ROUSSEAU ON *AMOUR-PROPRE*

N.J.H. Dent and Timothy O'Hagan

II—Timothy O'Hagan

ON SIX FACETS OF *AMOUR-PROPRE*

ABSTRACT O'Hagan agrees with Dent that in Rousseau's idea of *amour-propre* we encounter a powerful, coherent model of human psychology, according to which individuals find their own identities by engaging in a network of relationships within a more or less reconstituted social order. He examines five ways in which people strive to attain that goal and five ways in which they characteristically fail. In the sixth section he discusses Rousseau's strategy of retreat from society, which is also a retreat from the demands of *amour-propre*.

Just occasionally there is a revolution in intellectual history, a moment of radical challenge to a received reading of a text, to a received understanding of an idea. A Gestalt is refigured, as sentences previously in the background are brought into the foreground. What was previously an anomaly becomes a coherent part of the whole. One such moment was when G.A. Cohen re-read the classic sentences of Marx's '1859 Preface' in his famous Aristotelian Society paper 'On some criticisms of historical materialism' of 1970. Suddenly, apparently familiar little words, including humble prepositions, appeared in a new light, a lucid and coherent edifice was reconstructed from what had looked like a theoretical ruin riddled by logical inconsistencies. Since then, every word of Cohen's text has been challenged in turn, but the landscape of Marxist debate was definitively changed.[1]

Nicholas Dent's reading of Rousseau's writings on *amour-propre* has been equally revolutionary. He propounded it first in his book *Rousseau* in 1988, and has reinforced it in subsequent writings, most succinctly in his *Rousseau Dictionary* of 1992. Since I am convinced by Dent's reading, you will not be entertained by a gladiatorial display in which I attempt to snare my opponent with a net of counter-readings before impaling him on the horns of a dilemma. Instead I shall present my own reading

1. I suspect that G. Baker and K. Morris, *Descartes' Dualism*, London: Routledge, 1996, is a revolutionary text of the same order as those of Cohen and Dent.

of Rousseau's writings on *amour-propre*. I stress the multi-faceted nature of *amour-propre*, which performs many rôles in Rousseau's understanding of the human personality. I am also impressed by Rousseau's ruthless realism. His adopted motto 'Vitam impendere vero' is no mere hyperbole, however given he may have been to self-deceit. Guided by that realism, Rousseau propounds a powerful, coherent model of human psychology, according to which individuals can find their own identities by engaging in a network of egalitarian relationships within a more or less reconstituted social order.[2] But Rousseau's realism tends towards pessimism. As he engages with each facet of *amour-propre*, he questions whether its positive side can ever be realized by imperfect human beings. In his posthumous works, when he finally reaches the conclusion that it cannot, we find that Rousseau prefers to retreat to a domain of solitude where the demands of positive *amour-propre* would no longer have to be tested. We shall return to this withdrawal in the last section of the paper.

I bring you my Rousseau under six headings, each of which carries a sub-title.

I

Acceptance.

'So long as they judge soundly, it will be a fine thing to obtain their esteem.'

(Problems: the corruption of judgement and the 'Groucho Marx syndrome'.)

A key component of *amour-propre* is reflexion. One constructs one's own self by interacting with other selves, as one seeks and gives recognition and approval on the one hand, and rebuffal and

2. '*Amour-propre*, intrinsically, directs us to secure for ourselves recognition from others and a standing in society in which we are honoured as significant beings whose needs and desires have an absolute title to be taken into account on the same footing as anyone else's. To have such standing is inherently valuable, as recognition of our human and moral dignity. To enjoy it is one of our proper goods; in fact *amour-propre* is simply the form that *amour de soi* (which directs us to the enjoyment of our proper good) takes when the proper good sought is one that we need in our dealings with others. It is the desire to have what is our own (*proprius*), what belongs to us, as equal members in our association with others. Claiming such recognition as our due does not... involve denying the same due to others... There is... no competition or striving for domination involved here—this only enters in when other people are perceived as threatening to deny or deprive one of honour or standing. It is in response to such a perceived threat that *amour-propre* takes on an excessive, deformed character, and in its own defence seeks to deprive others.' (Dent, *A Rousseau Dictionary* Oxford: Blackwell, 1992, p. 35).

disapproval on the other. In Rousseau's pedagogy in the *Emile*, the tutor's rôle is to ensure that his pupil interacts with others who are worthy of his interaction, who will recognize in him what is worthy of recognition:

