, is to avoid the downfalls of the history outlined in the *Discourse on Inequality,* and instead to align Émile's social education with his nature. To

[81] I will argue in Chapter 3 that *Émile* in fact acts as a supplement to the *Social Contract,* and thus provides a guide for individual education that matches the goals set up in the political text.

[82] See, for example, Merle L. Perkins, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: On the Individual and Society* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1974), 205-211.

[83] Rousseau, *Émile*, 213. The child's pity takes longer to appear than his self-love because the child, at first, is the most pitiable creature, as we will review shortly.

follow the "education of nature" involves "the internal development of our faculties and our organs," and ensuring that Émile's experiences allow him to remain aligned with this proper development.[84] For Émile in his youth this means his education is focused on allowing him to freely develop his abilities to pursue his *amour de soi* and his capacity for pity.

Amour de soi, as Rousseau notes, is the most permanent aspect of a person's nature, so it does not take much to ensure that a child develops an ability to take care of himself other than avoiding coddling the child.[85] Pity, insofar as it involves commiseration with others' struggles, does not play much of a role until the child is older and less weak (so, no longer the one to be pitied in the midst of more capable beings). However, more centrally, the child learns early on to develop a friendship with his instructor, and, as Rousseau claims in the second *Discourse,* "friendship, properly understood, [is] the [product] of a steady pity focused on a particular object."[86]

Émile learns to develop and rely on both his *amour de soi* and his pity before he develops his *amour propre*, so that by the time he makes comparisons between the poor and the rich, he looks at both through this natural lens. His initial opportunities to compare, as recounted earlier, are instead used as opportunities to reinforce his conception of self-interest and the value of caring for the interests of others. The upshot of the unfair race is developing better skill to judge distances. The upshot of his ticklish questions about wealth are a focus on the tutor's productive contributions to society. Both of these scenarios mainly focus on the self-preservation skills of the person in question, and secondarily on the pity that allows him to contribute to the welfare of

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[84] Ibid., 38.

[85] Ibid., 213.

[86] Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, 153. OC III 155 [37].

those around him. A tendency toward equality results from both scenarios, as well. Émile is able and eager to share the cake with the less efficient boys as his tutor shares his wealth and production with his community.

When the tutor can no longer keep his pupil from comparisons of wealth and status, the student has already developed a keen sense of his own self-interest and has properly maintained his compassion. At this point, the tutor emphasizes how important it is to frame such comparisons so as to inspire Émile's pity, rather than inflame his *amour propre*, which might make Émile feel better than some or envy others on the basis of rank or wealth alone: "A single thing, carefully selected and shown at the right time, will fill him with pity and set him thinking for a month [...] his lasting impression of any object depends less on the object itself than on the point of view from which he regards it."[87] The tutor carefully crafts observable situations so that Émile can view both the rich and the poor through the lens of pity. The rich, overly obsessed with status and others' views of them, as discussed earlier, make Émile feel pity for their valuation of something that does not help them survive. The tutor emphasizes pity for the poor, meanwhile, by making Émile realize that any unforeseen accident could cause him to take their place:

> Do not, therefore, accustom your pupil to regard the sufferings of the unfortunate and the labours of the poor from the height of his glory; and do not hope to teach him to pity them while he considers them alien to him. Make him understand well that the fate of these unhappy men can be his, that his feet are standing on the edge of the abyss, into which he may be plunged at any moment by a thousand unexpected irresistible misfortunes. Teach him to put no trust in birth, health, or riches; show him all the changes of fortune.[88]

The proper form of education should lead Émile to feel for the suffering of others and not desire

[87] Rousseau, *Émile*, 231.

[88] Ibid., 224.

status and wealth to such an extent that he becomes a perpetrator himself of vast inequalities.[89]

We see in *Émile*, then, how to focus the child on cultivating his virtue and how this virtue benefits the ultimate cause of equality. His education, furthermore, has given him a kind of self-assurance such that he does not require recognition of his virtue from others. Émile has been successfully raised to be 'whole in himself:' he gets his satisfaction from fulfilling his own drives for pity and *amour de soi*.[90] This self-assurance is a kind of positive self-regard that virtuously "feeds *amour propre*."[91] Though some satisfaction of *amour propre* is achieved by this self-recognition, *amour propre* is primarily a drive that seeks recognition from others. As his education is meant to avoid the influence of outside forces, it does not directly address virtuous channels for receiving recognition from others. However, Émile's education does ultimately prepare him to be a citizen (as we will examine in more depth in Chapter 3) which will then provide him with these positive outlets for satisfaction of his *amour propre* at the national level.

1b. *On Marriage*

Though I believe the state provides for the virtuous satisfaction of *amour propre*, there are those that think that such satisfaction is the primary motivation for the private institution of marriage. This line of thinking posits that marriage allows the spouse to receive special attention

[89] *Émile* in fact takes place in a reality where some in this society would be far less likely to have such a fate than others, and this is not addressed despite the protagonist having a comfortable life from birth. This suggests that the combination of private education and a well set up society are both necessary to the actual workings of this educational plan.

[90] Rousseau, *Émile*, 40. See also ibid., 472. We will review in more detail what it means to be whole in oneself in Chapter 3.

[91] Ibid., 436.

and esteem from another individual and thus *amour propre* can be safely and virtuously satisfied through it. Frederick Neuhouser, for example, notes that romantic love would allow *amour propre*—that "desire to occupy 'the first-position' in the eyes of others"—to be in principle satisfiable for everyone in virtue of the fact that one's "very particular qualities" are esteemed by "*one* other subject."[92] Such a characterization of marriage would indeed provide a virtuous satisfaction of *amour propre*, and may be a desirable corrective to Rousseau; however, I find a different characterization of marriage in *Émile*. Instead, *Émile* focuses on the significant concerns romantic relationships cause for *amour propre*, and remedies them with a focus on virtue as the reason to esteem a *type* of partner, rather than the particular qualities Neuhouser would hope to emphasize.[93] The two main reasons to worry about satisfying *amour propre* as a primary goal of marriage are the greater risks of romantic relationships misdirecting, or inflaming, *amour propre* and that of becoming dependent on the esteem of a romantic partner.

First, Rousseau warns that romantic quests could inflame *amour propre*: there is a serious danger of loving and marrying someone for the wrong reason—because they esteem you without justification. In fact, one of the final tests of the tutor's success in instilling virtue over corrupted *amour propre* arrives when Émile must find a wife because here, again, there is a great risk of focusing on esteem over virtue. Romantic feelings in a corrupt society are based on certain notions of talent and beauty that make one seek partners based on the esteem one feels oneself to

[92] Neuhouser, *Rousseau's Theodicy of Self-Love,* 170 cf., Rousseau, *Émile*, 235 for the description of *amour propre.*

[93] Neuhouser has a parenthetical in the discussion of the particular esteem of romantic relationships that almost concedes as much. While I do not think the particular qualities of the two lovers are significant for satisfying *amour propre* in this case, I am not denying that the lovers have particular qualities nor that they are significant. I will explore their importance in Chapter 3.

deserve.[94] Rousseau blames this kind of desire not only for the dissolution of marriages but also for the mass inequality that corrupts societies. Instead, Rousseau cautions:

> Do you wish to prevent such abuses and to promote happy marriages? Stifle prejudices, forget human institutions, and consult nature. Do not unite people who suit each other only in a given condition and who will no longer suit one another if this condition happens to change; instead, unite people who will suit one another in whatever situation they find themselves, in whatever country they inhabit, in whatever rank they may wind up.[95]

The couple in *Émile* do not evaluate each other based on wealth or power.[96] Both Émile and Sophie have been raised to consult nature and, in doing so, to value virtue. Sophie, for her part, is taught to dislike false manners and to admire virtuous men. This idea from *Émile* was foreshadowed in the second *Discourse* when Rousseau addresses Genevan women in his "Letter to Geneva." Not only does he prescribe behavior that all women should take on, but he marks the purpose of such natural and modest behavior as also working to persuade men to keep their virtuous nature, too. Ideally educated women, to Rousseau, are ones who both value virtuous men and also use their own charms to "continue at every opportunity to assert the rights of the Heart and of Nature on behalf of duty and of virtue."[97] Émile and Sophie are made for each other because they have been educated in virtue, and virtue suits partnerships no matter in what circumstances they find themselves.

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[94] This idea originates in the second *Discourse.* See, for example, Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, 155. OC III 157-158; 165-166. OC III 169-170.

[95] Rousseau, *Émile*, 406. This advice mirrors the tutor's insistence at the beginning of *Émile* that it does not matter what rank or status his pupil has at birth because he will be educated to be a man no matter his future station.

[96] In fact, Émile's wealth worries Sophie precisely because, when she has just met him, she does not know whether he has his wealth because he has inflamed *amour propre* and pursues the wrong goals (ibid., 422-23).

[97] Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, 122. OC III 120 [20]. See also ibid., 121. OC III 119; Rousseau, *Émile*, 392, 431-3. For further discussion see also the Conclusion.

Now, it may seem problematic to my argument that valuing each other's virtue as I have outlined it here is a form of esteem. In fact, Rousseau states explicitly that there is no love without esteem, and that to be chosen as a spouse is an honor based on receiving another's esteem.[98] However, requiring the lovers to prove their moral worthiness to each other does not mean that marriage is meant to be a safeguard of Émile's *amour propre*.[99] Proving your moral worthiness is like winning the race to get the cake. It is not about the esteem that you get for winning, it is about achieving the desired end. So we can see here that marriage is an institution that reorients this achievement in terms of virtue. Just as his education focused on fostering Émile's virtue instead of on satisfaction of *amour propre*, so too does marriage.

Although marriage is one avenue through which Émile can satisfy his *amour propre*, it is clear this is not the goal of marriage for Rousseau because of how the tutor generally addresses the *idea* of Sophie rather than the *particular* Sophie. Sophie is first introduced as an idea of a virtuous woman. The tutor talks to Émile of finding "his Sophie,"[100] and even notes that he has given her the name in his depiction of such a woman because "'the name Sophie augurs well. If the girl whom [Émile chooses] does not bear it, she will at least be worthy of bearing it. We can do her the honor in advance."[101] Sophie, too, is looking for a type. Since reading *Telemachus* as a child, Sophie searched for her virtuous man, her Telemachus, and upon becoming familiar with

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[98] Rousseau, *Émile*, 430-431.

[99] Rousseau does imply that it can be a safeguard for Sophie's *amour propre* (ibid., 439), but the way that Rousseau discusses *amour propre* for women is different and less charitable than it is for his description of men. For example, the tutor tells Émile "your honor is in you alone, and hers depends on others" (ibid., 418). There is an extensive discussion to be had about how problematic Rousseau's views on *amour propre* for women are, but the question here regards man's virtue and how romantic relationships can either satisfy the natural man's *amour propre* or inflame it.

[100] Ibid., 405.

[101] Ibid., 329.

Émile, she realizes she has found a Telemachus to love.[102]

The first message here is that Sophie is replaceable: she is a type not a token and desirable as a spouse because she fits a type, not because the particular Sophie Émile marries is the only one who could satisfy his *amour propre.* There is another, more important sense of particularity that is missing but needed if the marriage were meant to satisfy the full sense of one's *amour propre.* Sophie does not esteem Émile because of any demonstrated qualities exclusive to himself. She esteems Émile and agrees to marry him due to his virtue; in fact, both declare their love to each other after the other has demonstrated pity for their ailing neighbors and sacrificed their time and interests to act compassionately.[103] These actions are ones that all virtuous and able people would do, as displays of pity are supposed to be an essential, universal characteristic of good men. If *amour propre* is a need to be esteemed for one's "very particular qualities," then the esteem the lovers give each other would fall short of this need.

Rousseau further emphasizes the importance of not depending on Sophie for Émile's happiness when he has his tutor bluntly teach Émile the lesson that, if she were to die, he should be master enough over his passions that her loss should not devastate him. If Émile is not overly attached to his happiness and satisfaction coming from Sophie, then he will remain both happy and virtuous.[104]

Rousseau corroborates this advice not to become dependent on a romantic relationship for the satisfaction of *amour propre* in his discussion of the dangers of theater, as addressed primarily in his *Letter to d'Alembert on the Theatre* (which will be discussed further in the

[102] Ibid., 404.

[103] Ibid., 441-2. See also, ibid., 433.

[104] Ibid., 442-6.

following section).[105] We will see that this shift away from the dangers of theater further emphasizes the need for society at large to be oriented toward virtue. It is possible, however, that the perfect private education cannot on its own overcome the corrupting influence of a depraved society. Indeed, in the unpublished sequel to *Émile*, we see that upon moving to Paris—the city that epitomizes corruption in *Émile*—Émile leaves Sophie after she is unfaithful. Though the text was unfinished and we cannot recover its full meaning, we can surmise that Rousseau still had concerns about the possibility of maintaining happiness and virtue for even a couple raised with the best of private institutions. Therefore, we must see what public institutions must look like in order to maintain and complement the virtue instilled by private institutions. For, if such institutions can maintain the people's virtue while providing an uninflamed channel for *amour propre*, the general will from such people will tend toward equality.

2. *Patriotic Institutions*

While *Émile* focuses on individual development of virtue, Rousseau's political texts have national suggestions for encouraging citizens to promote virtue at large. Virtue, at an individual level, involves balancing one's own sense of self-interest with one's pity. Patriotic institutions, which promote both mutual pity and mutual interest, promote virtue at a national level. Both of these translate to a certain kind of love of countrymen: love of countrymen based on pity involves wanting what will make one's fellow countrymen happy; love of countrymen based on mutual interest involves loving those who promote one's love of self. That the former kind of

[105] While Rousseau is much more descriptive of the sources of the theater's danger in the *Letter to d'Alembert* (especially Section V of the letter), his thoughts on theater in the *Letter* are consistent with his warnings about the corrupt lessons of theater in *Émile*. See, for example, Rousseau, *Émile*, 344, 387, and 443.

love of country originates in expanded pity is often the aspect least explored.[106] Rousseau explains the usefulness of this kind of patriotism, or love of country, best in the *Discourse on Political Economy* when he claims, "Love of fatherland is the most effective [for making men good], for… we readily want [or will] what the people we love want."[107]

When Rousseau outlines the necessities for formulating a love of country, it becomes clear that the point of engendering patriotism is to promote both feelings of shared *amour de soi* and pity in the countrymen. For instance, Rousseau claims that the first important factor in promoting love of country is a small country size, for "interest and commiseration must in some way be constricted and compressed in order to be activated."[108] A small country ensures that men experience the same hardships and thus not only have common interests but also benefit from communal actions to prevent or overcome those hardships. A small country also allows the people to make a "habit of seeing one another" so that they may commiserate with each other's pains.[109] For, recall from Chapter 1 that pity is a limited sentiment, and as such is strongest at a smaller scale. This idea of making a habit of looking at each other is a common theme in Rousseau's discussion of patriotism, serving as a key mechanism for promoting pity. A citizenry swayed by mutual interest and mutual pity will avoid extreme inequality and thus the fate

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[106] Most explorations of patriotism solely define it in terms of *amour propre*, or *amour propre* and *amour de soi*. See, for example, Robin Douglass, *Rousseau and Hobbes*, 160-167; Zev M. Trachtenberg, *Making Citizens: Rousseau's Political Theory of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 133-141; Nicholas Dent refers to systems of patriotism as efforts at promoting "social spirit," instead of two different sorts of love of country as I portray it here. Thus, I find it most important to identify which aspects of patriotism are founded in which sentiments so that pity is not neglected as a component of patriotism. For Dent's exploration of patriotic, social spirit, see Dent, *Rousseau*, 161-169.

[107] Rousseau, *Discourse on Political Economy*, 15. OC III 254 [29]. This idea is also repeated in Rousseau, *Social Contract,* 73-74. OC III 386-387 SC II 9. I alternate between "patriotism" and "love of country" the way Rousseau does between love of country, love of fatherland (or *patrie*, sharing its root with "patriotism"), and patriotism.

[108] Rousseau, *Discourse on Political Economy*, 15. OC III 254 [30].

[109] Ibid., 16. OC III 254 [30].

described at the end of the *Discourse on Inequality*. We will now look at patriotic institutions in two guises: civil religion and public festivals.

2a. *On Civil Religion*

Rousseau's recommendations on civil religion and its connection to patriotism in Book IV, Chapter VIII of the *Social Contract* have generated controversy since its publication, so it is important to address the issue and its concerns first. By civil religion, Rousseau means a profession of faith in the social contract and in the sanctity of the people's laws. He believes this faith must be backed up by a belief in a good, powerful, and knowing deity. This second requirement of the civil religion is based on Rousseau's belief that a transcendent form of justice is required in order to make oaths binding—an obvious requirement for entering into a social contract.[110] Rousseau's civil religion also comes with an important negative doctrine: the exclusion of intolerance.[111]

This chapter has led some to be critical of what they believe to be its tendency to promote totalitarian policies. This line of interpretation persists today in scholars who use Rousseau as a foil for their own liberal theories.[112] Terence Ball details nicely the history of these totalitarian readings of Rousseau in "Rousseau's Civil Religion Reconsidered," and I will not rehash that

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[110] For a more in-depth discussion of the importance of a "transcendent goal for the political process" see Robert Bellah's 1967 seminal text on American civil religion (Robert N. Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," *Dædalus* 134, no. 4 (Fall 2005), 43). While this description of God is a noticeably Western one, we will review below how Rousseau believes all forms of theism lead to the same religious conclusions. It is also noteworthy that, as Bellah states, it is non-Western to suggest that a people can belong to more than one religion, as Rousseau suggests with his civil religion (ibid., 40).

[111] Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 150-151. OC III 468 SC IV 8 [33].

[112] See, for example, Martha Nussbaum, *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice,* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2015).

history here.[113] Under this reading, Rousseau could be seen as a forefather of nationalism, thus linking Rousseau with a nineteenth-century term and idea that both historically and recently has been used to encourage not only exclusionary behaviors but also atrocities such as genocide.[114] Under these interpretations, Rousseau's civil religion demonstrates three authoritarian red flags that underscore the dangers of nationalism. Institutions that encourage nationalism are seen as dangerous because they police people's thoughts and beliefs, make people xenophobic, and take away people's individuality by homogenizing citizens.

For now, it is enough to understand that such misreadings of Rousseau are, at least in part, due to what Rousseau chose as his primary concern and what he largely ignored. Rousseau thought the main issue that his work needed to address was the problem of bourgeois Europeans having lost all national identity. Though concerned about patriotism's potential negative effects, he believed that those would be relics of the past, as ancient Greek, Roman, and Hebrew cultures had eventually fallen prey to their own xenophobia and bloodlust.[115] Because he thought the risks of instilling national feeling were relatively easy to circumvent, he focused instead on the benefits of building a national identity and commiseration with one's fellow countrymen. In what follows in this section, I describe how these benefits are instilled through civil religion and address the worry that it results in xenophobia. Chapter 3, which focuses on maintaining the

[113] Terence Ball, "Rousseau's Civil Religion Reconsidered," in *Reappraising Political Theory: Revisionist Studies in the History of Political Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 107-130. Totalitarian readings of Rousseau are still contemporary. See, for example, Marcela Cristi, *From Civil to Political Religion: The Intersection of Culture, Religion, and Politics* (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2001); I will examine Nussbaum's totalitarian reading in more depth in the following chapter.

[114] It is well known that Hannah Arendt accused Rousseau of having established "the ideal of French and of all other nationalism" (Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 77).

[115] Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 147. OC III 465 SC IV 8. I will review some interpreters' confusion with these passages in more detail in Chapter 3.

individuality of the citizen, details the measures Rousseau sought to avoid the policing of thought and homogeneity; in so doing, it will also confront the totalitarian readings of Rousseau offered by influential readers like Isaiah Berlin and Martha Nussbaum.

