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Senior Projects Spring 2017

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Spring 2017

## Rascals to Wise Men: Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Emancipatory Education

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### Recommended Citation

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Rascals to Wise Men: Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Emancipatory Education

Senior Project Submitted to  
The Division of Social Studies  
of Bard College

by  
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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York  
May 2017



## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Roger Berkowitz for leading me through Jean-Jacques Rousseau's work. You are a Rousseauian at heart, for you hardened my temperament early, preparing me for the ills to follow. You constantly challenged my reasoning while providing unconditional support. I thank Norton Batkin for always being humble with the knowledge you hold over me, and Ruth Zisman for making me fall in love with philosophy.

I dedicate this project to my mother, father and sister; may your love, happiness, and freedom be everlasting.



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You will never get to the point of producing wise men if you do not in the first place produce rascals.

- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile*

Freedom is found in no form of government; it is in the heart of the free man. He takes it with him everywhere.

- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile*





## Introduction: Enlightenment, Emancipation, and Education

The concept of emancipation originates in seventeenth century Roman law where it signifies to “set free from control” (Bingham and Biesta 27). The object of emancipation was assumed to be a son or wife, such that they were liberated from paternal authority and thus free to make his or her distinct way in the world (27). In *Jacques Rancière: Education, Truth, Emancipation* by Charles Bingham and Gert Biesta, the authors trace the idea of emancipation from seventeenth century Roman thought to Immanuel Kant’s eighteenth century enlightenment theory. Bingham and Biesta claim that Kant prompted a “decisive turn in the trajectory of the idea of emancipation” such that he revealed enlightenment as a process of emancipation (27).

Referencing Kant’s essay “What is Enlightenment?”, Bingham and Biesta identify the link between enlightenment and emancipation: “(Kant) defined enlightenment as ‘man’s release from his self-incurred tutelage’ and saw tutelage or immaturity as ‘man’s inability to make use of his understanding without the direction of another ... Enlightenment thus entailed a process of becoming independent or autonomous, and for Kant this autonomy was based on the use of one’s reason” (28). From Kant’s theory connecting enlightenment and emancipation, there emerge two distinct yet relative frameworks through which to conceptualize emancipation: “One is educational, the other philosophical” (28).

Bingham and Biesta use the emancipatory theory of Jacques Rancière to exemplify the unification of these two frameworks. Rancière’s idea of emancipatory education unfolds in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, a text which recounts the intellectual

adventure of Joseph Jacotot, a French literature professor. Kristin Ross in her edited version, introduces Jacotot's presumption that "all people are equally intelligent" as his core lesson in intellectual emancipation (Ross xix). It follows that "Jacotot came to realize that knowledge is not necessary to teaching, nor explication necessary to learning" (xix). Not only is explication unnecessary but it produces the opposite of what is intended: "Rather than eliminating incapacity, explication, in fact, creates it" (xix-xx). Kristin refers to this phenomenon as the myth of progress, thus Rancière invalidates the belief that if man is to follow a distinct progression of intelligence he will emerge as "learned" (xx). In *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* Rancière essentially narrates the intellectual lessons of Joseph Jacotot, elucidating and personalizing the material throughout, and concludes by determining five unique lessons in intellectual emancipation.

In shifting to Rancière's philosophical theory of emancipation we see an innate connection to politics. Bingham and Biesta reference Rancière's book *On the Shores of Politics* in which he discusses emancipation as a process of subjectification: "Subjectification 'inscribes a subject name as being different from any identified part of the community'" (Bingham and Biesta 33). Rancière's philosophical idea of emancipation therefore relates to man's ability to enter into the social order as a unique and independent being. If men desire freedom they must be able to claim mastery over themselves. They cannot be mere subjects to the regime, but must seek change and follow their individual inclination. In this sense subjectification both adds something to the social order and divides it: "It 'decomposes and recomposes the relationships between the ways of *doing*, of *being* and of *saying* that define the perceptible organization of the

community” (33). It divides, however such that “it intervenes in and reconfigures the existing order of things, the existing division or distribution of the sensible” (33).

Rancière emphasizes the importance of taking part politically in both word and deed, for it is through such activity that there occurs a gradual shift from inequality to equality: ““(Political activity) makes visible what had no business being seen, and makes heard a discourse where once there was only place for noise”” (34). While Rancière’s idea of equality is central to his discourse on emancipation, politics, and democracy, “he does not conceive of equality as something that has to be achieved through politics” (37). Rancière does not aim to produce a political state in which all men are equal, for he believes this is impractical. Rather, Rancière believes that men must determine their own freedom and the extent of their equality: “Rancière conceives of emancipation as something that people do for themselves. For this, they do not have to wait until someone explains their objective condition to them. Emancipation ‘simply’ means to act on the basis of the presupposition – or ‘axiom’ – of equality” (38).