> He loves men because they are his fellows, but he will especially love those who resemble him most because he will feel that he is good; and since he judges this resemblance by agreement in moral taste, he will be quite gratified to be approved in everything connected with good character. He will not precisely say to himself, 'I rejoice because they approve of me,' but rather, 'I rejoice because they approve of what I have done that is good. I rejoice that the people who honor me do themselves honor. So long as they judge so soundly, it will be a fine thing to obtain their esteem' (**Em**IV.671/339).†

Although it is not named here, this is the clearest specification of the positive role of *amour-propre* in the *Emile*. In the play of interaction one seeks to find oneself in the eyes of others, but those others must yield a true reflexion of oneself. There is an implicit appeal to objective standards of judgment ('So long as they judge so soundly...'), but Rousseau does not examine them further here.

If so much depends on the soundness of individuals' judgments, there seems to be little hope for individuals who live in a society whose standards of judgment have been globally corrupted. Rousseau devotes much of his work to denouncing the forms of that corruption in a culture of luxury inscribed in an inegalitarian, despotic social order of *dépendance personnelle*. That is the central theme of the *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences* and of the *Letter to d'Alembert*. A thread running through *Julie* is the contrast between the decadent standards of the Paris salons and the uncontaminated ones of the idealized countryside. Rousseau also seeks to enshrine those standards of purity, rooted in the virtues of self-subsistent country people, in the constitutions he devised for Poland and Corsica. But he is pessimistic about the possibility of their restoration in the great and powerful nations. In them one may have to resort to some *remède dans le mal*, and seek no more than a modus vivendi by balancing vice against vice. Otherwise he puts his trust in small and simple states, still uncorrupted, or in idyllic pockets like Clarens, maintained in isolation by a magician like de Wolmar. But the tragic dénouement of *Julie* shows that such isolation is fragile when it is built on deception.

The other side of the coin is the 'Groucho Marx syndrome', named after Groucho's gag that he wouldn't be a member of a club that would have him in it. This time the problem is not that standards have been corrupted, but that the successful, talented individual loses faith in the whole game of competing for acceptance, even for acceptance by the worthiest judges. A prize that one can win turns out to be a prize which is, after all, not worth winning. The feast turns to dust and ashes in one's mouth. I think that Jean-Jacques himself suffered frequent bouts of the syndrome, and responded with his strategies of radical retreat.[3]

II

Distribution and Reciprocity.

'Every nice girl loves a sailor.'

(Problems: Popeye, Olive Oyl and the Shifting Quantifier, and *Huis Clos* or the impossibility of reciprocal love.)

Rousseau holds that individuals enter fully into the moral world only when they encounter sexuality. In the *Emile* the tutor postpones the advent of his pupil's sexual awareness as long as possible. But at a certain moment in adolescence he finally encounters someone of the opposite sex, an encounter which the tutor engineers to allow Emile to make his decisive step into the adult world:

> As soon as man has need of a companion (*une compagne*), he is no longer an isolated being (*un être isolé*). He is no longer alone. All his relations with his species, all the affections of his soul are born with this one. (**Em**IV.493/214)

Though Rousseau assigns a key role to love and sexuality in the socialization of the individual, he is profoundly ambivalent in his attitudes towards them. This mirrors his underlying ambivalence about the role of *amour-propre* in all our interactions. But in treating sexuality, Rousseau swings with more than usual violence between optimism and pessimism. On balance his verdict is finally

3. On her deathbed, Julie expounds the sense of dust and ashes with tragic intensity. We shall see in a moment that Julie suffers from something deeper than the Groucho Marx syndrome. As she reveals in the letter delivered to her lover after her death, she was never really 'cured' of her passion for him, so her whole married life was infected by this suppressed feeling.

pessimistic about the possibility of an egalitarian, non-exploitative outcome of the battle of the sexes:

> Love must be reciprocal. To be loved one has to make oneself lovable. To be preferred, one has to make oneself more lovable than another, more lovable than every other, at least in the eyes of the beloved object. This is the source of the first glances at one's fellows... of the first comparisons with them... of emulation, rivalries and jealousy... With love and friendship are born dissensions, enmity and hate. From the bosom of so many diverse passions I see opinion raising an unshakable throne, and stupid mortals, subjected to its empire, basing their own existence on the judgments of others. (**Em**IV.494/214–5)