Rousseau's civil religious doctrine, as the finale of the *Social Contract,* acts instead as a final measure in solidifying man's virtuous nature by promoting a deeper connection to the natural sentiments and the state. This is observable not only in two of his core tenets of the faith—i) his ban on intolerance, and ii) the belief in a transcendent being—but also in the way Rousseau characterizes all the tenets of the civil religion as a whole. While Rousseau believes these "dogmas" ought to be "without explanations or commentaries," it is necessary in what follows to address how each of these three subjects combined reinforces citizens' mutual pity or interest, and even ultimately provides the basis of a potential healthy channel for *amour propre.*

i) *Ban Intolerance*

The centrality of pity to Rousseau's civil religion is most prominent in his single 'negative' doctrine: the citizens shall not be intolerant. As strange as the double negative might appear to us, Rousseau is insistent that this is not a 'positive' doctrine of toleration; it is a ban on intolerance.[116] This is to emphasize how dangerous it is to have a belief that excludes relating to one's fellow countrymen, living peacefully with them and, as Rousseau expressly puts it, loving them. To Rousseau, intolerance excludes commiseration.[117]

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[116] At the end of the chapter, Rousseau does state the doctrine in a more positive way: "one must tolerate all those [who] tolerate the others" (ibid., 151. OC III 469 SC IV 8 [35]), but this formulation, too, emphasizes his condemnation (and exclusion from tolerance) of those who cannot themselves be tolerant. He again refers to it as a negative doctrine in the *Letter on Providence* (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *La Lettre à Voltaire* in *Index des Fragments Autobiographiques et de la Lettre à Voltaire,* ed. Gilbert Fauconnier, Jacqueline Givel, Léo and Michel Launay (Paris: Champion, 1979), 324, 333. OC IV 1073 [34-35]).

[117] Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 151. OC III 469 SC IV 8. See also, Rousseau, *Émile*, 306, 309, 313.

In a striking clarification of whom he calls intolerant, Rousseau, in a letter to Voltaire, writes that it is the man who "pitilessly [*impitoyablement*] damns those who do not think like him."[118] Not thinking alike, as he puts it here, is a specific reference to not sharing religious beliefs. The wrong of damning those religious "others" is a failure of pity. Through pity, then, this negative doctrine excluding intolerance is meant to combat a form of xenophobia; for, the citizen is not to fear but to feel for the religious "others" living amongst him. An argument could be made that this ban on intolerance would, in an ideal society, function more like Émile's negative education: it is the state's way of maintaining man's original pity and avoiding unnatural alterations to that nature. For, through a dangerous form of socialization, intolerance was the result of some men losing their pity for other men.[119]

ii) *Religious Belief Requirement, or the Exclusion of Atheists*

A continuing theme of Rousseau's doctrine on civil religion, then, is that people without pity—people he calls *antisocial*—cannot work for the common good. As one of the core tenets of the civil religion still requires a belief in a divine being, Rousseau implies in the chapter that atheists are counted among such antisocial people. As shocking as this exclusion is, especially given the precept of tolerance that we just reviewed, Rousseau's reasoning for this prejudice is in fact likewise built on his concern for the survival of pity. Beyond the common eighteenth-century disbelief that atheists could be trusted to keep their oaths, Rousseau characterizes atheists as having reasoned themselves out of the natural sentiment of pity and into embracing rational

[118] Rousseau, *Lettre à Voltaire,* 327. OC IV 1073 [34]. Translation mine.

[119] Joshua Karant makes a similar argument about intolerance as a corruption of human nature though he does not connect the idea to negative education (Joshua Karant, "Revisiting Rousseau's Civil Religion," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 42, no.10 (2016), 1035).

self-interest alone.[120] In *Émile*, in his most expansive illumination of his concerns on atheism, Rousseau describes it as a state of "philosophic indifference," a phrase that directly connects the growth of reason with the suppression of pity.[121] He elaborates on this indifference as follows:

> If atheism does not cause the spilling of men's blood, it is less from love of peace than from indifference to the good. Whatever may be going on is of little importance for the allegedly wise man, provided that he can remain at rest in his study. His principles do not cause men to be killed, but they prevent them from being born by destroying the morals which cause them to multiply, by detaching them from their species, by reducing all their affections to a secret egoism as deadly to the population as to virtue.[122]

The frequent association of atheism with a loss of pity is difficult to miss: the atheist is indifferent, detached from concern for his fellow men, and, in light of this, he has reduced his affections. Rousseau sarcastically calls the atheist "wise," as he connects atheism with the "philosophic spirit," because he believes such a philosophy is only achieved through the combination of reason and inflamed *amour propre.*[123] This echoes the lamentation at the end of the *Discourse on Inequality* that reason and inflamed *amour propre* could extinguish or at least deeply suppress a person's natural pity.

Instead, Rousseau states, when a person preserves their nature, and in fact, consults the "book of nature," they will find religion.[124] His view without much support connects the

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[120] It was difficult to find defense of atheists in the eighteenth century. Rousseau's arguments in fact much resemble Locke's *Letter Concerning Toleration,* where Locke likewise excluded atheists for the ostensible reason that they could not be trusted to keep their oaths. See John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration,* in *John Locke, A Letter Concerning Toleration: In Focus,* eds. John Horton and Susan Mendus (New York: Routledge, 1991), 47. Rousseau, too, in a veiled way suggests that Catholicism is not a religion in this chapter and in effect could, like Locke, exclude Catholics from toleration as well.

[121] Rousseau, *Émile*, 312n.

[122] Ibid. Egoism here is, in fact, the same term in the French version <<un secret égoisme>> (Rousseau, *Émile*, *ou, de l'éducation*, 376).

[123] Rousseau, *Émile*, 312n.

[124] Ibid., 306-307.

preservation of man's natural and good sentiments with a belief in God. This applies to any religious belief, hence the civil religion's insistence on any form of theism because "a just heart [that balances interest and pity] is the true temple of the divinity…in every country and in every sect."[125]

A similar speculation is called for regarding Rousseau's connection between atheism and the loss of pity as is afforded to John Locke regarding whether a Locke transported to the modern world would maintain his prejudice against atheists.[126] While neither should be excused, it is important to understand in the case of Rousseau the underlying message that the preservation of man's virtue—his balance of *amour de soi* and pity—is the ultimate aim of his doctrines. It is also noteworthy that the exclusion of atheists, and antisocial people in general, is only a last resort in cases in which—rather than remaining internal to the mental life of the individual—a belief affects one's actions and thus becomes antisocial *behavior*. Interpreters have noted that Rousseau created the character, Wolmar, in his novel *Julie, or The New Heloise*, who is an atheist yet touted as an exemplar of virtue.[127] This distinction is likewise reflected in the way Rousseau's civil religion as a whole addresses the problem of antisocial people, which we will turn to next when considering the overall aim of the civil religion.

iii) *The Tenets are Sentiments of Sociability*

Our focus in these previous two requirements has been on the preservation of the

[125] Ibid., 311-312. See also, ibid., 308. The connection between the natural sentiments *amour de soi* and pity with religious conscience will be explored in more depth in Chapter 3.

[126] Beiner notes that Rousseau himself identifies his views on tolerance with Locke's (Ronald Beiner, *Civil Religion: A Dialogue in the History of Political Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 15, 15n15). See also, Rosenblatt, *Rousseau and Geneva*, 265-7.

[127] Warner, *Rousseau and the Problem of Human Relations*, 224; Timothy O'Hagan, "Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778): The novel of sensibility," in *The Cambridge Companion to European Novelists,* ed. Michael Bell, 89-106, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 97.

individual's natural sentiments, especially pity, so that they maintain their ability to care for others. We can see by examining the overall aim of Rousseau's proposed civil religion that he hopes to encourage these sentiments and the virtue they produce through patriotism. This point of the chapter becomes clear in its assigned purpose: to establish "a purely civil profession of faith, the articles of which it is up to the Sovereign to [establish], not precisely as dogmas of Religion but as sentiments of sociability, without which it is impossible to be either a good Citizen or a loyal subject."[128] It is significant that Rousseau replaces the notion of religious dogmas of the citizens' faith with "sentiments of sociability."[129] Rousseau is asserting the notion at the heart of patriotism here: that to have good citizens, they must love one another so that they want what each other wants.

This centrality of sociability is further underscored because, through it, Rousseau faces Hume's problem of the sensible knave.[130] Rousseau essentially admits that he does not know what to do with his version of the sensible knave, whom he calls "antisocial."[131] He suggests (rather horrifyingly) that the sovereign could exile (or even put to death) antisocial people. While these aggressive solutions are difficult to defend, Rousseau is attempting to tie commiseration and interest in one's fellow countrymen to one's very status as a citizen. Furthermore, as in the case of the atheist above, Rousseau is clearly more concerned with the

[128] Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 150. OC III 468 SC IV 8 [32].

[129] Karant, "Revisiting Rousseau's Civil Religion," 1040-1. Helena Rosenblatt aligns Rousseau's sentiments here directly with Locke's as an attempt for the state to remain tolerant, beliefs to be private, and state interference to remain only when they endanger the preservation of the state (Rosenblatt, *Rousseau and Geneva*, 265).

[130] David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Co., 1907), 122-123.

[131] Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 150. OC III 468 SC IV 8 [32]. The French term is *insociable* (Rousseau, *Du contrat social*, 174).

actions that would result from lacking sociability rather than policing the beliefs that do not cause antisocial actions; he states that a person should not be punished for being civilly "impious" but instead punished when a person "*behaves* as if he [does] not believe [the sentiments of sociability]."[132]

While Rousseau states the doctrines of civil religion and his reasoning behind them in only a concise five paragraphs, the importance of having a civil religion to foster the right sentiments is not solely evident in these final arguments. The rest of his chapter on civil religion emphasizes the importance of nationwide pity and interest through his brief study of the history of civil and individual religion. There Rousseau makes it clear what social sentiments he wishes to foster through his own civil religion. He does so by examining the effects on national commiseration and national interest that historical forms of religion have had and noting their successes and failures.

A Christian theocracy, for example, does not do enough to inspire pity among men about their mortal predicaments because of Christianity's otherworldly aims. It is interesting to note both atheists and Christians are similarly described as having been "detached" from their fellows.[133] A Christian society, as Rousseau puts it, lacks any "great [bond]" or social "cohesion" among its people that would enable them to celebrate the good tidings of their fellows and collectively mourn their losses.[134] This profound indifference also extends to the

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[132] Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 150. OC III 468 SC IV 8 [32]. Emphasis added. See also, ibid., 151. OC III 469 SC IV 8 [34]. In fact, Beiner calls this abandonment of the kind of pagan fanatical enforced belief, an "anemic," and "Enlightenment-style 'religion of tolerance'" more focused on the negative, avoiding social division, than on positive belief enforcement (Beiner, *Civil Religion*, 16; 15; see also ibid., 80). See also, Dent, *Rousseau,* 171-2.

[133] Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 147. OC III 465 SC IV 8 [21].

[134] Ibid., 147. OC III 465 SC IV 8 [21]; 148. OC III 465 SC IV 8 [23].

Christian nation's interests. For, even "if the state declines, [the Christian] blesses the hand of God that weighs down on his people."[135]

In so scorning the thought of a Christian nation and its failure to inspire compassion and interest in worldly affairs, Rousseau demonstrates the gap he hopes to fill with his own proposed institution of a civil religion. As part of believing in the sanctity of the laws and social contract, professing one's faith in Rousseau's civil religion also involves recognizing that, if the country needs, one must sacrifice one's life for it.[136] Essentially, when one is filled with this form of civil religious sentiment, one is recognizing one's desire to self-preserve and identifying one's interest with the state's. Thus, Rousseau uses his doctrine of civil religion to reinforce the virtuous qualities of the people—pity and *amour de soi*—in an effort to maintain a functioning, good civil society.

While it is clear that civil religion as an institution maintains the focus on citizens' virtue, it is unclear that it can provide a healthy channel for *amour propre.* Rousseau warns of the dangers of ancient forms of religion where the laws prescribe the gods and their rituals. This ancient "religion of the citizen," which we shall return to in Chapter 3, makes the citizens feel such noble purpose in serving their state that the exacerbated sentiment causes bloodlust and xenophobia for those outside of the state and its gods.[137]

Having recognized the potential for civil religion to inflame *amour propre*, Rousseau denounces the ancient religion of the citizen precisely because of its consequent xenophobia and bloodlust. He makes it clear, however, that he wants to keep the extended pity that unites this

[135] Ibid., 147. OC III 465 SC IV 8 [25].

[136] Ibid., 150. OC III 468 SC IV 8 [32].

[137] Ibid., 146. OC III 464 SC IV 8 [15].

religious state—unlike Christian theocracies, states with the religion of the citizen love each other and the laws—but not at the expense of fear and hatred of outsiders.[138] In fact, this thought is consistent with maintaining Rousseau's original definition of pity: repugnance at others' suffering. Rousseau does not want the stronger identification with a country to come at the expense of a person's ability to humanize outsiders.[139] Commiseration in this sense is a foil of xenophobia: recognizing another as someone to relate to.

The problem remains, then, how to instill a civil religion that provides a healthy channel for *amour propre*, rather than inflaming a xenophobic nationalistic pride. As his civil religion does insist on the sanctity of the laws and the social contract as one of its few doctrines, it would appear likely that an element of glorying in membership in a sanctified political order could grant the individual members esteem and thus virtuously channel their *amour propre*. In order for such a channel to not coincide with xenophobia, warmongering, and imperialist drives—all of which he denounced earlier in the text—Rousseau instead imagines such a channel for *amour propre* would result from an isolationist nation, one that is satisfied with the glory of its own internal workings and is uninterested in the outside world.[140] The primary focus of the tenets of

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[138] Ibid., 147. OC III 465 SC IV 8.

[139] It is consistent with the nature of sympathy that "one can love one's family or fellow believers without necessarily hating or thinking less of others" (Richard Boyd, "Justice, Beneficence, and Boundaries: Rousseau and the Paradox of Generality," in *The General Will: The Evolution of a Concept*, ed. James Farr and David Lay Williams (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 261 cf. Max Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2008)). Rousseau even states this goal of the civil religion in the *Geneva Manuscript* to have the bonds of society through its civil religion while "not being the enemy of anyone else's" (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Geneva Manuscript,* in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau Vol. 4*. trans. Judith R. Bush, Roger D. Masters, and Christopher Kelly, eds. Roger D. Masters and Christopher Kelly (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1994), 122. OC III 241 GM III 1.

[140] See for example, Rousseau, *Social Contract,* 47-48. OC III 358 SC I 4; 75-6. OC III 388-389 SC II 9-10; 114. OC III 429 SC III 15 [4]; Rousseau, *Discourse on Political Economy*, 28. OC III 268 [53]. Despite Rousseau's recommendations and expectations, it is unclear quite how he could actually avoid the imperialist consequences that Bellah identifies as a danger of distorting civil religion regarding international relations (Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," 51, 54-55). It is also evident that Rousseau failed to see the problems of isolationism or consider its international ramifications.

civil religion, however, is on fostering mutual interest and pity. Instead, it is the second form of public institutions we will consider that most successfully and obviously fills the role of virtuously satisfying *amour propre*. We turn now to public gatherings.

2b. *On Public Gatherings*

Robert Bellah in his groundbreaking article, "Civil Religion in America," wrote of the importance of ritualistic public gatherings to civil religion. Rituals are both symbolic of and actively reinvigorate the set of beliefs that constitute the American faith.[141] As an example, Bellah states that the national celebrations of Memorial Day and Veterans' Day are meant to enliven public sentiment around the American value of national sacrifice.[142] While Bellah rooted his examination of American civil religion in Rousseau's original concept from Book IV, Chapter VIII of the *Social Contract*, nowhere in that chapter does Rousseau suggest specific rituals that would keep the civil religion pervasive and vigorous. In fact, the chapter very sparsely states the doctrines of the religion and emphasizes that the details are left to the sovereign to decide.[143] I will review at the end of this section what I think are the likely reasons for this omission in the *Social Contract*. Nevertheless, Rousseau does write extensively in the *Letter to d'Alembert* of the importance of instituting public gatherings that cultivate in the people a love of each other and of their country. Such public gatherings are rituals—of the type described by Bellah—that fulfill the spirit of the civil religion and the "sentiments of sociability" recommended in the *Social Contract*. Regardless of whether Rousseau would count some or all

[141] Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," 50.

[142] Ibid., 49.

[143] Rousseau, *Social Contract,* 150. OC III 468 SC IV 8 [32-33].

of these gatherings as part of a civil religion or as separate institutions, they are the cornerstone that upholds the values of his ideal civil religion.

Patriotic public gatherings orient the people toward virtue by cultivating citizens' expanded pity in such a way as to moderate individuals' self-interest. They also provide a channel for the pursuit of self-interest, and thus an avenue for the expression of both *amour de soi* and *amour propre.*

Rousseau contrasts public gatherings like theatrical performances with public festivals, and recommends the latter replace the former in order to cultivate an active pity. When he writes in his *Letter to d'Alembert on the Theatre*, Rousseau's commentary involves arguing that drama does not consist of actively commiserating with one's fellow countrymen, but sitting in the dark, isolated.[144] Instead, public festivals allow each man to interact with his countrymen and not only sympathize with each other's pleasure, but also "[see] and [love] himself in the others."[145] This contrast with the theater reminds us that the habit of seeing each other to foster commiseration is a central component of patriotism. It is so central that Rousseau insists several times that even leaders and administrators of the law ought to participate so that watchmakers and magistrates alike can foster mutual affection.[146] This is a core reason why the ideal state must be small: when it is too large, "the people has less affection for [leaders] it never sees... and for its fellow-citizens most of whom are strangers to it."[147]

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[144] Rousseau, *Politics and the Arts: Letter to M. D'Alembert on the Theatre*, trans. Allan Bloom (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1960), 125. The active component of pity is especially important here in contrast to any pity that takes place in the theater which inspires inaction (David Marshall, "Rousseau and the State of Theater," in *Surprising Effects of Sympathy: Marivaux, Diderot, Rousseau, and Mary Shelley* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 144).

[145] Rousseau, *Letter to D'Alembert*, 126.

[146] Rousseau, *Letter to D'Alembert*, 129; 129n, 130n.

[147] Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 74. OC III 387 SC II 9 [3].

The commiseration fostered by public festivals makes one more willing to support one's countrymen through taxes, military endeavors, and other activities for the common good. We find both the emphases on commiseration and regular contact with one's fellow countrymen in Rousseau's statement in the *Social Contract* that an important element of effective taxation is the ability to see the results of the distribution. Commiserating with one's fellow men makes distributing one's wealth feel less burdensome.[148]

Furthermore, for Rousseau, abandoning the theater results in abandoning one of the most dangerous tropes common to it: the glorification of romance above all other goods. We have already reviewed some of the dangers of romantic love in the above section on marriage. In the case of the theater, such dangers also come with the inappropriate direction of pity.[149] An audience, starved of commiseration with each other, is offered instead a target Rousseau finds dangerous: the romantic male lead who will do anything—morality be damned—to win a woman's heart.[150] In corrupt society, this audience congratulates itself for having felt pity (since they rarely ever make use of the sentiment), but is incapable of recognizing that it was misguided.[151]

Prioritizing public festivals at the expense of theater further specifies what the social role

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[148] Ibid., 101. OC III 415 SC III 8. For more about Rousseau's focus on making taxes less burdensome, see Rosenblatt, *Rousseau and Geneva*, 191-3; Hanley, "Political Economy and Individual Liberty," 10-14.

[149] This is a popularly discussed flaw of pity in the literature on pity. See, for example, Richard Boyd, "Pity's Pathologies Portrayed: Rousseau and the Limits of Democratic Compassion" *Political Theory* 32, no. 4 (Aug 2004), 531; Niel Saccamano, "'Savage Patriotism,' Justice and Cosmopolitics," in *Adam Smith and Rousseau: Ethics, Politics, Economics,* eds. Maria Pia Paganelli, Dennis C. Rasmussen, and Craig Smith (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 288. I would note, however, that such a flaw arises mainly from the diminished state of pity in the already corrupt society, such that its outlets are few and equally corroded. To this point, John Marks acknowledges that the uncorrupted Émile knows how not to misapply his pity, as his upbringing has presented him with uncorrupted opportunities for its application (Marks, "A Discriminating Defense of Compassion," 737).

[150] Rousseau, *Letter to D'Alembert*, 47.