Why should that be? Rousseau gives no simple answer. Elsewhere I have suggested that the clue may lie in these lines which Rousseau deleted from an earlier draft:[4]

> If you ask me how it is possible that the morality of human life should be generated by a purely physical revolution, I shall reply that I have no idea. I am basing myself throughout on experience and do not seek to give an explanation of these facts. I do not know how the seminal spirits (*esprits seminaux*) can be related to the affections of the soul, nor how our sexual development relates to our feeling of good and evil. I simply observe that these relations exist. My reasoning is not aimed to explain them, but to put them to good use.[5]

Rousseau professes complete ignorance of the mechanism which connects the advent of sexuality to that of morality. Sexuality spans nature and culture, our physical being and our moral being. Sexual needs receive physical satisfaction, but differ from the physical needs of hunger and thirst. When the latter are not satisfied, we die, whereas celibates survive, often prosper. Thus the three sources of needs which Rousseau distinguishes are survival, sensuality and opinion (**PolFr**10.529/53–4), and he assigns 'the union of the sexes' to the second. At the same time, our sexuality, as soon as it advances from the ideal-typical abstraction of chance encounter in 'the forest', engages us in the play of *amour-propre*, in which we project and find our identities by interacting with others. In most of our dealings, this play involves domination and

4. See O'Hagan, *Rousseau*, London: Routledge, 1998, ch.VIII.

5. Quoted by Burgelin, **OC**4.lxxx, translated by Bloom, *Emile or on Education*, pp. 488–9.

subordination. In our political and economic interactions, it may be possible, ultimately, to engage in a play of freedom, equality and reciprocity. Yet our sexual relations remain brutally resistant to that transformation. Why is that? Rousseau does not tell us, for he never theorized an answer, but he leaves us clues. Intense sexual relations are so unstable just because they span the two worlds which cannot peacefully coexist, the natural and the social:

> When man once encroaches on the care which nature takes of him, she then abandons her work and leaves everything to human art. Those same plants which flourish in the wasteland die in our gardens when we neglect them. An animal, once it is domesticated, loses its instincts along with its liberty, and does not ever regain them when once more released. It is the same with our species; we can no longer do without the institutions which produce our miseries. Natural man has disappeared, never to return, and the one who is furthest from his natural state is he whom art has most neglected, for his only education is a worldly one, the worst which one can receive. (**FM**57)[6]

The goal, then, is reciprocal love. Such love is inaugurated by sexual passion, but cannot be sustained along with such passion. In the very passage in which he describes the ideal, Rousseau also describes the reality: 'emulation, rivalries... jealousy... dissensions, enmity and hate.' The same combination is seen in the picture of dawning sexual passion in the 'Youth of the World', as 'young people of opposite sexes [who] live in neighbouring huts... grow accustomed to... make comparisons...':

> The more they see one another, the less they can do without seeing one another still more. A tender and sweet feeling steals into the soul, and at the least obstacle becomes an impetuous frenzy: jealousy awakens together with love; Discord triumphs and the gentlest of all passions receives sacrifices of human blood. (**2D**168/47)

For Julie, sexual passion is the enemy of order and reason: 'disordered affections corrupt [our] judgment as well as [our] will'

6. Rousseau applies that thought epigrammatically to the political world: '...men become unhappy and wicked in becoming sociable,... the laws of justice and equality mean nothing to those who live both in the freedom of the state of nature and subject to the needs of the social state...' (**GM**I.2.288/81–2). In that context he is hopeful about the outcome: 'far from thinking that there is neither virtue nor happiness for us and that heaven has abandoned us without resources to the depravation of the species, let us attempt to draw from the ill itself the remedy that should cure it (ibid.).' But in affairs of the heart we cannot hope to find '*le remède dans le mal*'.

(**JNH**III.18.358/295). As reported by St.-Preux, Julie 'claims that everything that depends on the senses and is not necessary to life alters its nature as soon as it becomes a habit, that it ceases to be a pleasure as soon as it becomes a need' (**JNH**V.2.541/443). In sexual passion, physical drives are mediated through the imagination, which transforms love into jealousy, sets up 'inexplicable contradictions' in the feelings of the lover, who becomes 'at once submissive and bold, impetuous and shy' (**JNH**I.10.53/43).