[151] Ibid., 25; See also, Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality,* 152-153. OC III 155 [36].

of women should be in terms of their effect on men's virtue. Romantic theater gives women a particular, pernicious position of power; as actresses, they become the focus of attention, while romantic stories emphasize their sexual power over men.[152] Helena Rosenblatt sums up Rousseau's particular condemnation of this aspect of theater: the women on the stage and those who encourage their husbands to attend are not only depoliticizing men but focusing them on winning the attention of women who "prance around all 'decked out.'"[153]

Rousseau believes, instead, that society needs women to serve an assisting role in encouraging men's virtue, in part as witnesses in public festivals. By contrast with romantic theater, many public festivals involve the citizens themselves as the spectacles:

> Plant a stake crowned with flowers in the middle of a square; gather the people together there, and you will have a festival. Do better yet; let the spectators become an entertainment to themselves; make them actors themselves; do it so that each sees and loves himself in the others so that all will be better united.[154]

While not all public gatherings focus on the men as the sole active participants, Rousseau's most heartfelt recommendation is to have festivals like those of Lacedaemon that he witnessed in his youth. There, the soldiers and officers danced together in the streets after the women were asleep. It was a simple affair "without display" that held "a secret patriotic charm."[155] In his description, the women, awoken by the noise, at first were joyous witnesses of the affair. Rousseau's description of the festival closes with a statement reminiscent of the previously

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[152] This is reminiscent of Rousseau's memorable statement in the second *Discourse* that through romantic conventions women "establish their rule and [through convention] make dominant the sex that should obey" (Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, 155. OC III 158 [42]). The Conclusion will contain further discussion complicating Rousseau's statements about women's role in Rousseau.

[153] Helena Rosenblatt, "On the 'Misogyny' of Jean-Jacques Rousseau: The Letter to d'Alembert in Historical Context," *French Historical Studies,* 25, no. 1 (Winter 2002), 111. For an exploration of women as spectacle in the *Letter to D'Alembert* and beyond, see also, Marshall, *Surprising Effects of Sympathy*, 140-141.

[154] Rousseau, *Letter to D'Alembert*, 126.

[155] Ibid., 135.

discussed address to Genevan women in the *Discourse on Inequality*: "This is how these lovable and prudent women brought their husbands back home, not in disturbing their pleasures but in going to share them."[156] Rousseau asks women to participate by loving virtue as it appears in the men they love.[157] Women are no longer a distraction from political emotions, nor are they socialized by theater to wield their power to reinforce destructive habits, but should instead love the political emotions they see in men of virtue.

Thus, romantic theater contrasts with patriotic enterprises in regard to aligning man with his nature. When the theater of romantic love takes over, as Rousseau diagnosed in Paris, it draws attention away from political concerns and natural sentiments.[158] Instead, the development of common pity through public festivals is key to ensuring the citizens retain their virtue which will in turn ensure that each fellow citizen is provided for.

A second way public festivals help channel citizens toward a common good is through their rewards system. Also in the *Letter to d'Alembert*, Rousseau writes of the importance of public commendations and prize festivals.[159] These serve several functions, all of which are the direct result of presenting individual accomplishments as national achievements. First, by publicly acknowledging individual achievement, citizens feel better preserved for living in a society with men of great strength, thought, and other talents. *Amour de soi*, the drive to self-

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[156] Ibid., 136n.

[157] On the debate about women's passive or active role through public festivals, see, for example, Elizabeth Wingrove, "Republican Romance," in *Feminist Interpretations of Jean-Jacques Rousseau,* ed. Lynda Lange (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 338; Rosenblatt, "On the ''Misogyny'' of Jean-Jacques Rousseau," 98.

[158] Rousseau, *Letter to D'Alembert*, 47; Rousseau airs the same frustration at the distraction romance makes from commiseration with one's fellow countrymen in general in Rousseau, *Discourse on Political Economy*, 21. OC III 260 [36].

[159] Rousseau, *Letter to D'Alembert*, 126-127; see also*,* Rousseau, *Discourse on Political Economy*, 10. OC III 249 [20].

preservation, is better satisfied in a society protected and maintained by meritorious people.

Second, such public acknowledgment provides a healthy and virtuous channel for *amour propre* by emphasizing the greatness of the state and thus the greatness of the individual by virtue of being a member of the state. Rosenblatt even notes that this may be Rousseau's tactic in the second *Discourse*'s dedication: there, Rousseau flatters the Genevans for their virtue and thus tries to accord their *amour propre* with their virtue by identifying their pride with their country.[160] While Rousseau's applied political projects were neither published during his lifetime nor remotely successful, scholars see the attempt at channeling *amour propre* in both his proposals for Poland and Corsica. There he takes the honor-loving nature of both peoples and recommends they create rituals that would "giv[e them] a great opinion of themselves and of their fatherland"[161] based on the specific "people for whom it is intended."[162] Dent notes that both projects' patriotic institutions "work[ed] with existing ideas of honour and prestige and caus[ed] these to be turned gradually to new objects," love of country and one's countrymen.[163] Finally, third, public festivals provide a patriotic outlet for those like Bacon, Descartes, and Newton that Rousseau mentions in the *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts*. Through public festivals, men receive the esteem by others of their particular qualities—absent in the admiration

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[160] Rosenblatt, *Rousseau and Geneva,* 86. For more on the cultivation of *amour propre* through this form of patriotism, see Neuhouser, *Rousseau's Theodicy of Self-Love*, 236-237.

[161] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Considerations on the Government of Poland*, in *Rousseau: The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings*, trans. Victor Gourevitch, ed. Victor Gourevitch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 184. OC III 961 GP 3 [5].

[162] Ibid., 177. OC III 953 GP I [1]. See also, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Plan for a Constitution for Corsica,* in *The Plan for Perpetual Peace, On the Government of Poland, and Other Writings on History and Politics,* trans. Christopher Kelly and Judith Bush, ed. Christopher Kelly (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2005), 130.

[163] Dent, *Rousseau,* 177. For further discussion of the similarities between these two projects, see ibid., 174-9; Douglass, *Rousseau and Hobbes*, 160-7; Neuhouser also finds this identification but mainly in ancient accounts of *amour propre* (Neuhouser, *Rousseau's Theodicy of Self-Love,* 236-7).

received through romantic love—that I, following Neuhouser, take to be a defining feature of *amour propre*. Thus through "rewards and honours…'public testimony of a man's virtue is the sweetest prize he can receive for it.'"[164]

Thus, we can see most clearly in the recommendations primarily from the *Letter to d'Alembert* with assistance from Rousseau's work on Poland and Corsica how patriotic public gatherings invigorate national pity, *amour de soi* and channel *amour propre*. As mentioned earlier, it is not a coincidence that specificity regarding public gatherings is found only in Rousseau's more peripheral texts. There are no specific recommendations for public gatherings in the *Social Contract* with one clear exception: there must be "fixed and periodic assemblies" of the entire populace to ensure not only that all are regularly known to all, but also that the demands of the state are met and the voice of the general will is heard.[165] While I stated earlier that these recommended gatherings were not necessarily meant to be an element of Rousseau's civil religion, it is difficult to ignore the invocation of religious language Rousseau uses when discussing the sanctity of this particular gathering and its members. Rousseau does seem to connect the fixed assemblies to the spirit of the civil religion when he writes that "the person of the [humblest] Citizen is as sacred and inviolable as that of the first Magistrate"[166] and that "the voice of the people [that results] is indeed the voice of God."[167]

The lack of further specificity in prescribed gatherings and rituals should not be taken as a sign that Rousseau does not find instituting public gatherings like those outlined in the *Letter to*

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[164] Douglass, *Rousseau and Hobbes,*164, cf. Rousseau, *Fragments politiques* OC III 501.

[165] Rousseau, *Social Contract,* 111. OC III 426 SC III 13 [1].

[166] Ibid., 112. OC III 427-428 SC III 14 [1].

[167] Rousseau, *Discourse on Political Economy,* 8. OC III 246 [15].

d'Alembert to be important. On the contrary, apart from enforcing regular public assemblies of the sovereign, Rousseau writes in the *Social Contract* that the best way to maintain public bonds is through a people's "morals [*moeurs*], customs, and … opinion."[168] These customs are meant to preserve, even by "the force of habit," the "spirit of its institutions" that keep men virtuous.[169] Thus, he leaves the format of cultural activities like public gatherings open to contextual interpretation, but maintains their overarching goal of reinforcing citizens' healthy *amour propre, amour de soi,* and pity. It is the last of these three sentiments that Rousseau also relies on when, in the *Social Contract,* he insists that, in response to unforeseen circumstances, the sovereign can convene more than just its fixed periodic gatherings when fellow-feeling demands it.[170] To do so, Rousseau relies on the citizens to feel and then address any sudden pain of even their weakest member.[171] The focus of these institutions, then, is not directly on equality but on the sentiments.

Having examined the proper functioning of a variety of institutions, both public and private, it is clear that all share the aim of cultivating or reinforcing virtue. Focusing the people on their virtuous natures reasonably balances the drives of *amour de soi* and pity, promoting equality as the inevitable result. Furthermore, by concentrating on virtue instead of directly on

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[168] Rousseau, *Social Contract,* 81. OC III 394 SC II 12 [5].

[169] Rousseau, *Contrat Social*, 90. OC III 394 SC II 12 [5]. Translation mine. This need for context in consideration of public institutions is repeated in Rousseau, *Letter to D'Alembert*, 17. Furthermore, it has been argued that such a lack of specificity is meant to again avoid the xenophobia identified as pernicious in the chapter on civil religion. To be intentionally vague about manners of practicing a civil faith allows for seeing the wisdom of all paths that promote virtue (Karant, ""Revisiting Rousseau's Civil Religion," 1056).

[170] Rousseau, *Social Contract,* 111. OC III 426 SC III 13 [1].

[171] Otherwise, as I have noted, their silence signified tacit consent (ibid., 109. OC III 424 SC III 11 [4]).

equality, these institutions are all able to avoid the two main dangers that would come from a more direct focus on equality: discouraging exceptionalism and inflaming *amour propre.* Each, by giving the individual the room and orientation to pursue their own self-interest, maintains space for the individual to pursue great and meritorious activities. This focus further keeps the individual occupied with activities that would not directly inflame *amour propre,* while some institutions even channel *amour propre* for the benefit of the individual and society. The result is a form of equality that does not need direct, burdensome enforcement by the state because it is simply part of the underlying will of the people.

VI. Conclusion

Equality as a topic of moral and political conversation became prominent in the Enlightenment as a reaction to the political climate of the time. Authority had previously been assumed as a matter of hierarchy. Thus, when challenges came to king and church, this assumption of authority and the inequities that sustained the system were challenged as well. For Rousseau, it was not enough to change course and legislate equality because an entire social system had already failed. Instead, his ideal political system is built upon virtue because a virtuous society will tend toward equality without the need for retroactive, corrective measures.

Maintaining attention on virtue, rather than wealth, status, or power, will instead cultivate people worthy of those goods. Virtue for Rousseau involves reasonably balancing one's self-interest and one's pity. The general will is the will that results from the people acting with virtue. It tends toward equality because balancing self-interest and pity moderates extreme excesses to keep people from extreme need. If a people cultivate their natural inclinations toward virtue, mass inequalities requiring direct intervention simply do not arise. The general

will, then, tends toward equality through its pursuit of virtue; recall Rousseau's statements in the *Discourse on Political Economy* that the good of the state rests on liberty achieved through virtue: "[A country] cannot endure without freedom, nor freedom without virtue, nor virtue without citizens."[172] Now it remains to be seen how exactly people become citizens.

[172] Rousseau, *Discourse on Political Economy,* 20. OC III 259 [36].

Chapter 3: Pity Renders the Life of Man and Citizen Compatible

I. Introduction

Rousseau published both *Émile* and the *Social Contract* in the same year, 1762. The two texts focus on ostensibly dichotomous pictures of ideal human lives: the life of the man, as embodied by Émile, and the life of the citizen, as choreographed in the *Social Contract*. This chapter aims to understand the relationship between the two pictures. The options given in the two texts are allegedly opposed (Section II). As a man, Émile gets to direct his life by his own will. He has a complete existence in himself so long as he follows his nature. As a citizen, however, one's existence is described in the *Social Contract* as partial, and thus apparently not whole in itself. One is meant to give oneself and all one's goods up to the body-politic. The body-politic, with its general will, is thus the whole, self-directing entity to which one is only an incomplete fraction. As all one's fellow countrymen have done the same, the citizen is united with all other citizens to be guided by the general will. Communal unity forms when the citizens all seem alike by guiding themselves by the same general will, and in doing so, creating a single, unified body that acts with that one will. This communal unity thus creates a stable society.

As readers familiar with Rousseau interpretation will immediately recognize, this popular recent interpretation of the two books began with Judith Shklar's groundbreaking incompatibilist argument in *Men and Citizens.*[1] This reading takes Rousseau as offering us a choice between two mutually exclusive options: a life of autonomy or a life of unity through community. The thought here is that one can either choose to live autonomously, directing oneself according to

[1] Judith Shklar, *Men and Citizens: A Study of Rousseau's Social Theory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

one's own interests, or to live united with one's fellows, allowing the interests of the whole community (through the general will) to direct oneself. This interpretation has persisted since Shklar's 1969 publication and has become what John Warner calls "perhaps the central controversy in contemporary Rousseau scholarship."[2]

Warner, in fact, identifies the primary proponents of a compatibilist reading of Rousseau as the very "proto-Kantian" interpreters discussed in Chapter 1.[3] A Kantian interpretation of the self in Rousseau allows for both individuality and full citizenship through its conception of the moral agent. Kantian interpreters like Rawls and Cassirer emphasize that the moral agent's individuality derives precisely from their ability to self-legislate based on reason and interest, and this ability is then institutionalized through the general will.[4] But as these interpretations neglect the role of pity in their account of moral agency, it remains to be seen how my project can contribute to the discussion by reinserting the natural sentiment and thus a different avenue to aligning the lives of man and citizen.

While my argument will be a compatibilist one through the sentiment of pity, it will also

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[2] John M. Warner, *Rousseau and the Problem of Human Relations* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015), 28. Recent accounts that rely on a compatibilist reading of Rousseau include: Joshua Cohen, *Rousseau: A Free Community of Equals*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010; Nicholas Dent, *Rousseau.* New York: Routledge, 2005; Jonathan Marks, "Rousseau's Discriminating Defense of Compassion." *The American Political Science Review* 101, no. 4 (Nov. 2007), 727-739; Frederick Neuhouser, *Rousseau's Theodicy of Self-Love: Evil, Rationality and the Drive for Recognition.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008; David Lay Williams, "The Substantive Elements of Rousseau's General Will," in *The General Will: The Evolution of a Concept,* ed. James Farr and David Lay Williams (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 219-246. For contemporary accounts that continue in Shklar's vein to posit that *Émile* and the *Social Contract* appear incompatible, see fn. 5.

[3] Warner, *Rousseau and the Problem of Human Relations*, 166.

[4] John Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*, ed. Samuel Freeman (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007) 235, 247-8; Ernst Cassirer, *The Question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, trans. Peter Gay, ed. Peter Gay (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 104, 123; See also Warner, 165-167.

address the incompatibilist line of interpretation which has persisted in various forms.[5] After developing my account, I will confront two contemporary arguments—from Martha Nussbaum and Charly Coleman—that develop what they see as Rousseau's practical theory of the citizen self that, by necessity, lacks individuality.[6]

Contrary to this enduring scholarship, with the groundwork laid in Chapters 1 and 2, I hope to provide a more satisfying understanding of *Émile* and the *Social Contract* and how they might, in fact, work together. In the previous chapter, we saw that Rousseau wanted to allow individuality and civil inequalities based on merit. This suggests Rousseau values the uniqueness that individuals may have to offer when they are allowed the freedom to pursue their own interests in civil society. How, then, is the life of a citizen, which appears to require annihilation of the self, compatible with this allowance for individuality and self-direction?

It will be my argument that understanding the role of pity in the life of an autonomous individual can help bridge the conceptual gap between a self-directed, individualized life and a life united with one's fellow citizens under the general will. Seeing these two lives as compatible rests on what Rousseau understands the whole individual to be. In Section III, I will identify what that understanding of the whole individual is by looking at the characteristics of the life of man as presented in *Émile*. The whole individual has inherent personal drives by which they direct themselves on their own unique personal path. Among these personal drives, importantly, is that of pity, which makes the individual other-oriented. Thus, part of what it

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[5] See for example, Charly J. Coleman "The Value of Dispossession: Rethinking Discourses of Selfhood in Eighteenth-Century France." *Modern Intellectual History* 2, no. 3 (2005), 318; Martha Nussbaum, *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2015); Karen Pagani, *Man or Citizen: Anger, Forgiveness, and Authenticity in Rousseau.* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015); Warner, *Rousseau and the Problem of Human Relations.*

[6] Because, as I will demonstrate, I take Rousseau to offer practical suggestions for political life, it is most important to focus on interpretations that do likewise, unlike Shklar's utopian arguments.

means to self-direct is to take an interest in the interests of others, to act out of one's drive to pity. Pursuing the good of others, then, is still compatible with maintaining one's autonomy and individuality.

While I will have shown that the unique and individual life of man is compatible with a life with others, it will remain to be seen whether Rousseau depicts the life of the citizen as likewise compatible with individuality. In examining the nature of the citizen in Section IV, I will explore where Rousseau appears to argue for citizens' required lack of individuality. In that section, I will argue that there is conceptual space for individuality among citizens.

I will argue that pity in fact renders both lives compatible in Section V. There I will contend that since society's stability rests on a social bond that unites the people, pity is the mechanism through which there can be individuals in a stable society. I take this to be a better explanation than the familiar interpretations precipitated by Shklar. I will examine such interpretations in Section VI and demonstrate that they both neglect the nuance of Rousseau's account of a social individual and, ultimately, are unsupported by his texts.

II. *Émile* Presents the Problem

As I have suggested, accounts of Rousseau's man and his citizen tend to definitionally exclude a person leading both lives simultaneously. Rousseau himself seems to present the two identities, man and citizen, as incompatible at the beginning of *Émile*. He presents the natural man as opposed to what he here refers to as the "civil man," which I refer to as the "citizen."[7]

[7] Rousseau is not consistent with his terminology in this case. Occasionally "civil man" will denote a corrupt man in civil society. In the context of this passage, however, it is clear that he means a good citizen, whereas the corrupt men are referred to in the same passage as "men of our days" (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile, or On Education*, trans. Allan Bloom, ed. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1979), 40).

Natural man lives "entirely for himself," and exists as a "numerical unity," who is relative to no one but himself.[8] "Civil man is only a fractional unity,"[9] whose existence is dependent on and relative to the whole, the body-politic.[10] The clearest statement of the incompatibility of these two identities is contained in Rousseau's description of the corrupt man of his day, which Rousseau characterizes as the man who wants to preserve the nature of being entirely for himself while living in civil society. He who tries to do this, Rousseau claims, "does not know what he wants. Always in contradiction with himself …he will never be either man or citizen."[11]

So, early in *Émile*, we catch a glimpse of some qualities of natural man and citizen, as well as the first instance of concern about their compatibility. Existing for oneself, as natural man does, is related to maintaining the pre-eminence of one's natural sentiments. As I have argued, natural sentiments are primarily those two principles of human action: *amour de soi* and pity. If one is able to follow one's own natural sentiments, one thereby exists for oneself, existing to fulfill one's own will. Furthermore, such persons exist as a numerical unity because all they do is by their own will, which is based on their own natural sentiments. They are not divided against themselves because they do not have desires that they cannot fulfill or desires that would not actually make them happy.

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[8] Rousseau, *Émile*, 40.

[9] Ibid. As the word "fractional" suggests, Rousseau is using mathematical language in the French, saying <<L'homme civil n'est qu'une unité fractionnaire qui tient au dénominateur, et dont la valeur est dans son rapport avec l'entier, qui est le corps social.>> (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile, ou, de l'éducation* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1877), 9). The suggestion Rousseau makes is that if the social body of which man is a part is large, then the general will is to a lesser extent the individual man's because the denominator he is a fraction of is larger, making his fraction less significant. For example, in a social body of two people, the general will would be 1/2 his, whereas in a social body of a thousand, the general will would be 1/1000th his, and his existence would seem even more partial.

[10] Ibid., 40.

[11] Ibid. Dent credits the opening to *Émile* for the persistent agreement with Shklar of incompatibility (Dent, *Rousseau*, 84).

While *Émile* is not the treatise on citizenship that we will examine with the *Social Contract* in Section IV below, it does give us a brief idea of the possible conflicts between Rousseau's ideas of man and citizen. While natural man exists for himself, the citizen seems to exist for others or, specifically, his country. This means that instead of guiding himself by his own will, he is guided by a common will (the general will), based on the common good. Lastly, the citizen is not a numerical unity, but instead a "fractional unity;" in being guided by the will of the body-politic, he is guided by a will that is only fractionally his own. The numerical unity in such a system seems to be at the national level: the sovereign is whole in itself; the citizen is not.

Just a few paragraphs after introducing the apparent contradiction, however, Rousseau raises the question of whether a combination of the two identities is in fact possible without perpetual self-contradiction:

> 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. In order to judge of this, he would have to be seen wholly formed: his inclinations would have to have been observed, his progress seen, his development followed.[12]

The implication here is that, in an ideal situation, we may be able to discover how a person could be both a natural man and a citizen by studying natural man and his development. Thus, the study of Émile, which is the study of natural man's development, gives us a model with which to judge whether one can raise a man who can also be a citizen. Some readers of Rousseau's political philosophy ignore *Émile.* But *Émile* is critical to settling this question about citizenship when it ends with what I deem to be Émile becoming a citizen. The fact that Émile eventually becomes a citizen implies that *Émile* can act as a roadmap to achieving both identities in one

[12] Ibid., 41.

person. Instead of offering brief, seemingly preclusive definitions of the two lives as Rousseau rhetorically did in the introductory statements in *Émile*, we should examine the core characteristics of the man and the citizen that our two central texts offer, as identified by their development, mature lives, and duties. From there, we will see where any tensions may lie and how a man raised for himself can, without contradiction, also take on the duties and roles of a citizen.

III. Rousseau's Natural Man

It is necessary, then, to interpret who natural man is, as presented in *Émile*, in order to see if this man is compatible with the *Social Contract*'s citizen. The natural man in *Émile* is the same natural man I identified in Chapter 1. In that chapter, I argued that it is natural man to whom Rousseau refers when he states the *Social Contract's* aim of "taking men as they are and laws as they can be" to identify a legitimate form of state rule.[13] To be the subject for laws as they might be is to be the model for the formation of the general will. Thus, the natural man in Chapter 1 is the example of the kind of man who becomes a citizen. Given this, it may appear question-begging to already take Émile as a model for that same natural man when the question we are addressing is if it is possible to be both natural man and citizen. However, Rousseau in *Émile* clearly defines the same three options for a person's developmental trajectory as we examined in Chapter 1. One either develops into a healthy person (the natural man), an unhealthy person (the modern man), or one fails to develop at all (the original, "savage" man). Émile is meant to pursue the first path.

[13] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Of the Social Contract*, in *Rousseau: The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings*, trans. Victor Gourevitch, ed. Victor Gourevitch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 41. OC III 351 SC I [1].

Rousseau often discusses Émile's place in society so that his readers can understand both the context in which his educational program is meant to work and the ultimate goals of that education. It is specifically a natural education, or one that follows the lessons of nature. Rousseau is eager to avoid the misinterpretation that Émile is raised to live in the woods instead of in society. He makes this clear in the following quotation, which will serve as our guide for drawing the distinctions between original man, corrupt man, and natural man as well as unpacking the natural education that produces the natural man:

> [A]lthough I want to form the man of nature, the object is not, for all that, to make him a savage and relegate him to the depths of the woods. It suffices that, enclosed in a social whirlpool, he not let himself get carried away by either the passions or the opinions of men, that he see with his eyes, that he feel with his heart, that no authority govern him. Beyond that of his own reason.[14]

The savage life is not for him. But, as the above quotation suggests, Émile is not meant to live the corrupted civilized life either. Unlike the idealism of much of the *Social Contract*, *Émile* is distinctively written with the idealized goal of the natural education within the context of an already generally corrupted civil society.

The corrupt social man is essentially Émile's foil. The main passion that possesses and distracts the corrupt man is inflamed *amour propre*, which causes a person to act not according to what they desire, but according to what their misguided society has deemed most estimable—be that wealth, power, or fame. Corrupt man, unlike the natural man, does not live for himself. He lives for and through the eyes of others. Émile is taught to follow his own desires instead of

[14] Rousseau, *Émile,* 255. This quotation is almost a reiteration of an idea that first occurs on ibid., 205 that there are two different ways to live a natural life: one in nature and one in society, and Émile is meant for the latter. In the earlier passage, too, Rousseau notes that Émile must learn to live as a natural person even among his corrupted contemporaries. See also ibid, 184-5, 243, 406, 464 for similar references to his pupil being a "savage among men."

listening to a passion that will not fulfill them.[15] Émile thus not only knows himself better, he directs himself better than the corrupt man. Later in this section, I will examine the connection between living within the limits of one's natural desires and the happiness that results from the ability to live within oneself as a whole individual. For now, we need only note that while the expectation remains that Émile will interact with his perverted fellow men, his motivations will remain natural, unlike theirs.

As I have noted in the previous chapters, it is not always clear what the phrase 'natural man' means. Man in the state of nature is a natural man, but he is an undeveloped one; he remains in potentia. The concept of the natural man in civil society is meant to identify the man who takes the potential from the state of nature and reaches it fully. This is why the modern man of Rousseau's time fails to remain natural. Just because one can identify a trajectory from the state of nature to the state of inflamed *amour propre* does not make it a natural trajectory. That is because, as I suggested in the outline of the three possible paths of development above, it is not a healthy development. Rousseau equates 'natural' with healthy and his idea of healthy involves living productively for both one's survival and happiness.

There is then a firm line between the modern man and Émile that relies on this distinction between the unnaturalness, or unhealthiness, of the former and the naturalness, or healthiness, of the latter. In particular, Rousseau drives home the point that just because some of the passions are natural/healthy, does not mean they all are. Some passions, he claims, "subject us and destroy us" and divert us from our original healthy passions.[16] This is of course primarily a

[15] As I noted in Chapter 2, there are ways to channel *amour propre* so that it can coexist in a healthy manner with virtuous self-direction. However, a society that satisfies the desire for esteem through the means of valuing wealth, power, and status will not ultimately fulfill a person's natural desires.

[16] Rousseau, *Émile*, 212.

reference to inflamed *amour propre.* Meanwhile, we have very few natural passions, those which "are the instruments of our freedom; they tend to preserve us."[17] These natural passions are the primary sentiments identified as natural man's principal motivators in the *Discourse on Inequality*: *amour de soi* and pity.[18]

In fact, the entirety of Rousseau's educational method could be summarized by the desire to preserve these two primary natural sentiments and avoid the interference of any destructive influences on the child (which essentially boil down to inflamed *amour propre*). Rousseau calls this pedagogical method "negative education."[19] Instead of positive education, wherein one constructs and molds the child's development, Émile's negative education attempts to avoid outside influence on the child other than the influences of nature. This is why the education is the education of nature: all lessons come from what nature forces upon the child. The child learns the limits of his body and the necessities imposed on him by nature. If the child feels the natural pangs of hunger, the child learns how to get food. This accomplishment alone requires developing both bodily strength and intellectual capacity according to the circumstances.[20] At the same time, the child's drive for self-preservation introduces an understanding of love and benevolence. These will become the first seeds of commiseration or pity, for the child understands that others act on their pity, in the form of love and benevolence, when others see

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[17] Ibid.

[18] This would include any healthy development of the sentiments that grow from these two original drives.

[19] The initial definition of the term comes at Rousseau, *Émile*, 93. For more references to avoiding acting, see ibid., 41, 119, 171-2, 215, 219, 259, and 316-7.

[20] One can see how the other needs or contingencies force similar developments. The only interference comes from the instructor avoiding outside disruptions of the natural order of development. For example, when the instructor delays Émile from learning about social relations, most especially corrupt ones, before the boy has fully developed his own capacities to understand and withstand the dangers of such relations (ibid., 185). For further examples, see ibid., 157, 171, 230-2, 344, and 406.

the child suffering and fulfill the child's needs. From this the child begins to learn two lessons: that "the fate of man is to suffer,"[21] but that in suffering he comes to know the "sweetness of commiseration."[22]

This order of development is in fact the way Rousseau outlines the path to man's happiness and morality. Rousseau identifies what I just described above as the two major steps of development. First, Émile must recognize himself as an individual, capable of the physical and mental strength to fulfill his own needs. Second, he must recognize his moral relations to his fellow men through the compassion, or pity, he develops once he takes an interest in the plights of those around him. Once he comes into more frequent contact with others, he must feel for those around him and become loving. Rousseau calls this final step in man's development "perfect[ing] reason by sentiment."[23]

To call the interaction of pity with the earlier developed self-preservation learning "to perfect reason by sentiment" hearkens back to the definition of virtue in the *Discourse on Inequality* which is so central to my project. Virtue is precisely that balance of *amour de soi* with pity through the use of reason.[24] The final stage of man's development is becoming moral, and morality in *Émile* looks just like it did in the *Discourse on Inequality*. Perfecting reason by the sentiments here means cultivating pity.[25] Now the task for Émile is to balance out his own

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[21] Ibid., 48.

[22] Ibid., 87.

[23] Ibid., 203. Note that here Rousseau references a relationship between pity and reason where it is pity that directs reason.

[24] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men or Second Discourse*, in *Rousseau: The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings*, trans. Victor Gourevitch, ed. Victor Gourevitch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 218nXV. OC III 219 [1].

[25] As we reviewed in Chapter 2, this is how the institution of education refocuses any possible outside focus on inequalities into a focus on the primary sentiment of pity.

desires with the newly relevant desire not to cause harm and even to alleviate the suffering of those around him.

The lessons regarding moral order for Émile are lessons about ordering his affections. He must see what kinds of passions help him in both surviving and not harming others. His affections are ordered both according to his individual needs (*amour de soi*), but also according to his desire to avoid others' pain (pity). This will often allow him to see the foolishness of following one's *amour propre*, as it either prevents a person from fulfilling their more basic needs or allows them to be fulfilled at the expense of causing others harm. It is precisely this form of self-direction that Rousseau identifies as the mutual perfecting of reason and the sentiments.[26]

Developing his pity not only gives Émile a new set of desires, the fulfillment of which will lead to new forms of happiness, but it is in fact the ultimate key to his human potential as a moral agent and as a happy, fulfilled person. I will take in turn the ideas of the creation of new desires, moral agency, and fulfillment. As I noted, developed pity gives Émile an extended interest in the welfare of his neighbors. This means that he now has the desire that his actions not cause others harm; it also means that he now has the desire that, if those around him are unwell and there is any way he could manageably alleviate the pain, he wants to do so. Thus, if Émile is able to fulfill any of these desires, he has satisfied a new drive in himself, thus gaining a new outlet to gratification.

Once he has this developed sense of pity, Émile now experiences the complete array of his natural sentiments. Before, all his desires were self-oriented, based in *amour de soi*. Now he adds to those his other-oriented desires, based in pity. This means that, at this stage, when Émile

[26] Rousseau, *Émile*, 235, 219.

considers which desires to act upon, he is aware that his actions have broader consequences; his actions affect those around him. When he ultimately acts on a desire, now it is from having ordered all possible choices. Émile is finally a complete moral agent.

In the *Social Contract,* a moral agent is someone who has moral liberty: the freedom to direct oneself.[27] Self-directing involves considering all of the possible sentiments available to an adult, understanding that the ordering of these sentiments has consequences beyond oneself, and acting accordingly. Reasonably balancing one's *amour de soi* and pity allows individuals to freely follow the path they set for themselves. This provides a further reason why it is not question-begging to take Émile as the natural man for whom the social contract works. Only natural man, healthy in his development of the sentiments, is capable of moral liberty. In the *Social Contract,* moral liberty is what moves man past his animalistic life in the state of nature and demonstrates his full humanity. Émile, too, only achieves his full humanity when he becomes a moral agent. It is this recognition of the interaction between one's duties toward others and one's own self-interest that then allows one to recognize the particular good that arises out of the social contract.

The ultimate product is not only a moral agent but a happy person, for it is clear that to Rousseau the education of man is meant to lead to happiness.[28] Émile is raised to have a happy childhood, allowed to pursue his own desires and play as he learned to take care of himself. The ability to satisfy his own need for self-preservation grew as he aged, augmenting his happiness as it did so. Likewise, as I mentioned, the new pleasure at alleviating others' suffering added to his happiness as his development furthered. However, on top of fulfilling these natural sentiments,

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[27] Rousseau, *Social Contract,* 54. OC III 365 SC I 8 [3].

[28] See also, Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, 73.

Émile's ultimate happiness as an adult comes specifically from achieving moral agency and being a good man.

Rousseau identifies an intimate connection between happiness and virtue: it is not possible to have one without the other. To be virtuous, as I have noted, is to properly order one's drives towards one's own survival with one's duties toward others. Moral agency is bound up in happiness, in that to be happy is to achieve the satisfaction that one is providing for oneself to the best of one's abilities while also feeling the connection and love that results from contributing to the well-being of those around oneself.

Again, pity is central to the achievement of both goodness and happiness. Rousseau expressly states this connection when he claims that our common bonding through the recognition of mutual suffering is both what unites us in moral obligations and what fully satisfies us as human beings. First, pity "turns our hearts to humanity" and makes us discover what we all then "owe humanity" in light of recognizing our mutual fate of suffering.[29] Then, when one acts on or receives pity, one experiences the joy of loving and being loved that bonds those who commiserate. For, Rousseau states, "I do not conceive how someone who needs nothing can love anything. I do not conceive how someone who loves nothing can be happy. […] If our common needs unite us by interest, our common miseries unite us by affection."[30]

It is not simply being good that makes Émile happy, but it is his moral agency in itself. By this I mean that Émile's happiness comes from being an agent, self-directing toward good. Original man, without the understanding that he does the right things, is not in fact virtuous.[31]

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[29] Rousseau, *Émile,* 221.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid., 193.

He has achieved the potential of the original man: "his faculties are exercised and developed, his ideas enlarged, his sentiments ennobled, his entire soul is elevated to such an extent, that […] he should ceaselessly bless the happy moment" wherein he became a man.[32] Understanding what ordering of desires is in fact good, and then choosing to act with that understanding is the only way to achieve moral liberty as well as real felicity. Thus, when Émile acts freely, his mastery over his own will is the source of his ultimate happiness. Goodness, individual freedom, and happiness are thus achieved simultaneously.

These are the characteristics of natural man; they are not unique to the distinctive character of Émile. While the text focuses the reader on Émile, his development, and the man he is raised to be, it is significant that Émile's instructor himself has all the characteristics of that actualized natural man to qualify him for the role.[33] Rousseau requires the instructor to be "virtuous and good," and act with reason upon his own drives of self-preservation and pity.[34] Because the instructor is expected not to have corrupted *amour propre*, it is noted that the instructor is not interested in teaching Émile anything useless simply for the sake of his own

[32] Rousseau, *Social Contract,* 53. OC III 365 SC I 8 [1].

[33] Émile himself is ultimately expected to guide his own children along the same path toward natural manhood because, as Rousseau states, it is the duty of a father, if he is fit to it, to impart this education on his children (Rousseau, *Émile*, 48-50). This allows us to take a look at the characteristics of Émile's own instructor because he too is expected to have achieved natural manhood in order to be fit to teach Émile.

[34] Rousseau, *Émile*, 100. Regarding his sense of self-preservation, the instructor learns the same trade as Émile, and is said to take up work wherever he and Émile spot it (ibid., 186, 201). The instructor makes sure not only to take on new useful skills alongside Émile but also works on such trades on his own time (ibid., 203). Furthermore, Rousseau states that the instructor should use his own *amour de soi* to guide his judgments about lessons if they get too dangerous, for if the instructor does everything with the child, then the instructor's drive toward self-preservation will limit the risks they take in their tasks (ibid., 132). The instructor's relationship with Émile also demonstrates his developed sense of pity. His instructive duty, just like the father's, is meant to come from compassion for his charge. He also has to see the world from his pupil's eyes in order to set lessons at the child's level and help him to grow (ibid., 246, 179). Rousseau states that he wants the attachment to not simply go from the child to his teacher, but to be reciprocated and deep (ibid., 51, 159). The instructor thus truly enjoys his pupil's companionship.

esteem from his pupil or from the community.[35] He has so properly ordered his own will that he takes to his vocation as naturally as though he does not feel constrained by either duty or interest because it is the pleasures of the trades he practices as well as the joy of his pupil's camaraderie that would have him do nothing else.[36]

The character of the Savoyard vicar (though he only appears in a fraction of Book IV), also emerges in an instructional role, and demonstrates similarly how a good man is meant to take his natural sentiments seriously and learn how to order them. Though the vicar is not introduced to Émile, he is used as an example of how an instructor might best guide his pupil on matters of faith.[37] The character emphasizes the importance of listening to "the sentiments of nature," and ultimately following one's conscience.[38] He defines conscience as the impulse formed from a "double relation to oneself and to one's fellows."[39] In other words, the conscience is the voice that guides one's choices among the natural sentiments that cause one to act for oneself (*amour de soi*) and for others (pity, or the relation he sees as leading to man's

[35] See, for example, ibid., 110, 161, 162, 216.

[36] Ibid., 348.

[37] It is believed that the vicar is an amalgamation of two different clergymen Rousseau himself encountered, and also widely considered to give an account of faith with which Rousseau agrees. See, for example, Dent, *Rousseau,* 108; David Lay Williams, *Rousseau's Platonic Enlightenment* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 62; Jeffrey Macy, "'God Helps those Who Help Themselves': New Light on the Theological-Political Teaching in Rousseau's 'Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar," *Polity* 24, no. 4 (Summer 1992): 615-632, 618n8.

[38] Rousseau, *Émile*, 311. Cassirer has difficulty situating this specific point in *Émile* with his Kantian account for the place it gives to pity (Cassirer, *The Question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, 125-6). I believe this is because here Rousseau is expanding upon distinctly sentimentalist elements of his theory of moral agency. Cassirer claims that with this reference, it appears that sympathy is necessary to the derivation of duty and conscience but then Cassirer proceeds to claim without substantiation that it is reason instead that performs such a role.

[39] Rousseau, *Émile*, 290.

sociability).[40] Through the depictions of these two instructors, it is clear that the qualities fostered in Émile are Rousseau's general representation of mature, natural men.

It is significant that these two grown men, alongside the adult Émile, show the reader three different pictures of moral agents in touch with their natural sentiments. Each respectively lives as an instructor, a vicar, and a farmer. This raises a final, important component of natural development for man's happiness and freedom, and one that we might worry will conflict with the qualities of a citizen: the fostering of unique interests and individual character.[41]

As children age, Rousseau notes, they will have different tastes, inclinations, and character. Whenever this idea of individual uniqueness arises, Rousseau makes a point to command his readers not to squash this individuality but to nurture it and use it to guide the students' lessons.[42] That Rousseau takes uniqueness into account is most evident when he discusses the importance of introducing a child to a trade. The only key characteristic of the trade a child must learn is that it be useful wherever life may lead him.[43] Other than that, he is open to Émile finding trades that interest him (in his case, metalwork in addition to working the land), while acknowledging that this will change according to the child.[44] Before he has even hit

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[40] See, specifically, ibid., 289-293.

[41] The subject of *Émile* is not to examine individual uniqueness but to study what qualities are common to all, so that all may follow the same method of education (ibid., 254). This means that the individuality and uniqueness of each person is mentioned in most places in passing, while it is still fostered and represented in the choices and advice given to instructors.

[42] Ibid., 192. Here Rousseau makes the general recommendation to follow the "spirit" of his examples and cater lessons to the "genius peculiar to each pupil… to develop his taste and his talent, to make the first steps toward the object to which his genius leads him" (ibid., 192). For examples of lessons where Rousseau reminds his reader to vary instruction based on the particular character and interests of the child, see ibid., 100 (on private property), 319 (on sex and reproduction), and even, notably, 226 (on extending the pupil's sympathy to humanity).