Is there a middle way to be found in *Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse*? Might the marriage of de Wolmar and Julie embody a calm, passionless, complementary relationship, which would allow for an enduring, well balanced reciprocity of affection and respect? Here is Julie in her most pietistic mood, lecturing St.-Preux:

> The thing that long deluded me and still perhaps deludes you is the idea that love is essential to a happy marriage. My friend, this is an error; honesty, virtue, certain conformities, less of status and age than of character and humour, suffice between husband and wife; that does not prevent a very tender attachment from emerging from this union which, without exactly being love, is nonetheless sweet and for that only the more lasting. Love is accompanied by a continual anxiety of jealousy or deprivation, ill suited to marriage, which is a state of delectation and peace... Lovers never see anyone but themselves, are endlessly occupied with each other alone, and the only thing they can do is love one another. That is not enough for Spouses who have so many other duties to attend to. There is no passion that gives us so strong an illusion as love: its violence is taken as a sign of its durability... But on the contrary its very ardour consumes it; it wears with youth, fades with beauty, burns out under the snows of age... Lovers must assume that sooner or later they will cease to worship each other; then the idol they served being destroyed, they see each other as they are... (**JNH**III.20.372/306)

So much for the ideal. The drama of the novel turns on the inability of Julie (and of the *âme sensible* which she represents) to live her life on such terms. At the very peak of her success, when she has become the focal point of the 'Idyll of Clarens', the utopian semi-feudal estate ruled over by the benevolent despot de Wolmar, she confesses: 'Favoured in all things by heaven, fortune and men, I see everything conspiring toward my happiness. A secret sorrow,

a single sorrow poisons it, and I am not happy' (**JNH**IV.15.513/420–1). On her deathbed she reveals that the source of that unhappiness was her surviving passion for St.-Preux, from which she wrongly thought she had been 'cured'. Only now does she discover that her feeling has only been 'stifled', not extinguished, for the cause of virtue.

The lesson of *Julie* is bleak. The passionless de Wolmar (despite his love for Julie) remains a kind of automaton, since only people subject to sexual passion are capable of full moral relations. Yet sexual passion is incompatible with an ordered life. Is this just the result of the particular circumstance of this extraordinary novel? Might there be another dénouement which would allow the *âme sensible* to attain some kind of equilibrium? Some have thought that the problem lies in the brutally inegalitarian world of the Ancien Régime, which imposes intolerable duties on people purely in virtue of their social status. If that were so, then the conflict could be resolved with the dawn of democracy. But while this is a powerful theme of the novel, it does not reach the core of Rousseau's pessimism, for he undoubtedly believes that sexual passion must conflict with moral order under any political and social régime, since that conflict is inscribed in the hearts of men and women once they emerge from the Forest into any social order.

I conclude this section with a summary of the two doomed outcomes of *amour-propre* when it is mediated through sexual passion, reflecting on the jingle 'Every nice girl loves a sailor'.[7]

This jingle produces a problem, that of the *distribution* of the recognition which each of us requires if our normal, healthy *amour-propre* is to be sustained. Those of you who enjoy the fun of elementary formal logic, the ideal situation is embodied in the formula:

(1) $\forall x\,(Nx \supset \exists y\,[Sy \,\&\, xLy])$

Formula **(1)** represents the innocent form of *amour-propre* and can be translated 'for each nice girl there is a different sailor whom she loves' (i.e. Olive Oyl loves Popeye, Lady Hamilton loves Nelson etc.). Contrast this with:

7. I wonder if it would be possible to find a more politically incorrect jingle. Perhaps it could be rewritten: 'Every sexually active, but not promiscuous, young woman is attracted to a seafarer'!

(2) $\exists y\ (Sy\ \&\ \forall x\ [Nx \supset xLy])$

Formula **(2)** represents a corrupted form of *amour-propre*. It can be translated 'there is one particular sailor (whether it be Popeye, Nelson or another) whom every nice girl loves'.

Whatever the mechanism of corruption, Rousseau suggests that the transition from **(1)** to **(2)** is all but inevitable, and that it leads to all the vices of 'emulation, rivalries and jealousy'. In terms of the *distribution* problem, reciprocal love is possible, but it is rare because most of the available positive drives have been wasted, driven by the imagination towards a single, necessarily unresponsive figure through channels etched by fashion. These channels could in principle be re-drawn.

The problem would be insoluble, even in principle, if Sartre's catastrophic vision of love were to replace Rousseau's sceptical one. For Sartre, one plays the zero-sum game of love by seeking one's identity in the eyes of the other, but one wins the game only when one negates the identity of the other, and thereby frustrates the original goal. In this game, there can be no equilibrium point, no reciprocal interaction. Sartre tells the story schematically in *L'être et le néant*,[8] and dramatically in *Huis clos*, in which the three protagonists are condemned to play out into eternity their frustrated search for reciprocal love: '*L'enfer c'est les autres*'.

III

Self-Knowledge.

> 'We see neither the soul of the other, because it hides itself, nor our own, because we have no mirror of the mind.'
> (**LMor#**3, p. 1092)

(Problem: the distorting mirror.)

In this phrase from the *Lettres morales*, Rousseau seems to abandon his correspondent, his beloved Sophie d'Houdetot, marooned on a 'reef of solipsism', without any means of access to the soul either of herself or of others. As he tells the story elsewhere, one can gain knowledge at least of oneself with the help of *amour-propre*. *Amour-propre* thus plays a constructive rôle in allowing us to *make* ourselves what we are, but it also plays a

8. J-P. Sartre, *L'être et le néant*, Paris: Gallimard, 1943, Part III, chapter 3.

cognitive rôle in allowing us to *discover* who we are. Rousseau gives a gnomic expression to this thought in the unpublished *Traité de sphère*:

> In order to understand ourselves, it is necessary to know many things which are not ourselves. A man knows himself well only when he knows other men well; and in order to know men, it is necessary to know the things on which men depend. Thus everything holds together... With the best of eyes, even the most clear-sighted man would see nothing, unless he had learnt to see since his childhood. (**OC**V.585)

Early in *Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse*, when she is still prey to her passion and unable to make her crucial decision, the heroine writes to her confidante and cousin Claire: '...you read what is in this heart that loves you; you know it better than I do...' (**JNH**II.201/164). Interestingly, in the posthumous works, particularly the *Reveries*, Rousseau distances himself most decisively from *amour-propre*, but at the same time he there places most emphasis on the non-transparency of the inner, on the difficulty of 'disentangling' (*démêler*) the real internal causes of his actions. The lesson of the *Emile* was that the most reliable way to gain self-awareness is through the responses of others, provided that those others have earned your trust. And it is just because he has lost faith in all his former friends that Rousseau abandons *amour-propre* as a key to self-understanding in the late works. The problem here then is the cognitive analogue to the moral problem of the Groucho Marx syndrome. In a world of distorting mirrors, one will gain only a distorted image of oneself. Whereas if one abandons all interaction, one loses the only source of self-knowledge, and abandons oneself to unbridled imagination.

IV

Amour-Propre as Instrument of Moral Education and Social Control: the 'Clarens Method'.

'*Amour-propre* is a useful but dangerous instrument.'

(Problem: the manipulative turn.)

In the *Emile* and in *Julie,* Rousseau describes *amour-propre* as a tool in the arsenal of psychological and social control, 'a useful but dangerous instrument'. Why dangerous? Because 'it often wounds

the hand making use of it and rarely does good without evil' (**Em**IV.536–7/244–5). Rousseau does not explain that epigram immediately, and we may have to await the sequel to the *Emile* before we learn just how dangerous it is. But let us turn first to *Julie*. In the novel, Julie's husband de Wolmar, the embodiment of the *philosophes*' rationalism, regards *amour-propre* dispassionately and neutrally, as an essential psychological feature of human beings in society. In a comment on himself, reported by Julie, he reflects that he finds his own *amour-propre* rewarded when exercising his chilling insight into the characters of others, rather than when playing deceptive rôles as others do:

> If I have any ruling passion it is that of observation. I like to read what is in men's hearts; as my own little deludes me, as I observe composedly and disinterestedly, and as long experience has given me some sagacity, I scarcely err in my judgments, and that is the whole compensation for *amour-propre* in my continual studies; for I do not like playing a role, but only seeing others perform. (**JNH**IV.12.491/403)

Just because *amour-propre* is essential to each person's (or at least to most persons') well-being in society, so too is it the key to social interaction and social control. Here is de Wolmar's summary presentation of his method:

> I learnt... that interest is not... the only motive of human acts and that among the flocks of prejudices that combat virtue, there are also some that favour it. I understood that the general character of man is *amour-propre* which as such is indifferent, good or bad through the accidents that modify it and that depend upon customs, laws, ranks, fortune, and our whole human system. (ibid.)