[43] Ibid., 200.

[44] For example, if the child enjoys "the speculative sciences," Rousseau recommends finding a trade that likewise conforms to this interest (ibid., 201).

adolescence, this exploration of trades foreshadows the method recommended for Émile to choose his profession and where he ultimately settles, freely based on his own tastes.[45]

This individuality is central to natural man's being. It is the pursuit of his own unique interests that distinguishes Émile most noticeably from his degenerate contemporaries. Rousseau laments that modern men with their corrupted *amour propre* "all resemble one another,"[46] as they all pursue the same unhealthy paths to esteem and "wear pretty much the same mask"[47] to achieve those ends. In fact, Rousseau writes that Émile must be introduced to these modern men in such a way as to inspire him to remain unique and independent. He is meant to see through their facades to the way in which they are harming themselves. If he is introduced to their plight in such a way as to inspire his pity, this sense of the suffering of modern men will keep Émile from emulating them. Thus, in a lesson about inspiring pity, Rousseau makes it clear that natural man is meant to grow up following his own unique path:

> To incline a young man to humanity, far from making him admire the brilliant lot of others, one must show him the sad sides of that lot, one must make him fear it. Then by an evident inference, he ought to cut out his own road to happiness, following in no one else's tracks.[48]

Natural man can only find happiness by following his own pursuits and remaining true to himself, quirks and all.[49]

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[45] Ibid., 455-7.

[46] Ibid., 239.

[47] Ibid., 237. This idea is thematic in the *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts* and expressed similarly in the *Discourse on Inequality*. See, for example, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts or First Discourse*, in *Rousseau: The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings*, trans. Victor Gourevitch, ed. Victor Gourevitch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 8. OC III 8 [13]; Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, 184. OC III 189 [52].

[48] Rousseau, *Émile*, 223.

[49] Even Sophie, though her education and development is only the subject of a portion of Book V, receives several pages describing her individual quirks that lead her to take particular interest in pursuing her own form of domestic life (ibid., 395).

Natural man, then, is a unique individual, whole in himself. He is not only in touch with his natural sentiments, but he also knows how to properly order them so that he can pursue his own distinctive interests while remaining compassionate towards the plights of others. Ultimately, in the section on pity, we will see that it is this compassion that resolves the potential conflict between man's unique individuality and citizenship.

In fact, the final part of Émile's education in Book V is a political education in which Rousseau essentially summarizes key points from the *Social Contract* in his book on education. This is significant for two reasons: first, it implies that there is a compatibility between Rousseau's political project in the *Social Contract* and his development of an educational program in *Émile*. Second, adding this political education onto Émile's natural education suggests that Rousseau sees the smoothest path to citizenship not through a denatured, public education, but through a private, negative, and natural education.[50] However, before discussing the way in which the life of a citizen is compatible with the individual, free, and virtuous life we just described of the natural man, we need to make the same examination of the qualities of a citizen as we did the qualities of a man. It is my goal in Section IV to demonstrate that these qualities leave room for the compatibility of the identities before I argue precisely how that is done in the following section.

IV. Rousseau's Citizen

One becomes a citizen when one agrees to the terms of the social contract. The establishment of the social contract and the conception of the citizen are so closely linked that

[50] I want to note that I use the word "denatured" here to mean giving man a new nature, and that I will explore the different uses of this word momentarily in subsection 2 of Section IV.

Rousseau defines the citizen immediately following his introduction to the nature of the social contract. It is the passage that immediately follows his statement of the social contract's guiding principle that has been the source of much confusion about the nature of the individual qua citizen. By looking more closely at this passage, I will show that it can also be the source of much clarification.

> If, then, one sets aside everything that is not [essential to] the social compact, one finds that it can be reduced to the following terms: *Each of us puts his person and his full power in common under the supreme direction of the general will; and in a body we receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole.*
>
> At once, in place of the private person of each contracting party, this act of association produces a moral and collective body made up of as many members as the assembly has voices, and which receives by this same act its unity, its common *self* [*moi commun*], its life and its will. The public person thus formed by the union of all the others formerly assumed the name *City* and now assumes that of *Republic* or of *body politic*, which its members call *State* when it is passive, *Sovereign* when active, *Power* when comparing it to similar bodies. As for the associates, they collectively assume the name *people* and individually call themselves *Citizens* as participants in the sovereign authority, and *Subjects* as subjected to the laws of the State.[51]

I include this lengthy selection of definitions to demonstrate to the reader the importance Rousseau places on distinguishing individual *citizens* from the *indivisible body* of the state that they comprise. For, in this section on the citizen, I will demonstrate that Rousseau leaves open the possibility of maintaining individuality with citizenship. Citizens in the *Social Contract* are not often talked about individually. Often it is the citizens as a collective, as the *people*, the *sovereign*, or the *moi commun,* to whom Rousseau refers, which may give the impression that the individual does not matter or possibly disappears. However, the context surrounding this choice is Rousseau's concern with fostering a sense of relationship among citizens that he believed

[51] Rousseau, *Social Contract,* 50-51. OC III 361-362 SC I 6 [9-10].

sorely lacking in his time. As he saw it, the individual, with his private interests, was less in danger of disappearing than the citizen, with his public ones.

Given the centrality of this passage in Rousseau's thoughts about the relationship between citizens and the state, this section will be devoted to unpacking these distinctions in order to demonstrate that being a citizen does not necessarily result in the annihilation of the particulars of individuality. First, I will look at what it might mean to be an "indivisible part of the whole" and argue that there is still room for individuality within an understanding of such a concept.[52] I will demonstrate that individuality is not excluded from Rousseau's account of citizenship, in spite of his rhetoric, by examining the origins and development of a people, as well as the role of expanded pity in civil society. I will then explore the citizen's relationship to the general will, that "supreme direction" said to belong to the "common self" of all the citizens combined. The relationship between citizens and the general will allows me to formulate the particular duties and qualities expected of each individual citizen. While this section's exploration of citizens aims to demonstrate the theoretical possibility of compatibility between the life of man and of citizen, it will be in the following section, on uniting the identities through pity, where I will fill the explanatory gap and show how pity allows the maintenance of both forms of identification.

1. *Sources of Perceived Incompatibility in the* Social Contract

In a particularly disturbing passage in the *Social Contract*, Rousseau presents the idea of an indivisible whole, acting as one, using extreme rhetoric that immediately makes readers skeptical of the possibility of individuality's compatibility with citizenship. Rousseau describes

[52] Ibid., 50. OC III 361 SC I 6 [9].

citizenship in the *Social Contract* here as a transformation with hyperbolic language similar to that at the beginning of *Émile*, when combining the two lives seemed almost impossible:

> He who dares to set about establishing a people should feel himself to be capable of changing, so to speak, human nature…of substituting a partial and moral existence for the independent and physical existence that we have all received from nature… He must, in a word, take from man his own forces in order to give him forces that are strange to him, forces which he cannot make use of without the assistance of others. The more these natural forces are dead and annihilated, the greater and more durable are the acquired ones, and the more too is the institution solid and perfect.[53]

It appears that the passage is stating that there can be nothing natural about a *people*, and thus it would be unthinkable for the citizen to live in the individualized manner of Émile. However, we cannot take this passage by itself to be decisive on this matter for several reasons.

One reason why the passage's significance is unclear relates to my view that Rousseau writes in three different ways in the *Social Contract*: one is ideal but practical, one is utopian, and one is merely descriptive. So, in any given passage, he may be offering practical features a society needs to achieve an ideal, legitimate state, or offering what he acknowledges are unattainable ideals, or, lastly, simply offering a description (often a lamentation) of what he sees as the current, corrupt, and thus illegitimate state of affairs.[54]

The purpose of the above passage is obscured because it is unclear with which of the first two purposes Rousseau is writing. If the passage refers to the complete denaturing that Rousseau finds in a program of public education, then at most he believes this a wholly unattainable ideal. Rousseau refers readers to Plato's *Republic* to understand that public education of this sort is a

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[53] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du contrat social,* ed. Bruno Bernardi (Paris: Flammarion, 2001)*,* 75. OC III 381-382 SC II 7 [3]. Translation mine.

[54] Likewise, Cassirer remarks that this results in an ambiguity in language in *Émile* (Cassirer, *The Question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, 123).

process wherein all individuals are molded to act, think, and feel alike by state institutional forces. However, he makes clear that a public educational scheme like Plato's is strictly impossible in this day and age, a topic of further discussion in Section VI.[55] If indeed the passage above describes an ideal state like that of *The Republic,* then Rousseau cannot intend it to be a prescription for his own ideal political state. Though Rousseau does at times invoke the utopian, I take the overarching purpose of the *Social Contract* to be the identification of what is practically necessary to achieve an ideal, legitimate state. Therefore, the passage would only be significant to this goal if it is not written with the utopian in mind.

If we are to read this passage with the practical in mind, then it is necessary to read it as calling for a less radical departure from nature than what it rhetorically suggests. Such a reading is permitted by a closer examination of Rousseau's use of the ideas of the natural and the departure from nature, or *denaturing*. This allows us to see that the obscurity of the above passage further arises from Rousseau's inconsistent use of these terms. As a result, whichever way Rousseau uses these ideas in this passage can drastically change its meaning, and what it means to "change, so to speak, human nature."[56] It is plausible to read the passage as not literally calling for a complete alteration of human nature, as the clause "so to speak" shows Rousseau's hesitancy to call it a complete transformation.[57] While Rousseau uses the idea of

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[55] Rousseau, *Émile,* 40.

[56] Rousseau, *Contract Social,* 75. OC III 381 SC II 7 [3]. Translation mine.

[57] Many translations of this portion of the text, the Gourevitch translation included, choose locations for the "so to speak" clause that I find to obscure the original French. Rousseau wrote <<Celui qui ose entreprendre d'instituer un peuple doit se sentir en état de changer, pour ainsi dire, la nature humaine>> (ibid.). The location of the clause "so to speak" could change the meaning of which idea in the sentence is meant to be weakened somewhat in the way we are meant to interpret it. In the original, Rousseau is making it clear that it is the changing of human nature that is not quite to be taken as literally as he writes it. In the Gourevitch and Cress translations, the clause instead modifies the position of he who establishes a people (making that person's position appear as the aspect of the idea that is meant to be taken less literally). I think it is important that we do not take the change as a radical change based on the original French.

nature in a variety of ways, one such use allows for a consistency between the natural and the "denatured." In this case, "natural" means *healthy* and whole in oneself in the manner I explained earlier, and 'denatured' simply means a departure from the original state of nature.[58]

Émile is an example of this conception of natural and denatured. He departs from the state of nature when he develops sentiments of sociability that original man would not have had, but he ultimately arrives at a strengthened sense of self and purpose in line with his natural sentiments of *amour de soi* and pity. Sometimes, however, Rousseau's use of 'denaturing' suggests the replacement of one nature for another in such a complete way that one could not remain natural while denatured. This is the radical process that Rousseau sees taking place in a public education like that in Plato's *Republic.* This individual is thus denatured in a way inconsistent with remaining natural because they are no longer ordering themselves according to their own independent sentiments, but according to the order imposed on them by the state. Furthermore, this form of denaturing would be inconsistent with individuality by its very conception: all people would be denatured specifically to lose their uniqueness and become a like part of a larger whole. But given that this radical denaturing is that of Plato's *Republic* and an unattainable ideal, we cannot take seriously that this passage recommends it as a course of action for Rousseau's ideal state.[59]

If, instead, the passage can be read in line with Rousseau's practical objective in the *Social Contract,* he would have to be referring to the kind of denaturing that is compatible with the natural. The citizen could then possibly have the developmental path of Émile. I think this is what ultimately happens in the *Social Contract,* and it is most obvious when noting how the

[58] Recall that healthy in this sense means having the proper order and development of one's natural sentiments.

[59] I will address this topic further in Section VI. See also fn. 106.

development of a people in the *Social Contract* in many ways resembles the development of the individual in *Émile*.

2. *Citizens as Indivisible Parts of a Whole*

Like Émile, who must reach a certain age and level of experience to be introduced to the moral laws as such, Rousseau warns of introducing legislation and civilization to a people who are not yet mature enough: "For Nations as for men there is a time of maturity for which one has to wait before subjecting them to laws."[60] Not only does this mean recognizing when may be too early for a people to feel a common obligation laid down by new laws, but it also means that the laws eventually produced have to match the character of the people as a whole. Individual countries will have different general characters and accompanying desires, and laws are meant to work *with* these individual national natures, not against them.[61] Recognizing these national characters involves examining the shared origin story, interests, or customs of the people.[62] Here we can see that to have a people presupposes some level of homogeneity among the individuals that comprise it. Not only do the people have to have a similar rate of development, but they must develop from a common point, whether that be common rituals, common historical suffering or success, or a common problem they face. There must be some degree of common interest among the people, or those that comprise it would not be able to, "in a body[,] receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole."[63]

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[60] Rousseau, *Social Contract,* 73. OC III 386 SC II 8 [5].

[61] The number of references to Montesquieu in the *Social Contract* is no coincidence. Rousseau took very seriously the idea that anthropology and effective political science align.

[62] Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 77. OC III 390-391 SC II 10 [5].

[63] Ibid., 50. OC III 361 SC I 6 [9].

Underlying this idea that there be some common point among the citizens is the idea that citizens need to be able to commiserate and love each other. Rousseau first describes the importance of loving one's countrymen to successful citizenship in the *Discourse on Political Economy.* A good citizen must experience a deep sense of pity, there described as commiseration and love, and fostered by communal interaction.[64] Shortly after that claim, Rousseau emphasizes that this sentiment is the key to a citizen's happiness: he takes joy in the joys of his countrymen, and the more each care for the happiness of the others, the more the overall happiness of each is augmented.[65] Like pity in *Émile*, this expanded pity involved in loving one's countrymen is separate from self-interest, and thus a separate joy when fulfilled. Loving one's countrymen involves desiring the good of one's countrymen for their sake, because "we readily want [that which] the people we love want."[66] In Chapter 2 we have already reviewed the varieties of institutions whose foundations in the state are important to maintaining this sentiment. A developed sense of pity aimed at one's countrymen is a central characteristic of the good citizen.

Expanding upon this notion of love of countrymen can help us further understand what it means to be an indivisible part of the whole. This is because there is a kind of indivisibility resulting from expanded pity. It can be found in the idea that pity involves linking one's fortune with that of one's fellows to the extent that no longer can one hurt one member of the whole

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[64] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on Political Economy*, in *Rousseau:* The Social Contract *and Other Later Political Writings*, trans. Victor Gourevitch, ed. Victor Gourevitch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 15-16. OC III 254-256.

[65] Ibid., 16. OC III 255 [30].

[66] Ibid., 15. OC III 254 [29].

without all feeling it.[67] The metaphor discussed in Chapter 1 of the organism portrayed by the names 'body politic' and '*moi commun*' conveys this idea well: one could no sooner believe that one citizen could perish without the body politic's notice than believe that one part of a body could be maimed without the notice of the rest of the body. The indivisible whole the citizens collectively form is united and then moved to action by expanded pity.

3. *Citizens' Relationship to the General Will*

When the *moi commun* moves into action out of expanded pity, it does so by exercising the general will. Being a part of an indivisible whole, then, requires subjecting oneself to the general will. Ergo, the general will itself is a central part of the identity of the citizen, and one that delineates the citizen's role from the man's. The man has a private, individual will, based on his personal interests; the citizen has the general will, and thus orients himself toward the common good.[68] Rousseau identifies potential conflicting interests in the two wills a person has as an individual and as a citizen. The concern with the general will, like the concern with the idea of an indivisible whole, is that to be a citizen is to deny the particular aspects of oneself as an individual. If all citizens must have and follow the general will based on shared drives toward the common good, then the fear is that citizens can no longer follow their particular wills, which drive them toward unique interests and personal projects. One could raise a similar worry about Kant; individuality seems to disappear when all individuals are abstracted into rational moral agents following the categorical imperative.

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[67] This notion of a sympathetic whole is referenced both in the *Discourse on Political Economy*, (ibid., 17. OC III 256 [31]) and in the *Social Contract* (Rousseau, *Social Contract,* 52. OC III 363 SC I 7 [4]).

[68] Rousseau, *Social Contract,* 52. OC III 363 SC I 7 [7].

Rousseau, however, allows for both the personal and general wills to exist in the same individual without the destruction of one or the other. He does write that he expects citizens to order their wills to prioritize the general will over the individual.[69] Again, it is not obvious if this prioritization ultimately must erase the private will if it is to be successful. Not only that, but if we are to maintain two wills as a citizen, it appears that the citizen must always be at odds with himself, battling between two separate identities and desires in much the same way Rousseau wrote in *Émile* that one not only fails to be a man and a citizen, but one becomes nothing more than a corrupt man of our time. In the following section, I will argue how this prioritization can be possible within a person not at odds with himself. It is the answer to this question that solves the problem outlined in *Émile* of what a man raised for himself can be for others. For now, however, I will note what it is that we can learn about citizens in light of the fact that they self-govern through the general will.

Citizens' participation in the general will demonstrates two central qualities of the citizen: citizens must be active and free. First, I will examine the nature of the citizen's freedom, and then I will turn to their activity. Following the general will is an expression of moral liberty, that is, following rules one sets for oneself. It is a mark of one's entrance into civil society that the citizen replaces his natural liberty, or the ability to act on any instinct that strikes him, with moral liberty. Moral liberty is bound up with Rousseau's conception of a citizen: "the essence of the political body consists in the concurrence of obedience and freedom, and that the words *subject* and *sovereign* are identical correlatives whose [meaning] is combined in the single word Citizen."[70] Submitting one's vote to the general will is an act of both obedience and liberty.

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[69] Ibid., 87. OC III 400-401 SC III 2.

[70] Ibid., 111. OC III 427 SC III 13 [5].

Moral liberty requires one to self-direct, which means that one becomes free by following one's own rules, acting as both sovereign and subject.[71] Again, the concern for moral liberty as we identify it through the general will remains the same as could be levied against Kant. How can we see individuals as truly self-legislating if they are legislating according to a universalized standard, be it the general will or the categorical imperative?

For one, moral liberty is not the only type of freedom enjoyed by individual citizens. Rousseau makes it clear that civil society sets up the conditions for civil liberty, too. Civil liberty is the freedom to do anything not prohibited by the general will.[72] Enforcing the value of civil liberty guarantees any private desires an individual might have that do not infringe upon the needs and desires of the other citizens. This would seem, then, to leave space for both the private and general will to guide a person. Until we consider in what way we can bridge the gap between guiding oneself by the general will and maintaining individual identity, it is not clear how much room in Rousseau's theory there is for this negative form of liberty that could allow for the natural man's private pursuits in civil society. What we can say with certainty is that freedom is a requirement for citizenship. The value of freedom is so deeply ingrained in Rousseau's political writing that he states that liberty is the greatest good at which legislation can possibly aim.[73]

Lying in the background of this discussion around liberty and the citizen's participation in the general will is the final key characteristic of a citizen. In order to be a citizen, one has to be active and engaged. Active engagement is at the core of what keeps the citizen free. There is

[71] Ibid., 54. OC III 365 SC I 8 [3].

[72] Ibid., 54. OC III 365 SC I 8 [2].

[73] Ibid., 78. OC III 391 SC II 11 [1].

a very specific form of obedience involved in maintaining moral liberty. If it extends beyond following one's *own* rules to simply agreeing to follow *the* rules, then the people are no longer composed of citizens but slaves, and cease being a people.[74] This is one reason why Rousseau calls for regular assemblies of the citizens so that they can register their wills.[75] Furthermore, it is why he underscores the importance of each citizen making up his own mind in private deliberation before casting his vote for the general will.[76] On a day-to-day basis, the activities of citizens may seem more passive, as with tacit consent to the daily workings of the state and its magistrates instead of actively amending them. Refraining from registering dissent in this case is still taken to be an action. What citizens cannot do is commit themselves to never opposing the magistrates' commands because then there is no presumed, tacit activity. Engagement of some sort is still required for the citizen's identity.

So, one must be active and free to be a good citizen, guided by the general will. This picture of the citizen looks much like Kant's moral agent. However, expanded pity provides Rousseau an avenue unavailable to Kant for recognizing the individuality of citizens.

V. Man *and* Citizen: Compatibility through Expanded Pity

It now remains for me to show how Rousseau uses expanded pity to highlight the importance of individuality and personal projects to the stable, public-oriented life of the citizen, and thus how pity renders the two lives compatible. Recall, first, that, per Chapter 1, pity is a disinterested sentiment; one desires the other's good primarily for the sake of the other and not

[74] Ibid., 57-58. OC III 368-369 SC II 1.

[75] Ibid., 111. OC III 426 SC III 13 [1].

[76] Ibid., 60. OC III 372 SC II 3 [4].

out of any self-interest. It is true that, as a result, one gets pleasure from seeing the other happy, but when one acts out of pity, one temporarily puts aside one's self-interested projects in favor of another's personal projects. In delineating two central drives of human action (*amour de soi* and pity), Rousseau has drawn a firm distinction between drives for one's own personal projects and drives for others'. It is easiest to see this delineation in the original man, the man from the state of nature. His drives from self-interest cause him to pursue food, sex, or sleep. However, when he crosses the path of someone in pain, those self-interested drives are set aside. He reflexively feels the pain of the other, and his new drives are, at a minimum, to avoid causing more pain and can even potentially expand to extending help. In such a simplified state of nature extending help or feeling a repugnance at the other's pain are not actions that directly or even intentionally promote the self-preservation of the original man. In fact, they can often be counter to that goal. The original man does not have the foresight or the conception of self to understand how actions from pity could possibly be advantageous to him in the end (though Rousseau ultimately identifies the sentiment as the cause of the preservation of the species).[77] He is only aware that in that instance he was driven to his actions out of a disinterested desire on the other's behalf. Meanwhile, the receptor of the pity is at the time receiving, at minimum, an understanding of his great need to self-preserve in that moment in a particular way. On occasions where pity actually inspires positive action and interference on behalf of the individual in need, both actors are advancing the cause of the self-preservation of the pitied.

[77] While Rousseau wrote over one hundred years before Darwin, this idea regarding the role of pity, or later sympathy, in the perpetuation of the species is prominent in modern discussions of evolutionary theories. Darwin, too, began his discussion of the sentiment by drawing a clear distinction between drives that are advantageous to the individual and those that are advantageous to the species. See Charles Darwin, "On the Development of the Intellectual and Moral Faculties during Primeval and Civilised Times," in *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1875), 127-145.

Though often overlooked, I view it as crucial that in these examples pity is distinct from unity. You are not feeling another's pain as though you both are a single, united being. If another suffers from, say, a lost job opportunity in a career you yourself never desired, you do not feel the other's desire for the job as if it were your own desire, but for their sake. Their projects remain distinct from yours, though you can commiserate with their losses.[78] Having and acting on this drive maintains the individuality of the actors, as one is not taking on the projects of the other as one's own, but in fact putting aside one's own projects for an other-oriented act. Thus, instead of becoming one individual in pursuit of the same object, as extending one's self-interest would do, acting out of compassion is a temporary departure from the norm of acting from self-interest for one's own personal projects.[79]

I can thus explain the compatibility between the identities of man and citizen by the role of pity in the general will. I do so by taking this account of what pity looks like at the individual level, with its distinction between the individual's and other's projects, and identifying that the same phenomenon occurs at the state level. I have already argued that expanded pity plays a

[78] It is interesting to note that Rousseau does not seem to consider self-pity a form of the original *pitié*, as self-pity results from looking at oneself from the outside and therefore is a form of *amour propre*. One has to compare one's situation to another's in order to feel one's own suffering in a self-pitying way as opposed to merely suffering. Pity is supposed to come from a person who is whole in themselves: one who feels their own sentiments as an internally cohesive being. Instead, to feel self-pity is to feel both one's own suffering as oneself but also to feel sentiments as if one were outside oneself.

[79] Of course, Rousseau also thinks it is important to extend the scope of the self in certain cases so that one can pursue mutual projects out of self-interest. In Chapter 2, where I identified two kinds of patriotism, we can see the distinction between acting out of expanded self-interest and expanded pity. However, without also accounting for expanded pity, even conceptions of Rousseau's political program that emphasize cultivating his natural passions for political purposes ultimately run the risk of erasing the individual self. For example, Douglass explains an account based purely on expanding man's natural *amour de soi* and *amour propre* to have a self-identification with the country, but equally could be accused of cultivating solely homogenizing emotions of the sort we will find in Section VI that Nussbaum accuses of Rousseau (Robin Douglass, *Rousseau and Hobbes: Nature, Free Will, and the Passions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015),164-5). See also, Ingrid Makus, "Pity, Pride, and Prejudice: Rousseau on the Passions," in *Bringing the Passions Back In: The Emotions in Political Philosophy*, eds. Rebecca Kingston and Leonard Ferry (Toronto: UBC Press, 2008), 152 on the significance of distinguishing self and other when acting on pity.

significant part in the functioning of the general will in Chapter 1. Given that expanded pity is involved in the general will, it thus allows people to maintain their own individual interests while also concerning themselves that others are able to pursue their own interests as well. If the general will were simply an account of pursuing only expanded, mutual self-interest, the individuals in the state would need to consider themselves as a single unit, with the same exact interests. If all individuals were alike, then they would share the same self-interested personal projects, and all simultaneously pursue a common interest. This would be the case where the people were denatured in such a way that they came to have only the same interests.[80] There are certainly common projects that all citizens want to pursue (such as providing for the common defense), but the general will is not limited to such aims. The general will aims at the common good, which also includes individual projects that unique persons find valuable.

Having established, through pity, that there is space for the individual in the citizen's capacity to generally will, it remains to be seen what becomes of the two concepts of liberty that appear in the accounts of man and citizen. This combination of goals (to pursue common as well as individual projects) can be condensed into an overarching one: to preserve liberty. The highest aim of legislation, Rousseau claims, is liberty. Liberty here is the freedom to pursue a good life.[81] Aiming at liberty then encompasses both goals of protecting the national self-interest (as such goals work to preserve the life and liberty of all citizens), as well as the personal projects just mentioned.

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[80] I will address interpretations of Rousseau that involve this kind of denaturing in the following section.

[81] This is because there is the positive sense of liberty in moral liberty, to pursue laws that you determine, and those laws should lead to a good life, as well as the sense of negative liberty, to pursue whatever is not proscribed by the general will (civil liberty), and thus an added way to complete one's pursuit of flourishing.

Liberty is central to the lives of both the citizen and the man as I have explored them. Now that I have called our attention to the central role of pity, it is clear that we have to read certain passages of Rousseau differently. Take for example, this central passage on the dynamics of liberty under the general will:

> How can it be that [citizens] obey and no one commands, that they serve yet have no master; [how can it be that they are] all the freer in fact than in apparent subjection, [and] no one loses any more of his own freedom [except what] might harm someone else's [liberty]? These marvels are the work of law. […] It is this celestial voice that dictates the precepts of public reason to every citizen, and teaches him to act in conformity with the maxims of his own judgment, and not to be in contradiction with himself.[82]

The general will protects an individual's liberty to pursue his or her own projects up to the limit of infringing upon others' liberties to do the same. Avoiding harming others' liberty arises in part out of self-interest; you do not want to lose the advantages of having your own liberty protected and so are more willing to agree to protect others' in return. However, the language of *harm* in the passage is significant, and ties the matter likewise to pity. For pity is the drive to avoid harming others, and a repugnance at their pain. Pity causes the desire to avoid harm in relation to another's liberty. It is the repugnance at causing the pain that results from unduly interfering in another's endeavors. Pity's function in the general will also emphasizes the importance of each individual's contribution to the whole. From pity, the whole must acknowledge and address the pain of even the lowliest individual. Each individual's pains are taken so seriously and "private [welfare] is so closely bound up with the public confederation that…[the social contract] would by right be dissolved if a single citizen in the state perished

[82] Rousseau, *Discourse on Political Economy,* 10. OC III 248 [19].

who could have been saved."[83] Thus, the concept of the indivisible whole as a body connected through pity in fact reinforces the importance of individual projects.

Furthermore, the citizens, through public institutions that foster their mutual pity (see Chapter 2), do not simply want to avoid causing others pain, but in fact take pleasure in each other's happiness. Expanded pity involves the desire that others be happy, and this involves wishing them to make use of their moral and civil liberty to the fullest extent. Through pity, therefore, we can see how the citizen's role maintains a space for individuality. However, we have yet to completely connect the unique and whole life of the individual man with the seemingly fractional life of the citizen. The ability to maintain both civil and moral liberty as man and citizen hinges on the question of how the citizen as an individual avoids being at odds with himself.

It is no coincidence that Rousseau uses the language of being at odds with oneself in the passage if one fails to protect others' liberty with one's own. Being at odds with oneself is failing to accord one's natural sentiments and instead having an internal battle between the sentiments about what to prioritize.[84] Being 'whole' and in harmony with oneself was a defining characteristic of the life of man. Émile learned when to limit his *amour de soi* with his pity, and thus not to have an internal conflict about when and whether to help others or himself. It appears

[83] Ibid., 17. OC III 256 [31]. This idea also occurs in the *Social Contract*; see, for example, Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 112. OC III 427-428 SC III 14 [1]. It is most elaborately repeated in the *Discourse on Political Economy*, where Rousseau admires the ancient Romans for being "distinguished… above all peoples on earth by the government's regard for private individuals, and its scrupulous care to respect the inviolable rights of all members of the state. Nothing was as sacred as the life of simple citizens" (Rousseau, *Discourse on Political Economy,* 18. OC III 257 [33]). The use of Rome to emphasize individual liberty is explored in Ryan Patrick Hanley, "Political Economy and Individual Liberty," in *The Challenge of Rousseau,* eds. Eve Grace and Christopher Kelly (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 41.

[84] There is a sense in which it can also mean that one has lost touch with one or all of one's natural sentiments. For example, if one has lost their sense of pity for the plight of others because other unnatural sentiments have overridden it.

from the passage, then, that one way to achieve this form of wholeness is through participating in the general will. To participate in the general will is to pursue one's own interest while having pity for others trying to do the same. It is allowing a general law to limit one from harming others while one self-directs.

If the citizen is not to be at odds with himself, but instead a single, harmonious whole, what does it mean to then also claim that the citizen is a fractionalized being? A whole person is someone who experiences the full range of emotions and is able to pursue projects that keep them whole. However, in the sense that one experiences pity for another, one's happiness does become fractionalized. One's other-oriented desires are multiplied based on the number of people one cares about, and thus one becomes a fraction of a whole that one desires to be happy. Your own happiness from self-interest is only a piece of the total happiness that you desire. However, the fact that your happiness in part relies on the happiness of others does not mean you are no longer a whole individual. Recall that Émile's education as a man culminates with the augmentation of his happiness through expanded pity; yet nowhere was it stated that, with this development, he was no longer a man, whole in himself.

To be whole is to maintain your natural sentiments. The two most natural sentiments that Rousseau identifies are *amour de soi* and pity. While original man was not a social being, and thus not constantly aware of his sense of pity, recognizing this emotion as a central drive is a necessary part of keeping in touch with oneself. Rousseau's man, keep in mind, is not completely isolated. He is a social being, and thus will regularly experience both drives from self-interest and pity. He is no longer whole when he fails to commiserate with others in pain (because he has been separated from himself to such an extent that he only views himself from the outside, in a comparative position to those around him, and enjoys the fact that he is better

than those who suffer). He would likewise no longer be whole if he failed to promote his own self-interest, and thus the path to maintaining a complete and happy self is finding the balance between self-interest and pity. It is not to get rid of either sentiment.

In fact, the general will acts to minimize the fractionalization that occurs with pity while simultaneously keeping the individual citizens whole in themselves. It is for this reason that Rousseau suggests setting up an impersonally dependent system by having individuals balance their *amour de soi* and pity via the general will.[85] The general will then produces results that allow one to pursue one's own projects while also limiting oneself (per one's own drive of pity) from generally harming anyone else. So, instead of personally easing the suffering of one's fellow countrymen, one is enacting general legislation to do so. Thus, with the laws addressing the subjects in a general way, one is alleviated from personal dependence that would increase the burdens of acting on one's pity for particular individuals.[86] Instead one's pity is disseminated through the enactment of law. Thus, an individual can remain as free from entanglement in personal attachments as they were before the social contract.

Though it does this in an impersonal way, the general will would not look the same without the specific individuals that comprise it. Here is how pity solves the problem of individuality in citizenship for Rousseau in a way that reason cannot for Kant. As I argued in Chapter 1, pity is a particular sentiment, not universal, and is aimed at desiring the good of the specific individuals that are one's countrymen. So, everyone is expected to act and legislate as

[85] Rousseau, *Social Contract,* 80. OC III 394 SC II 12 [3].

[86] For further exploration of the dangers of personal human dependence, see, for example, Frederick Neuhouser, *Rousseau's Critique of Inequality: Reconstructing the* Second Discourse (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press 2014), 168-175.

individuals, where their unique interests are balanced with their pity to create the general will of a given society.

This creates a system in which Émile would thrive. Émile was raised to be in touch with his natural sentiments and to learn how to appropriately order them to behave as a moral being, as a man. The original project of *Émile* was to see if this kind of man could simultaneously fill the role of citizen. The workings of the natural sentiments in the general will allow for Émile, who uniquely cultivated them for his own development, to become a citizen and care for his countrymen. All that remains for Émile is for his pity to be directed at his countrymen. He already wishes to find a place where he can live with decent men and flourish in a place without harming others or worrying about coming to harm from them.[87] The public festivities and general institutions that maintain in the population a habit of seeing each other would easily capture Émile's heart.[88] Rousseau states that "wherever the people loves its country, respects its laws, and lives simply, there is little left to be done to make it happy."[89] Since Émile's pity would be primed for developing love of country, and he is by then predisposed to live simply among men who do similarly, we can already see how he would thrive under such a government. The goal of the best state is to make its people happy, and this goal is accomplished by letting its people be men. The general will takes the natural harmony of man's sentiments and applies it to all in the form of law. So, a country of *men* would in fact be perfectly set up to be a country of citizens.

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[87] Rousseau, *Émile*, 457.

[88] In fact, the instructor suggests that this is exactly what will happen in Émile's future (ibid., 474).

[89] Rousseau, *Discourse on Political Economy,* 23. OC III 262 [40].

VI. Alternative Interpretations: Their Focus and their Difficulties

Entering the problem from the side of man's development, as Rousseau sets out to do in *Émile*, thus helps us to get a clear sense of how the two lives can be compatible. It is also for this reason that alternative interpretations tend to deny the compatibility of the two lives. They enter the question through the development of citizens and find there an ideal form of life that, if radically molded, would annihilate the private self, replacing it with the citizen-self or the common self. I want to briefly explore some of the central ways in which alternative interpretations reach this conclusion about Rousseau before examining why I believe them to be unsupported by the texts and ultimately unsatisfying as an interpretation of Rousseau's system.

Within Rousseau scholarship, Judith Shklar in *Men and Citizens* poignantly posed the dichotomy.[90] Briefly, she sees *Émile* and the *Social Contract* as depicting two mutually exclusive utopian courses of living: the life of man and the life of citizen, as Rousseau originally contrasted them. It is not generally agreed upon whether the two lives are posed as utopias, and thus not only ideal states, but impossible ones to achieve. However, for Shklar, this idea of dichotomous lives originates in the juxtaposition between the "Spartan city" and the "Golden Age" of the "tranquil household."[91] Under this interpretation, Sparta represents the life of the citizen and the tranquil household represents the life of the man. Though Rousseau does nostalgically reference Sparta as an ideal state in the *Social Contract* among his other political

[90] While I will not go into the intricacies of her theory, as it involves a view of the general will already discussed in Chapter 1, the dichotomy she establishes and its origins are notable for their influences on the development of other modern interpretations of Rousseau that are relevant for our present discussion.

[91] Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, 3.

works, and even mentions reviving the golden age in *Émile*, it is Shklar who puts forth the idea that they are opposing concepts incompatible with one another.[92]

Most scholarship that develops the citizen in contrast to the individual similarly takes Sparta to be the prime example of the life of the citizen.[93] To become a Spartan is to be denatured into living for the state. The essential difference between the two lives, then, arises from the contrast between a negative education for man and a positive education for citizens. Men grow. Citizens are grown. One finds men by freeing people from the corrosive impositions of society, from preventing the unnatural. Citizens, on the other hand, are made. This education is imposed on people to create them into whomever the state desires, to give them "a new character and a new will."[94]

While he preceded Shklar, Isaiah Berlin famously raised concerns about this new character and new will in his renowned essay, "Two Concepts of Liberty." There he posed the issue in terms of what he coined as Rousseau's promotion of "positive liberty." Positive liberty for Berlin is freedom achieved through self-governance.[95] The problem, particularly for Rousseau, is that if one's liberty is tied to sovereignty, and since sovereignty in Rousseau is tied to obeying the general will, the individual could be said to have a "true self" only when they lose

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[92] See, for example, Rousseau, *Social Contract,* 72. OC III 385 SC II 8 [3]; Rousseau, *Émile,* 474.

[93] Wright credits the Spartan narrative for a history of misinterpretation of the *Social Contract* (J. Kent Wright, "Rousseau and Montesquieu" in *Thinking with Rousseau: From Machiavelli to Schmitt,* eds. Helena Rosenblatt and Paul Schweigert (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 73). See, also, Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty" in *Liberty*, ed. Henry Hardy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 207-208; Lester Crocker, *Rousseau's Social Contract: An Interpretive Essay*. (Cleveland, OH: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1968) 48-49; I believe Nussbaum, as will be discussed below, could be added to Wright's account, as well.

[94] Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, 157.

[95] Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," 177. My goal here is not to parse through the various conceptions of positive liberty that Berlin provides in his essay but to point out the elements he found dangerous in connection with Rousseau.

their individuality and will just the same as all members of the community. The will of the true self is thus set in opposition to the individual's particular will.[96]

A new character and new will under this kind of interpretation lead to the exclusion of the life of man. It sees the individual self of man annihilated in order to produce a citizen. Shklar notes that a citizen's new character is one of "excessive civic uniformity."[97] There are two main modern ways of interpreting this excessive civic uniformity: one where all individuals are alike because they have been molded alike, and another where individuals choose to give up their individuality to a whole larger than themselves: the body politic.

One of the more recent illuminating explorations of the former view of Rousseau is taken up in Martha Nussbaum's *Political Emotions.* The picture of the Spartan republic looms over Nussbaum's account of Rousseau. She observes that Rousseau's goal is a nation in which everyone has been sculpted by public education to act and feel alike. Their education has taught them not to feel individual emotions but to only feel homogenized political emotions, oriented at the state's well-being. Nussbaum describes these homogenized political emotions as an imposed kind of love that the citizenry feel toward one another on the basis that they are all the same.[98] She specifically denies that this political emotion is pity, as she finds pity to be a commendable sentiment that only exists in *Émile*.[99] Instead she finds the political sentiments molded through

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[96] Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," 179. Berlin further worries that positing a "higher," citizen-self is open to serious political abuse, allowing those in power to coerce the general population into whatever they claim their true selves are: "The immature and untutored must be made to say to themselves: 'Only the truth liberates, and the only way in which I can learn the truth is by doing blindly today what you, who know it, order me, or coerce me, to do, in the certain knowledge that only thus will I arrive at your clear vision, and be free like you'" (Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," 198). The fear of totalitarian thought police is thus a consequence of the concerns about what it might mean to set the citizen-self opposed to the particular self.

[97] Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, 167.

[98] Nussbaum, *Political Emotions*, 30.