What Rousseau here puts into de Wolmar's mouth he expresses in his own voice in the *Emile*, most clearly in the passage from Book IV which is the cornerstone of Dent's reading. Though that passage is extraordinarily difficult (for native French-speakers too!), it does lead to the conclusion that *amour-propre* is in itself neutral or 'indifferent', and that whether it produces good or bad passions depends on the environment encountered by the individual:

> But to decide whether among these passions the dominant ones in his character will be humane and gentle or cruel and malignant, whether they will be passions of beneficence and commiseration or of envy and covetousness, we must know what position he will feel he has among men, and what kinds of obstacles he may believe he

> has to overcome to reach the position he wants to occupy. (**Em**IV.523–4/235)

De Wolmar is not alone in his judgment of *amour-propre*. Whether under his influence or through her own experience of child-rearing, Julie too makes use of the 'Clarens method' in her pedagogy:

> Here no one commands or obeys. But the child never obtains from those who approach him any more goodwill than he has for them. Therefore, sensing that he holds over everyone around him no authority but that of benevolence, he becomes docile and accommodating (docile et complaisant); by trying to win the hearts of others, his own is won in turn; for one loves by making oneself loved; this is the infallible effect of *amour-propre*, and from this reciprocal affection, born of equality, effortlessly result the good qualities we endlessly preach to our children, without ever obtaining any of them. (**JNH**V.3.571/468: St.-Preux quoting Julie in a letter to Lord Edward)

All the components of healthy *amour-propre* are here. The child's identity is established through ties of reciprocity and equality. Julie's insight is that loving is something one learns to do, and that the teacher must return love if the pupil is ever to learn the lesson, so that 'one loves by making oneself loved'. That same insight lies at the heart of the pedagogy of the *Emile*. Later in the same letter Julie points to the danger that *amour-propre* may be inflamed once relations of equality degenerate into the lethal game of domination and slavery:

> [My children] are in no way limited... and are incapable of misusing their freedom, their character is susceptible of neither corruption nor constraint; we leave in peace their body to build strength and their judgment to germinate; their soul is not defiled by slavery, the admiration of others does not inflame ('ferment') their *amour-propre*, they think of themselves not as powerful men nor as chained-up animals, but as happy and free children. (ibid.)

Does the 'Clarens method' embody brutal manipulation or humane realism? Perhaps a bit of both. De Wolmar himself is undoubtedly a sinister figure. He controls the Clarens household by orchestrating the mutual play of *amour-propre* amongst its subordinate members. He:

> ...invites them to help each other silently, unostentatiously, without making a show of it. Which is all the less difficult to obtain in that

> they know very well that the master, witness to this discretion, thinks the more of them for it; thus self-interest gains thereby and *amour-propre* is not hurt. (**JNH**IV.10.463/380–1)

Now, our democratic sensibilities may be outraged by de Wolmar's ruthlessness, as he dominates this grossly unequal little society, but it is the subordinates' loss of autonomy rather than their own interaction in the play of *amour-propre* that is shocking. The problem remains whether one can 'use' the *amour-propre* of others in order to liberate rather than enslave them. Such an outcome would be possible only in a relatively egalitarian order, in which a pedagogy like Julie's could be used to 'prepare from afar the realm of freedom' (**Em**I.282/63).[9] Then everything would depend on the sense of timing of the educator.

V

Man's Estate.

> 'Emile is not a savage to be relegated to the desert. He is a savage made to inhabit cities.'
>
> (Problem: the frailty of love.)

Dent has rightly emphasized the importance of the idea of 'man's estate' in Rousseau's picture of *amour-propre*, particularly in the *Emile*. He writes: 'The only rank which can promise secure and long-lasting happiness... is one from which the self-engendered ills of competition for invidious supremacy are eliminated; it is the rank... of being a man, that in which we occupy man's estate'. He points out, as I have above, the danger that standards of recognition are corrupted in present day societies, where 'opinion and prejudice' hold sway. We must note that it is 'competition for

9. Lester G. Crocker, '*Julie* ou la nouvelle duplicité' in *Annales de la Société Jean-Jacques Rousseau* #36 (1963–5), pp. 105–152. In this article Crocker applies his criticism of Rousseau's totalitarianism to the novel. It is a powerful and sustained argument that 'duplicity, unconscious or conscious, lies at the heart of the *Nouvelle Héloïse* and recurs throughout the whole of the novel'. According to Crocker, no character in the novel is innocent of this deceit. Through it, de Wolmar controls the semi-feudal members of the household and Julie controls her children. I am not sure how far Crocker's charge can be answered. It is clear that Julie's pedagogical methods, no less than the tutor's in the *Emile*, rely on the systematic trickery of the child. I have argued elsewhere that such trickery can be justified if it achieves its goal, the development of the autonomous adult. Rousseau's slogan, 'Prepare from afar the realm of freedom' appears sinister to those who think that that realm cannot be reached by Rousseau's method, since the method must destroy the very autonomy it is supposed to produce.

invidious supremacy' that is a sign of corruption, rather than competition for supremacy as such. That is the lesson of 'Every nice girl loves a sailor'. Popeye must be supremely attractive in Olive Oyl's eyes, and vice versa. Each must have competed for the love of the other, and won, against the competition.

Let us pause here to head off a possible misunderstanding of the idea of 'man's estate' (*l'état d'homme*). It might be thought that Rousseau is criticizing any socially determined differences of rank and rules of competition. Insofar as the *Emile* is designed to educate 'a savage made to inhabit cities' (**Em**III.484/205), it can be read as a critique of that sort. But we should not forget (and Dent never does) that in his political texts, particularly the works of applied political theory on Corsica and Poland, Rousseau advocates a system of rank and honour which depends on constant public scrutiny: '...every citizen shall feel the eyes of his fellow-countrymen upon him every moment of the day... no man shall move upward and win success except by public approbation... everyone shall depend so much on public esteem, that without it one will not be able to do, acquire or attain anything' (**Poland**1019/87).

With that brief clarification, we return to the *Emile*. Of all Rousseau's major texts, it is the one in which he works out most fully what it is to live an integrated, autonomous life within an unreconstructed, imperfect social and political order. For that reason, in the absence of a stable, reliable social milieu, the individual, in order to acquire and maintain a sense of personal identity and self-esteem, must rely on the recognition of a worthy, equal partner. But just because the ties of love, when institutionalized, too often become the shackles rather than the wings of the soul, the project may be doomed from the outset. In *Emile et Sophie, ou les solitaires*, Rousseau tells the tale of the disastrous marriage of Emile and Sophie. Many explanations have been given of this remarkable unfinished sequel to the *Emile*. According to some, we should understand that Emile's education is not truly finished until he has experienced catastrophic unhappiness. But when we put the little story together with the magnum opus that is *Julie*, that explanation seems insufficiently pessimistic. Rousseau's final verdict may be that true happiness is not to be found in the real world, but only in the 'world of

chimaeras' or in death: '...imagination no longer embellishes anything one possesses, illusion ends where enjoyment begins. The land of chimaeras is on this earth the only one worth living in, and such is the void of things human that, with the exception of the Being who exists in himself, the only beauty to be found is in things that are not' (**JNH**VI.8.693/569).

VI

Withdrawal.

'I never had much inclination to *amour-propre*.'

(Problem: 'What then, must we... return and live in the forests with the bears?')

The words of Julie which concluded the preceding section bring us to the last phase of our reflexions on *amour-propre*, and to the last period of Rousseau's writings. In his posthumously published works, particularly the *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, Rousseau meditates on a complete withdrawal from society. The *Reveries* comprise a string of autobiographical sketches, written when Rousseau had abandoned all hope that the social world could be transformed. Reacting to the *philosophes*' plot against him, part real, part imagined, he judges that he was 'never really made for civil society' (**Reveries**VI.1059/103), and that he 'never had much inclination to *amour-propre*' (**Reveries**VIII.1079/129). Someone lacking all *amour-propre* is by definition removed from society, since *amour-propre* is the key to all interaction between individuals, and that interaction constitutes society. Thus withdrawn, Rousseau becomes the reincarnation of 'the Savage [who] lives within himself', in contrast to 'sociable man [who] always outside himself knows how to live only in the opinion of others... [and] derives the feeling of his own existence from their judgment alone' (**2D**193/66).

David Gauthier has dedicated some exquisite pages to Rousseau's withdrawal into solitude. Up to this point in the present paper, I have focused on the different strategies adopted by Rousseau to channel *amour-propre*, and to the dangers present in each of those strategies. In this concluding section, I turn to Rousseau's last works, in which he comes to see those dangers as insurmountable, and decides instead to retreat to a higher ground,

where, isolated from society, he is present only to himself on the one hand and to the beneficent natural world on the other. The latter is 'a state of blissful self-abandonment [where] he loses himself in the immensity of this beautiful system, with which he feels himself identified' (**Reveries**VII.1062–3/108).