[99] Ibid., 45.

the state's civil religion, which will be examined in more depth shortly. Nussbaum finds that the patriotism fostered in citizens through the civil religion "removes key freedoms of speech and religious expression"[100] through a "type of fraternity grounded in unanimity and homogeneity."[101] Moreover, once all citizens have been made to feel the same political sentiments that then drive their will, the general will is thus easy to locate because all citizens are so similar that their interests are already common, and the general will is simply this common interest.[102]

The other possible way of describing this process of losing oneself to one's state is through the historical lens of possessive individualism. This frame, originally posed by C.B. MacPherson, described a movement in social contract theories like Hobbes' and Locke's to which Rousseau responded.[103] Possessive individualism identifies the popular Enlightenment idea that the individual at her very core owns her person and all her capacities and thoughts. She is free because she is self-possessed, and thus responsible for (or *owns*) all her actions. Thus, this self-possessing person, in order to protect her possessions, enters a social contract to maintain her individual property and autonomy. If this category applies to Hobbes and Locke, Rousseau arguably poses as their foil. This is Charly Coleman's argument that we will return to

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[100] Ibid., 5.

[101] Ibid., 45.

[102] While we reviewed in Chapter 1 where Shklar identifies this common good solely in self-interest, Nussbaum adds to self-interest a sentiment she calls "masculine love," which falls short of my conception of expanded sympathy because it involves bloodlust and xenophobia as well as a masculinized homogeneity of citizens. While I will briefly address some issues raised by the details of her masculine love argument in the Conclusion, I will address the homogeneity concerns in this chapter as I addressed Rousseau's approach to bloodlust and xenophobia in the former one.

[103] C.B. MacPherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962). This line of possessive individualism could also be linked to Puffendorf and Grotius to whom Rousseau also responded.

later. Rousseau's individual, under this reading, gives up his possessions of self and property to the body politic which becomes, as the *moi commun,* or common self, the primary possessor of both property and will. The idea then is that transition into civil society must entail giving up one's individual traits to become a fraction of this new whole.

Seeing Rousseau's citizen as a homogenized part of a larger whole in either of these two ways discounts some of the distinctive aspects of Rousseau's theory. Rousseau is trying to tackle the very problem of how to be an individual in society. He wants to discover a way of being that can be true to oneself as well as beneficial to others. His account of the individual self is more nuanced than these interpretations, and in fact his texts not only leave room for the uniqueness of individuals in society, they aim to foster it.

First, making all citizens homogenized does not leave space for individual genius. In Chapter 2, we examined Rousseau's view that political inequalities are not necessarily insidious. In fact, he encouraged them in proportion to individual genius and skill. Public prosperity, furthermore, comes from the achievements of individual citizens, and these should be allowed to take whatever form the interests of the individuals take. While Rousseau does not explicitly call for treatment of individuals that would foster exceptional people more than everyday ones, this is because he believes that exceptional individuals will be able to carve their own paths with the same opportunities as everyone else.[104]

Secondly, and more importantly for clarifying the overall debate, Rousseau does not in fact appear to advocate for a denaturing public education that would remove individuality while forging citizens. Though public education is discussed in other of Rousseau's works, such a discussion is conspicuously missing from the *Social Contract.* The fact that it does not appear in

[104] Rousseau, *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts,* 26-27. OC III 29-30 [59].

this most significant of his treatises on the citizen suggests that it is not what Rousseau has in mind when cultivating the individual's public-oriented nature. Furthermore, when discussed in *Émile* and the *Discourse on Political Economy*, this kind of public education is dismissed as an unfeasible option. Rousseau declares in the beginning of Book I of *Émile* that public education of this sort is not a practical or possible method for creating citizens in his time, and thus the question of creating citizens can only be a question of natural education producing them.[105] Civic education is then purely a utopian approach while natural education is the realizable one.

The absence of the utopian public education from the *Social Contract* suggests that, contrary to Shklar, we must read it as offering practical, feasible political measures. In short, advancing a utopian contract is contrary to the text's aim. In fact, Rousseau posits that the nation island of Corsica is ripe for the political guidance he lays out in the *Social Contract*, making it all the more clear that he does not take this work to be purely utopian.[106] Utopias are meant only as modes of judgment of present conditions. Because they are not achievable, they act as mirrors, reflecting back upon current conditions all of their failings.[107] While the mirroring is certainly part of the function of Rousseau's descriptions, he by no means intends his work to be purely judgmental.[108] Rousseau is clearly nostalgic in his writing about certain ancient modes of living

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[105] Rousseau, *Émile,* 40. For his similar claim in the third *Discourse*, see Rousseau, *Discourse on Political Economy*, 22. OC III 261-262 [39]. Aside from being unfeasible, scholars note that Rousseau would in fact not choose such an option were it available. They cite, among other reasons, that Rousseau scorns this method for its approach to familial relationships and individual liberty (Dent, *Rousseau*, 165; Warner, *Rousseau and the Problem of Human Relations*, 214; Hanley, "Political Economy and Individual Liberty," 52-3.) Through these objections we can see that private institutions like education and marriage are not in fact as separate from public life as they are originally presented.

[106] Rousseau, *Social Contract,* 78. OC III 391 SC II 10 [6].

[107] Shklar, *Men and Citizens,* 4.

[108] Rousseau's references to Plato's *Republic* and other forms of past public education often present civic education and the citizens it produces as a utopian ideal. Vestiges of this unachievable form of perfection still appear in the *Social Contract* when he mentions certain ways of being a citizen. It is possible an element of the utopian surfaces

that seem like a longing for totalitarian state tendencies, but just as he writes with nostalgia for the state of nature, he makes no suggestion that we can or should turn back time. He is offering instead a method of legitimate statehood that could be practically realizable.

However, there appears to be one chapter in the *Social Contract* that alternative interpretations typically offer as a model for a form of public education that I have just argued he is no longer seeking. It is to this interpretation we must now turn. Often, Book IV, Chapter VIII, "On Civil Religion" is offered as an example of how Rousseau requires his citizens to be homogenized in the hopes of achieving a unity like that of ancient Greece's religion of the citizen.[109] The religion of the citizen, as Rousseau introduces it, involves positive laws that designate dogmas of religious belief that all citizens must follow.[110] Citizens in this state, then, all act and believe alike, as they all follow the state-prescribed religion. Nussbaum in particular fixates on the clear wistful tone Rousseau has in the chapter for the religion of the citizen.[111] From that, she incorrectly concludes that he wants to maintain the religion of the citizen, with its homogenization of the people, bloodlust, and xenophobia.[112] There is no doubt that Rousseau writes positively of the ancient form of religion's ability to achieve social unity. He references this good many times throughout the chapter, and clearly wishes to find a way to promote bonds

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in his discussion on perfect citizenship when he states that the height of perfection in citizenship is when the citizen, in Spartan fashion, "is nothing and can do nothing except with all the others" (Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 69. OC III 382 SC II 7 [3]).

[109] This is what Allan Bloom, editor and translator of *Émile*, believes to be the doctrines for public education in the *Social Contract* (Rousseau, *Émile*, 40n7). Martha Nussbaum, too, takes this chapter to be further evidence for a homogenized citizenry. We will shortly examine how this is a misreading of the chapter.

[110] Rousseau, *Social Contract,* 146. OC III 464 SC IV 8 [15].

[111] Nussbaum, *Political Emotions,* 44.

[112] Ibid.*,* 45.

of unity in a contemporary state.[113] It is understandable, too, that the alarming aspects of the religion of the citizen could overwhelm the point of the Civil Religion chapter. As Ronald Beiner observes, the bulk of the thirty-five-paragraph chapter is devoted to historical accounts of religion and state relations while Rousseau's actual proposition for a civil religion is only five paragraphs long at the chapter's very end.[114]

However, it is significant that Rousseau in fact rejects this form of religion as a recommendation for an ideal state, and the grounds on which he rejects it are telling. First, he states that it does not allow individuals an avenue for seeking their own religious truth. We will explore this point later in his own suggestions for proper dogmas of civil religion. Second, Rousseau rejects the religion of the citizen because he claims that it makes the individuals of the state xenophobic, causing conflict with others who do not share their national beliefs.[115] We can see here the beginning of an argument for the significance of individual pursuits within a state.

The doctrines Rousseau does suggest within the chapter act to reiterate the points thus far made about the sentiments of the individual while leaving space for the individual's personal development within the state. I have already discussed the first point in Chapter 2, where I indicate that the purpose of the profession of faith is to acknowledge the duties owed to the state based on both the individual's sense of expanded pity toward his countrymen and his acknowledgement that the state acts to promote his self-preservation. Thus, the doctrines of a state's civil religion as Rousseau posits them are not meant "as dogmas of Religion but as

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[113] Rousseau, *Social Contract,* 145-147. OC III 462-465 SC IV 8.

[114] Ronald Beiner, *Civil Religion: A Dialogue in the History of Political Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 14.

[115] Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 147. OC III 465 SC IV 8 [19].

sentiments of sociability."[116] As an institution, civil faith is an expression of the primary sentiments of man: pity and *amour de soi*.

The one negative dogma of the profession of faith is the one that leaves the most space for personal development and the preservation of the self within the state. Rousseau only forbids intolerance.[117] Not only is this meant to reinforce the values of loving one another, as was discussed in Chapter 2, but it is also meant to protect the pursuits of the individual in his own private life.[118] Because the state does not and should not impose one religion for all its citizens, citizens are left to make their own spiritual journeys toward religious truth. For, as Rousseau states, "the right which the social pact gives the Sovereign over the subjects does not[…] exceed the bounds of public utility."[119] An individual's spiritual journey lies outside of this realm. They are expected to then sympathize with others pursuing their own journeys regardless of the religious endpoint others obtain. He thinks it is important to leave areas that do not harm public life to the unique chosen paths of the individuals within the state.

This chapter on civil religion also raises a final point that, in combination with his other political writing, contradicts the idea posed in Coleman's theory of dispossession: that Rousseau requires individuals to give up their own identities, personal characteristics, and individual freedom to become a part of the state. Before addressing this final point, it is necessary to take a closer look at the precise distinction Coleman draws between the loss of the individual self in

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[116] Ibid., 150. OC III 468 SC IV 8 [32].

[117] Ibid., 151. OC III 468-469 [33].

[118] See also, Joshua Karant, "Revisiting Rousseau's Civil Religion," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 42, no.10 (2016), 1041.

[119] Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 149-150. OC III 467 [31].

Rousseau's *Social Contract* and the maintenance of the self he sees in the alternative eighteenth-century belief of possessive individualism:

> The proponents of self-ownership [(what MacPherson called possessive individualism)], gave meaning to their claims in terms of independent volition, personal accountability, and the desire for recompense in spiritual and material goods. The opposition to this stance, in contrast, was articulated within a discourse of dispossessive subjectivity, according to which the self is reduced to nothing and reconstituted in the expanse of a totalizing will that speaks for it and through it.[120]

What Coleman identifies as the dichotomy here was briefly discussed earlier with C.B. MacPherson. Proponents of self-ownership, a theory identified with Hobbes and Locke, maintain that not only does individual selfhood persist upon entering a state, but each person's individuality is maintained through the state. By individuality, Coleman means characteristics of the individual that contribute to their having personal responsibility for their actions (i.e., a personal free will and capacity to self-direct and a sense that any capacities that the individual possesses that contribute to their self-direction—for example the drive toward self-interest—are inalienable components of the person that contribute to their having an equally inalienable human dignity). This personal responsibility also allows for personal consequences (like salvation or damnation), as well as individual (and thus unequal) material rewards based on one's actions. The alternative to self-ownership is the loss of the individual self and the creation instead of a communal self, a *moi commun.* This means that free will and self-direction and any particular capacities that contribute to that self-direction are not seen as individual but, in Coleman's reading of Rousseau, only describe the body politic. Only the state, according to Coleman, has distinctive attributes, and human agency only exists collectively through the

[120] Coleman, "The Value of Dispossession," 311-312.

general will.[121] This Coleman sees as a necessary and rewarding compromise in Rousseau: "the loss of particularity gave way to the fullness of communal being."[122]

Rousseau's language when discussing individual citizens, however, still bears many similarities to the language Coleman associates with self-ownership. First, he certainly maintains a concept of individual rewards based on personal responsibility even within the state. An important component of Rousseau's civil religion involves the belief that individual actions will ultimately come with their own reward and punishment.[123] Furthermore, as was discussed in Chapter 2, Rousseau believes in a merit-based system where those with greater capacities are rewarded with positions of status and power. Second, his language directly addresses inalienable components of individual character. Particularly, throughout the *Social Contract* as well as his other political writings, Rousseau makes reference not only to pity, but also self-preservation and free will as qualities that an individual person cannot give up without losing their own humanity.[124] He vehemently presents the inalienable nature of individual free will in a famous chapter against slavery:

> To renounce one's freedom is to renounce one's quality as man, the rights of humanity, and even its duties. There can be no possible compensation for someone who renounces everything. Such a renunciation is incompatible with the nature of man, and to deprive one's will of all freedom is to deprive one's actions of all morality.[125]

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[121] Ibid., 319.

[122] Ibid., 315. He identifies this process as occurring when the individual contracts to follow the general will.

[123] Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 150-151. OC III 468 SC IV 8 [33].

[124] See, for example, ibid., 43, 45-46. OC III 353 I 2 [8], OC III 355-356 SC I 4 [6]; Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, 128, 177, 218. OC III 126-127 [12], OC III 182 [39], OC III 219 [1]; Rousseau, *Émile*, 87.

[125] Rousseau, *Social Contract,* 45. OC III 356 SC I 4 [6].

Rousseau's discussion of pity is even stronger. In his chapter "On Civil Religion," Rousseau makes it clear that he does not know what a person incapable of pity can be for the state. As discussed in Chapter 2, he goes to such an extreme as suggesting exile or execution of such an individual.[126] In fact, Rousseau also refers to the qualities of free will, pity, and self-preservation as either supernatural or natural "dons," which is the French word for gifts or givens.[127] Charly Coleman identifies language that refers to gifts or possessions from God as indicators of possessive individualism, the theory he juxtaposes with Rousseau's.[128] That is because such language implies an individual self that possesses these God-given gifts. This continuity of language then suggests to the reader that an individual does not lose their personal sentiments and characteristics, but in fact must maintain them even upon entry into the state. Rousseau cannot be advocating for the erasure of individual capacities and attributes if such attributes are necessary to maintaining their humanity and even their citizenship. Instead, the proper functioning of the state will promote and foster them.

This is the ultimate destination for Émile, as well. He must find the state in which he can best see a future for himself. Interpretations that deny citizens can live as men must grapple with the fact that the culmination of the education of a man, in Book V of *Émile*, is an education about the *Social Contract* and political duties. It may be because *Émile* has received far less attention as a philosophical text than Rousseau's political writings that the solution given in *Émile* does not get the attention it deserves.

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[126] Ibid., 150. OC III 468 SC IV 8 [32].

[127] For the use of the translated terms for the French, *dons*, see Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality,* 134, 151-152, 158, 161, and 178. OC III 134 [2], OC III 153-155 [35-36], OC III 161 [49], OC III 165 [3], and OC III 183 [41].

[128] Coleman, "The Value of Dispossession," 305.

VII. The Individual as Citizen

Often difficulties in reconciling ideas within Rousseau are blamed on his rhetorical style. However, I think in this case the difficulty in seeing how the life of the man and the life of the citizen could work together comes also from the fact that Rousseau is doing something unique for his time in the way he characterizes the life of the man. Unlike other social contract theorists, Rousseau's individual is not originally an atomized, self-made 'self.' For Rousseau, there is no *self* without society. How might one have and foster one's unique genius if one has not first garnered all the resources of society? Language and the abstract reasoning that comes with it only come from prolonged interaction with other people. These are necessary to the development of the imagination, foresight, and memory. One cannot pursue individual passions without these skills. For that matter, one cannot even recognize oneself beyond one's present desires without the faculties developed in society. Rousseau differentiates between the life of the man, developed through negative education, and the life of the original man, which has no developmental path whatsoever. The original man alone is separate from society. Meanwhile, there is a degree of socialization required to reach the life of a man, which makes Rousseau's individualized self more intertwined with society than his atomistic contemporaries admitted.[129] So, instead of claiming that the individual disappears in civil society, one cannot actually become an individual without society. Ultimately, then, Rousseau's picture of an ideal state that works for the good of its people is a state that fosters the natures of the individual men within it.

[129] This is why Rousseau criticizes Hobbes and Locke and others who posit a state of nature for failing to go far enough back to actually reach the state of nature (Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, 132. OC III 132 [5]). They assume aspects of individuals (that then allow for possessive individualism) that would not exist in the state of nature. People would not have a concept of 'mine or thine' or even of a continuous self to which things could belong in the first place.

Concluding Remarks

Political emotions do not just motivate political participation, they can affect public policy and actions. Rousseau might seem like a distant figure to try to draw on for politics today, but in fact the importance of political emotions is currently in the foreground of political discourse. The effects of political emotions, particularly those that arise from expanded forms of pity, were the primary theme of the 2020 Democratic National Convention. Michelle Obama centered her keynote address of the convention's first night on empathy, an inconsistently defined term introduced into the English language in the twentieth century that is often used synonymously with sympathy.[1] Obama remarked:

> Empathy: that's something I've been thinking a lot about lately. […] Most of us practice this without a second thought. If we see someone suffering or struggling, we don't stand in judgment. We reach out because, "There, but for the grace of God, go I." It is not a hard concept to grasp. It's what we teach our children. And like so many of you, Barack and I have tried our best to instill in our girls a strong moral foundation to carry forward the values that our parents and grandparents poured into us. But right now, kids in this country are seeing what happens when we stop requiring empathy of one another.[2]

What is striking about Obama's speech is that she identifies both the natural inclination toward commiseration in human beings as well as the need to educate children so as to preserve that

[1] Remy Debes, "From *Einfühlung* to Empathy: Sympathy in Early Phenomenology and Psychology," in *Sympathy: A History,* ed. Eric Schliesser (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 286-7.

[2] Michelle Obama, "Speech to the 2020 Democratic National Convention," (speech, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, August 17, 2020).

tendency—the very same ideas Rousseau puts forth with respect to the original sentiment of pity. Obama continues in her speech to list the horrors perpetuated by both individuals and the government that have occurred because they are acting on personal and political wills that lack fellow-feeling. Her despairing observations greatly resemble the results of the false contract in the *Discourse on Inequality*, the one made without compassion and purely from inflamed senses of self-interest. One could almost hear Rousseau echoed in the speech, adding his lines from the *Discourse on Inequality* where, upon witnessing others' suffering, the rational, self-interested man says to himself "'Perish if you wish; I am safe.'"[3] Obama, like Rousseau, came to underscore the importance of compassion by observing what happens when it is lacking in politics. Compassion is precisely what quells the ideas that "certain people belong here, that greed is good, and winning is everything."[4]

Obama's suggestion that fellow-feeling is integral to moral and political action closely resembles the place Rousseau gives the sentiment in his moral and political system. Rousseau's project in the *Social Contract* is one of identifying a political program that fits the moral agent: a rational, self-interested, and pitying being. He thus seeks to answer questions concerning how to be both a good person and a good citizen.

I have attempted in this dissertation to give a fuller account of pity's role in both individual moral agency as well as its extension into the political realm. To do so, I place considerable weight on a footnote to the *Discourse on Inequality* where Rousseau explains individual virtue as the interaction of pity, *amour de soi*, and reason. In Chapter 1, I examine

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[3] Jean-Jacques, Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men or Second Discourse*, in *Rousseau: The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings*, trans. Victor Gourevitch, ed. Victor Gourevitch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 153. OC III 156 [37].

[4] Obama, "Speech to the 2020 Democratic National Convention."

how Rousseau's treatment of the original sentiment in society does not work solely as an individual or reactive sentiment as it did in the state of nature. Having predicted before Darwin's evolutionary hypothesis that compassion is the source of the survival of the species, Rousseau identifies the sentiment as the basis of all social virtues.[5] Models of the general will influenced by Kant exclude this social sentiment from the determination of the general will, instead finding the generality of the will through common rational self-interest. I find that, in addition to reasoned self-interest, it is pity as a political emotion that motivates and maintains the interests of the state through the general will. This disinterested sentiment makes the citizen want what will make others happy, and thus willingly submit to a general will that preserves their self-interest and recognizes the interests of others. When an individual acts on a will that reasonably moderates their self-interest with pity, that individual acts virtuously; when the sovereign legislates from a will that combines a reasonable balance of pity and self-interest, the general will is virtuous.