Much of what Rousseau wrote on his withdrawal from society suggests that it is only a *pis aller* in the face of recalcitrant circumstances preventing the realization of healthy, egalitarian *amour-propre*. But from another perspective Rousseau sees it as something more positive. According to that latter perspective, a world free of *amour-propre* is actually superior to any other world. In solitude, Rousseau suggests, we achieve some kind of redemption from the sins and sorrows of the social world, living in communion with nature and with God.[10]

Rousseau thinks that by withdrawing to solitude he will be immune to the dangers inherent in the more energetic strategies of positive *amour-propre*. But his solitude is always vulnerable. On the one hand, even the most protected place of retreat, the Ile St. Pierre, for instance, is never wholly removed from outside intrusion. His expulsion from his refuge on the island was brutal and definitive. In reality, the natural Savage is gone, never to be revived: 'What then? Must we destroy Societies, abolish thine and mine, and return to live in the forests with the bears? An inference in the manner of my adversaries, which I should prefer to anticipate rather than leave them the shame of drawing' (**2D**, note IX.167/79). But the inner equilibrium of the natural savage is also gone. Jean-Jacques, when he tries to live in solitude on the margins of society, is disturbed not only by ceaseless intrusions from the external world, but also from within, by his own frustrated, slighted *amour-propre*. The hundreds of pages of passionate *ressentiment* that make up the *Confessions* and *Rousseau, juge de Jean-Jacques* show how unsuccessful their author was in his struggle to 'live within himself'.

10. I have stolen the reference to redemption from David Gauthier. See: Gauthier, 'The politics of redemption' in *Moral Dealing*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990; see also: '*Le Promeneur Solitaire* and the emergence of the post-social self' in E.F. Paul, F.D. Miller, J. Paul (edd.), *Ethics, Politics, and Human Nature*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1991; 'The making of Jean-Jacques' in Timothy O'Hagan (ed.), *Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the Sources of the Self*, Aldershot: Avebury, 1997.

†REFERENCES TO ROUSSEAU'S WORKS

Citations in the text to Rousseau's works are to abbreviated titles (abbreviations listed below), followed in most cases by two sets of page references, separated by '/', the first to the French, the second to the English translation, where available. The first page reference is to the relevant volume of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Oeuvres complètes*, 5 volumes, Paris: Gallimard (Bibliothèque la Pléiade), general editors B. Gagnebin, M. Raymond, 1959–1995 (**OC** + volume number). The second reference is standardly to the relevant volume of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Collected Writings*, 6 volumes, Hanover, NH: University of New England Press, series editors R.D. Masters, C. Kelly, 1990–7 (**CW** + volume number). Where no translation is yet available in that series, another translation is listed below, where there is one.

A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality among Men (Second Discourse), 1755. **2D**

OC2/**CW**3 (cited by page numbers).

Lettres morales (written 1757–8, published posthumously). **LMor**

OC4 (cited by letter and page number).

Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse, 1761. **JNH**

OC2/**CW**6 (cited by Part, Letter and page number, e.g. III.5.315 = Part III, Letter 5, **OC**2, p. 315, **CW**6, p. 258).

Emile, or on Education, 1762. **Em**

OC4/trans. Allan Bloom, New York: Basic Books, 1979 (cited by Book and page number, e.g. **Em**V.692/357 = *Emile* Book V, **OC**4, p. 692, Bloom translation, p. 357)

Manuscrit Favre (Favre Manuscript) (published posthumously). **FM**

OC4 (cited by page number)

Political Fragments (published posthumously). **PolFr**

OC3/**CW**4 (cited by Fragment number and page number)

Geneva Manuscript (first version of the *Social Contract*) (published posthumously). **GM**

OC3/**CW**4 (cited by page number)

Considerations on the Government of Poland (written 1771–2, published posthumously). **Poland**

OC3/trans. W. Kendall, Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1972 (cited by chapter number and page number)

Reveries of the Solitary Walker (written 1776–8, published posthumously). **Reveries**

OC1/trans. P. France, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979 (cited by Walk number and page number, e.g. **Reveries**VI.1059/103 = *Reveries*, Sixth Walk, **OC**1, p. 1059, France translation, p. 103)