Incorporating pity into our understanding of the general will provides a clearer appreciation of why the general will is not a universal will than the Kantian interpretation. This is because pity is a limited sentiment; the strength of the sentiment depends on the familiarity of its target to the pitier. I further argue that the Kantian interpretation cannot be defended simply by classifying pity as self-interest because Rousseau identifies the sentiment as a separate, disinterested drive of the will. Both drives—pity and *amour de soi*—must be taken into account for both individual and national action to be virtuous.

[5] Charles Darwin, "On the Development of the Intellectual and Moral Faculties during Primeval and Civilised Times," in *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1875), 127-145.

As I argue in Chapter 2, this virtue leads both individuals and society to moderation through pity, thereby tending the general will toward equality. Instead of focusing on the direct intervention by law needed to equalize the state, the state most effectively tends toward moderation by fostering institutions that encourage healthy development of the original sentiments as well as the appropriate channels for *amour propre.*

This healthy cultivation of man's original sentiments not only bonds men as fellow citizens but also makes them virtuous and happy men. In Chapter 3, I argue that it is again the neglect of the original sentiment of pity that contributes to the perceived conflict between the lives of man and citizen that has persisted since Shklar wrote of it. *Émile* makes it clear how central pity is to the whole human being. If a man desired the harm of another man to further his own self-interest, he would be in contradiction with himself. To similarly take pity out of the political system would be to put man in contradiction with himself, denying him his wholeness. Thus, the pitying man is whole in himself by sharing the interests of citizens: his own self-interest and his interest in what makes others happy. Likewise, I argue that it is this sentiment that allows citizens to be individuals. For, by the nature of pity as a disinterested, individual drive, an individual who balances his *amour de soi* and pity is balancing his drives toward his personal well-being with his drives toward promoting others'. A space therefore remains for individual self-discovery and pursuit of personal wellbeing. When this core principle of human action is kept unadulterated, it is the foundation of both personal morality and political legitimacy.

This dissertation is the preliminary work for restoring a complete picture of the nature and virtue of the sentiments in Rousseau. If we were to consider borrowing from Rousseau and

making his system useful today, there is further work to be done to identify whether he can overcome the obstacles for which I have not yet accounted.

The very quality of the sentiment that makes it most efficacious in fact poses a significant risk left unconsidered by Rousseau: pity applies most vigorously to those who are close to us and resemble us. Although Rousseau recognizes the need to develop and expand the sentiment of pity, his focus is on fostering pity toward one's fellow citizens. This raises concerns as to whom Rousseau counts as being among those who resemble us. One of the obstacles to pity's political utility, then, is the potential for under-identification with certain others. Such under-identification can lead to arbitrary and pernicious forms of discrimination and exclusion. There is a concern among some Rousseau scholars that his politics are inseparable from his othering of specific groups, particularly foreign nationals (especially those outside of Europe) and women. The question we now turn to is whether Rousseau's use of pity as a political emotion is inextricable from his exclusivity.

1. *Relating to the 'Noble Savage'*

While pity functions in the state of nature to cause repugnance at the pain of any sentient creature, Rousseau makes it clear that it is most active in civil society when we have plentiful occasions to recognize others as relatable. In *Émile*, Rousseau acknowledges the potential problem of national prejudices, particularly against foreigners. He finds the problem to be inevitable, and relatively unconcerning, and his solution is to recommend that Émile maintain friendships with virtuous individuals from as many countries as he can visit.[6] However,

[6] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile, or On Education*, trans. Allan Bloom, ed. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1979), 39, 471.

Rousseau himself does not always account for such prejudices in his discussions of non-Europeans. In the eighteenth century, European naturalists and explorers typically described indigenous peoples as barbarous and depraved.[7] Though Rousseau does not ascribe to that particular supremacist view, and in fact laments the eurocentrism of such accounts, he instead adopts the well-known and problematic narrative of the noble savage.[8]

While there are any number of problems worth discussing in such a narrative, limiting ourselves to the role of pity raises concerns about the extent to which this sentiment can actually work to promote and maintain ideal societies. For how is one to fully commiserate with people they have deemed savage (however noble they may be)? If pity maintains the tendency toward equality and the avoidance of interference in others' free personal pursuits, it is crucial that other peoples' full humanity is not called into question despite cultural differences.

Sankar Muthu in *Enlightenment against Empire* argues along these lines that a "more meaningful and substantive moral commiseration with non-Europeans" required the rejection of noble savagery.[9] This is the case because the noble savage narrative Rousseau uses dehumanizes its subjects whilst identifying them as the most "purely" human.[10] Many scholars note this effect when Rousseau frequently uses accounts of native populations in the Americas, Africa, and the

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[7] Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment against Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 10, 37; Francis Moran III, "Between Primates and Primitives: Natural Man as the Missing Link in Rousseau's *Second Discourse*," in *Philosophers on Race: Critical Essays*, eds. Julie K. Ward and Tommy L. Lott, 125-144 (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 126-139; Christopher Miller, *The French Atlantic Triangle: Literature and Culture of the Slave Trade* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 68.

[8] Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality,* 204-211nX. OC III 208-214. I should note, however, that the phrase "noble savage" does not appear in Rousseau's works though it is often mistakenly attributed to him (Robert Launay, *Savages, Romans, and Despots: Thinking about Others from Montaigne to Herder* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 152-153).

[9] Muthu, *Enlightenment against Empire,* 12.

[10] Ibid., 39

South Pacific to identify qualities of original man because he sees them as the closest living analogues to the hypothetical condition (despite the fact that he actually places most of the native populations he discusses in the "golden age," the developmental midpoint between the state of nature and civil society).[11]

Furthermore, without resorting to essentializing descriptions of what certain groups are *innately* capable of, Rousseau nevertheless makes climatological arguments throughout his writings that describe the ways in which, e.g., "the organization of the brain is less perfect in the two [climate] extremes. Neither the Negroes nor the Laplanders have the sense of the Europeans" because men are "all that they can be only in temperate climates… in France, for example."[12] Rousseau is not making the claim that certain peoples are innately less capable than others. But he is claiming that certain conditions (most achievable in Europe) provide the right level of challenges to fully develop the capacity of reason. This capacity is necessary for man to achieve his sublime calling.[13] Rousseau cannot escape the claim of European superiority given that he considers the ideal state of being to be one of self-rule by *reasoning* moral agents. In order for commiseration to properly balance reason and self-interest, one needs to also recognize the suffering that accompanies lack of full recognition as a moral agent. One cannot do so if one denies full moral agency to non-Europeans based on European supremacy.[14]

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[11] Ibid., 39; Moran, "Between Primates and Primitives," 126.

[12] Rousseau, *Émile,* 52. The influence of Montesquieu in this line of thinking is clear and occasionally directly attributed by Rousseau (see, for example Jean-Jacques, Rousseau, *Of the Social Contract*, in *Rousseau: The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings*, trans. Victor Gourevitch, ed. Victor Gourevitch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 100. OC III 414 SC III 8 [1]).

[13] Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality,* 203-204nIX. OC III 207 [14].

[14] For more on the concern of animalizing indigenous groups, see for example, Muthu, *Enlightenment against Empire,* 41-43; Moran, "Between Primates and Primitives," 137-138.

In fact, this superiority makes Rousseau blind to the possibility that native populations may have already achieved his ideal society as outlined in the *Social Contract*. In his writings on aristocracy, Rousseau makes several claims in succession that demonstrate this prejudice:

> The first societies governed themselves aristocratically. The chiefs of families deliberated among themselves about the public business; young people readily yielded to the authority of experience. … The savages of northern America still govern themselves this way in our day, and they are very well governed.
>
> But in proportion as instituted inequality prevailed over natural inequality, riches or power was given preference over age, and Aristocracy became elective. … There are, then, three kinds of Aristocracy: natural, elective, hereditary. The first is suited only to simple peoples; the third is the worst of all Governments. The second is the best; it is Aristocracy properly so called.[15]

Recalling the discussion of inequality from Chapter 2, Rousseau claims in the *Discourse on Inequality* that moral inequalities institutionalized by the government are legitimate as long as they are in proportion to natural inequalities, e.g., age or experience. Here, however, Rousseau cannot recognize the indigenous governments of North America as "elective," not recognizing that they could have in fact established the very social institutions that, had he seen them in Europe, he would have deemed healthy.[16]

This presentation of the limited capacities and agency of non-Europeans is fodder for arguments in favor of paternalistic rule by European powers. Despite Rousseau's thematic criticisms of the lack of pity by contemporary Europeans, he nevertheless is not interested in expanding his criticism to a targeted critique of European colonization.[17] In fact, his arguments

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[15] Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 92-93. OC III 406 SC III 5 [2-4].

[16] Mills identifies this as a form of racial contract in Rousseau where he recognizes a strict demarcation of the possibilities for European and non-European peoples (Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 26, 69).

[17] Louis Sala-Molins, *Dark Side of the Light: Slavery and the French Enlightenment*, trans. John Conteh-Morgan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 73-74; Muthu, *Enlightenment against Empire,* 13.

against state expansion and conquest, like his seeming references to slavery that I discussed in Chapter 2, much more concern European corruption and lack concern for their effects on native populations. Muthu, however, does point to one place, in Rousseau's replies to his critics, where Rousseau makes reference to European corruption particularly as it related to the conquest of the Americas.[18]

Yet, Christopher L. Miller reveals in *The French Atlantic Triangle* that in Rousseau's writings there is only one clear condemnation of the kind of slavery that went hand-in-hand with European colonization.[19] In fact, in the sequel to *Émile*, Rousseau described the conditions that would allow for what he calls a "happy bondage."[20] The problem in Rousseau is so profound that there are plenty of records of slavers in the Americas who used his writings to bolster their own arguments in favor of the slave trade or simply did not see the incongruity between Rousseau's accounts of both pity and slavery and their own actions.[21] Miller adds that Rousseau himself demonstrated difficulty commiserating with the suffering of slaves, noting that Rousseau often wrote of enslaved people across his works with disdain.[22] The limited sentiment of pity, in Rousseau, then, leaves room for citizens to commiserate with each other while explicitly not commiserating with those in service to them. Such dehumanization leads to disintegration of any generalized notion of liberty or equality.

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[18] Muthu, *Enlightenment against Empire*, 45-46, cf. the "Last Reply" to the *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts.*

[19] Miller, *The French Atlantic Triangle,* 67. This is the one exception to Sala-Molins's claim that there is nowhere in Rousseau any condemnation of Euro-Afro-Caribbean slavery (Sala-Molins, *Dark Side of the Light,* 73, 155-156n34. See also Muthu, *Enlightenment against Empire*, 13.

[20] Fayçal Falaky, "Reading Rousseau in the Colonies: Theory, Practice, and the Question of Slavery," *Small Axe* 19, no. 1 (March 2015), 17. Falaky notes that this idea does not only appear in *Les Solitaires* but also in the published *La nouvelle Héloise.*

[21] Falaky, "Reading Rousseau in the Colonies," 7, 11-14, 16; Miller, *The French Atlantic Triangle,* 67-70.

[22] Miller, *The French Atlantic Triangle,* 64.

2. *Commiseration with Women*

We find a similar issue of commiseration and servitude in the way Rousseau writes of women. In this case, the concern arises from the segregation of the sexes that relegates women to domestic affairs only, without which, arguably, Rousseau could not build and maintain his political order. This is Carole Pateman's thesis in *Sexual Contract*.[23] The problem is two-fold, then. First, for Rousseau, inalienable liberty and a certain extent of equality among men might in fact be achievable only through the subjugation of women and the structured denial of those goods to this class of people. Second, this implies a limitation to the extendability of pity in his system: there is a disconnect between the commiseration that would keep one man from harming another man's interests and the commiseration afforded to women.

Incidentally, the same Golden Age into which Rousseau categorizes indigenous populations establishes the systematized segregation of the sexes in Rousseau's politics. Pateman builds her argument from the following account of the first small societies from Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality*:

> The first developments of the heart were the effect of a new situation [of settling down in huts] that brought husbands and Wives, Fathers and Children together in a common dwelling … Each family became a small Society, all the better united… and this is when the first difference was established in the ways of living of the two Sexes, which until then had had but one. Women became more sedentary and grew accustomed to looking after the Hut and Children, while the man went in quest of the common subsistence.[24]

Pateman marks this event as the origin of a sexual contract, an agreement between men and women to authorize the former's political and sexual right over the latter. By first establishing what he claimed was the "only natural [society]," Rousseau, according to Pateman, thus relies on

[23] Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 97.

[24] Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, 164. OC III 168 [12].

the subjugation of women as fundamental to the ultimate establishment of the social contract.[25] This subjugation is seen as morally necessary, as women represent the purely passionate, and the social contract represents the constraint of passion by reason. Men are the only people capable of fully realized moral agency because they can balance their *amour de soi* and pity with their reason. Since the general will requires self-legislation by members of the sovereign, men are also the only people capable of full citizenship in the social contract. Women must have their passions restrained through the sexual contract.[26] Because the segregated spheres of men and women allow only Rousseau's man to seek self-rule through the social contract, Pateman argues that Rousseau's search for "'freedom as *autonomy*'" was "fatally compromised."[27]

If Rousseau's social contract were simply inclusive of anyone capable of a mutual relationship between their own reason and passions, Mary Wollstonecraft alone could dictate why the exclusivity problem in Rousseau could be resolved simply by recognizing the full capacities of her sex. However, more work needs to be done to determine if Rousseau's men are only able to contract because of the entrenched servitude involved in his system.

While I think the question of necessitating servitude is left unanswered, Helena Rosenblatt provides necessary historical context to demonstrate that Rousseau would afford women more of a role in politics than his times tended to allow. She argues that readings like Pateman's take Rousseau's theory out of the context of the practical situation he was addressing. For example, to examine the Genevan context of Rousseau's *Letter to D'Alembert*, as Rosenblatt does, is to find Rousseau's proposals for women in fact more empowering, politicizing, and

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[25] Rousseau, *Social Contract,* 42. OC III 352 SC I 2 [1].

[26] Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, 100.

[27] Ibid., 229.

equalizing than their circumstances had allowed at the time. Rosenblatt's argument is that Rousseau views specifically women of the upper, ruling class (the patriciate) as problematic. His message was to inspire a form of virtue that 'ordinary' women could achieve: "First, he defines virtue so as to make it accessible to all women, not just an elite. Second, he shows obvious admiration for the simple, frugal, hardworking woman. Finally, he questions whether the patrician ethos does even its own women justice."[28] The patrician class emphasized the value of women as pacifiers of their husbands' political engagement, reorienting the men to focus on social performance and luxury.[29] These women, to Rousseau, were then embodiments of the corrupting influence of *amour propre* that the patrician class deemed meritorious. This worsened when women of other classes began emulating the patrician women.[30]

Thus, Rosenblatt claims that when Rousseau attempts to reorient women's virtue toward encouraging republican values he is arguing for more of a political position for women than what the patriciate modeled, further making virtue more accessible than one achieved by travel to French salons. Women being more political was meant to motivate men to be more civically engaged. Rousseau wanting to expand the number of men in politics was in stark contrast with the exclusivity of the times. Only 6% of the Genevan male population could vote, with active patrician movements to further reduce this number.[31] Thus, Rosenblatt credits Rousseau for according the average Genevan woman and man a more expansive role in political life. Furthermore, in encouraging virtue for men and women (though in different forms for each),

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[28] Helena Rosenblatt, "On the 'Misogyny' of Jean-Jacques Rousseau: The Letter to d'Alembert in Historical Context," *French Historical Studies* 25, no. 1 (Winter 2002), 113.

[29] Ibid., 101, 109.

[30] Ibid., 110.

[31] Ibid., 114.

both were thus able to sympathize through a mutual love of their country and its citizens. This proposed role for women does not, however, eliminate their servitude because they are still primarily bolstering men's virtue and political engagement, but it at least recognizes the potential for women's virtuous political participation. Martha Nussbaum, however, denies Rousseau even this much by claiming that the sentiment through which he inspires political participation is an intrinsically masculine one.

It is through Martha Nussbaum that an additional question arises about pity as it relates to women in Rousseau. Nussbaum argues extensively in *Political Emotions* that Rousseau's recommended unifying political emotion (which she primarily cites from the chapter "On Civil Religion" in the *Social Contract*) was inseparable from its exclusively "masculine" character. According to her reading, it is not only significant but necessary that Rousseau's institutionalized political festivals center men and that the form of expanded pity they inspire (which she alternately calls fraternal, patriotic, or civic love) revolves around "masculine" values.[32] Nussbaum identifies Rousseau's patriotic love as masculine because it invokes "manly honor,"[33] militarism, feelings of invulnerability, and assertiveness among other qualities she identifies as masculine.[34] She also notes that unlike the historically "feminine" nature of reciprocal, "egalitarian" love, Rousseau's political love is hierarchical in nature. Interestingly, Nussbaum counts Rousseau's theory of *pitié* in *Émile* as reciprocal and egalitarian, but claims it is absent from his account of love in the *Social Contract.*[35]

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[32] Martha Nussbaum, *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2015), 30, 45.

[33] Ibid., 30.

[34] Ibid., 16, 30, 45.

[35] Ibid., 45.

Some of these charges are exaggerated as well as unnecessarily gender-essentializing. For example, Rousseau's sentiment of pity even beyond *Émile* is central to his idea of humanity *because* men recognize all people as vulnerable beings. However, Nussbaum's charges point to the very real challenge of the potential exclusivity of Rousseau's political emotions. The question thus remains as to whether Rousseau's choices in institutions that bond the populace through pity are not simply incidentally male-oriented because of the historical context but because his system in fact relies on segregated emotional capacities between men and women, and his theory of pity could not be extricated from perpetuating that strict demarcation. I think my arguments for the compatibility of accounts of pity in *Émile* and Rousseau's other political writings work to demonstrate that the sentiment is not as toxically masculine as Nussbaum presents it. The sentiment moves the individual to care about others' suffering within a system that promotes self-sufficiency and self-protection—all desires that I do not take to be gendered. Furthermore, it is notable that Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality* references contemporary women as an example of the sentiment that he laments as lost in contemporary, rational men. He claims that, like the man in the state of nature who "is always seen to yield without a thought to the first sentiment of humanity," (pity) it is "the women of the marketplace, [when there is a riot or a street brawl,] who separate the combatants, and who prevent honest people from killing one another."[36]

Ironically, the overarching goal of Nussbaum's *Political Emotions* is much like the one I ascribe to Rousseau: to maintain the liberty associated with individual autonomy while simultaneously inspiring the political emotions that keep individuals united with their fellow

[36] Rousseau, *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*, ed. Jean Starobinski (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), 86. OC III 156 [37]. Translation mine.

citizens. In fact, Nussbaum's ultimate proposal incorporates many of the uses of expanded pity that we should find familiar: patriotic compassion that considers the historical particularity of the country, ritualistic public associations that reaffirm mutual commitments and shared beliefs, and even a civil religion she outlines as "a public cultivation of sympathy, love, and concern that could motivate a range of valuable actions, from military defense to philanthropy."[37] So, although there are still significant questions left unanswered in terms of the nature and application of pity as a Rousseauian political emotion, examining the role of pity in Rousseau's political and moral system offers the groundwork for an understanding of the institutions that reinforce political emotions and their effect on individual and political life.

However, for as much as our contemporaries, like Nussbaum and Obama, recognize the need for compassion, there is now at the same time a backlash to the idea of merely *feeling* with others. Displays of sympathy in response to systemic horrors are not enough. What is needed is action. We must not believe it is enough to treat news as a spectacle, just as Rousseau lamented the form of sympathy provoked by the theater. In the most corrupt and unpitying of political times, Rousseau saw in the theater the potential for the sentiment of pity to appear but in an inert fashion. We must not become like Rousseau's theater-goers, who having cried for what we witness, feel "we have satisfied all the rights of humanity without having to give anything more of ourselves."[38] Our current politics underscore that we must not merely congratulate ourselves on the moral superiority of our sadness, but commit to pity as an original motivation for and principle of action.

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[37] Nussbaum, *Political Emotions*, 378. For examples of the other listed elements of her proposal, see, ibid., 6, 17, 142, 207.

[38] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Letter to D'Alembert* in *Politics and the Arts: Letter to M. D'Alembert on the Theatre*, trans. Allan Bloom (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1960), 25.

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