Education therefore emerges as the passage to political freedom. Rancière’s educational theory of emancipation exists at the core of his political philosophy. To prove this link let us return to Rancière’s discussion against explication: “the child who is *explained to* will devote his intelligence to the work of grieving: to understanding, that is to say, to understanding that he doesn’t understand unless he is explained to” (Rancière 8). To depend on another man’s explanation, one transpires restrained by necessity and without intelligence (9). Rancière’s emancipatory method teaches man to follow his individual inclination and curiosity as opposed to blindly obeying the instruction of another. Independence allows for future autonomy and likewise political freedom.

Freedom which prompts man to participate in both political discourse and deed; a inclination which would have been subdued had he received a different sort of education.

Ranci re's emancipatory approach therefore encapsulates both an educational and philosophical framework:

In one sense, this places Ranci re's critique firmly within a tradition that does believe that education has something to do and *should* have something to do with emancipation, a tradition that, philosophically, runs from Kant to Foucault and beyond, and that, educationally, runs from Rousseau to such authors as Paulo Freire, Klaus Mollenhauer and Henry Giroux. But whereas Ranci re shares an interest in emancipation with authors like these, the logic of emancipation he proposes is a radically different one. (153)

Ranci re offers a unique approach to intellectual emancipation which provides a helpful foundation on which to conceive an idea of emancipatory education. I will therefore continue to explore the combination of the educational and philosophical approach to emancipation, however I shift my focus to Jean-Jacques Rousseau; to whom many emancipatory projects source from. My project explores a Rousseauian perspective of emancipatory education. It unfolds as a two-part exploration in which I first address his political philosophy, and second, his educational philosophy; ideas which I integrate in the final chapter.

In chapter one I outline Rousseau's political project on freedom which manifests in *The Social Contract*. I first look at the complication of the particular will, a will that reflects individual freedom fostered through independence. In part two I explore Rousseau's idea of the general will, a will that reflects the laws of the common good to

which men collectively strive to oblige themselves. If man comes to will the general will as his own, his autonomy and civil freedom is won.

Within Rousseau's political philosophy, the general will however emerges problematic because it does not incorporate a way for all men to live freely under it. The particular will, which Rousseau establishes as a pre-condition to the general will, for this reason likewise seems incompatible to his idea of the general will. Since all men do not naturally will the general will, Rousseau presents two alternatives to secure the creation of the civil state: One, is to force man to be free, the other, to condition freedom through religion (Rousseau, *The Social Contract* 167). I argue that the use of force is paradoxical to the very idea of freedom, thus deeming it invalid. Rousseau's idea of civil religion is likewise illegitimate because it conditions man against his will, a refusal to which results in state expulsion. These two approaches which Rousseau presents in his political philosophy, therefore fall short of the objective of civil freedom.

I argue that there is a third option which Rousseau leaves out *The Social Contract*, and is often overlooked as a result. This alternative is Rousseau's method of education which he presents in *Emile*, an original text on emancipatory education. I read *Emile* as a silent yet important part of Rousseau's political thinking. Allan Bloom, in his edited version of *Emile*, suggest that the evolution from inclination and duty to inclination and ideal, mirrors Rousseau's discussion in *The Social Contract* and the shift from the particular will to the general will: "The problem of morality is no longer the conflict between inclination and duty but between inclination and ideal, which is a kind of equivalent to the conflict between particular and general will" (Bloom 27). Inclination and duty relate to freedom found in childhood independence, while inclination and ideal

to civil freedom obtained through reason and autonomy. Bloom likewise asserts: “*Emile* is the outline of a possible bridge between the particular will and the general will” (27). I render “bridge” as an emancipatory mechanism that aims to liberate man from the particular will into the general will. While Bloom draws these parallels, he does not dwell on them. My project is therefore inspired by these claims, and from this point forward, is dedicated as an attempt to develop his argument, to prove the possibility of this bridge.

In chapters two and three I offer a close examination of *Emile*, and show that Rousseau’s method of education emerges an emancipatory method. In chapter two I look closely at the first phase of Emile’s life; Emile is the fictitious character Rousseau creates to demonstrate on his method of education. This first stage is spent isolated in nature and lasts roughly fifteen years. During this time Emile’s childhood freedom is fostered in independence, which is procured through his strength, correct allotment of necessity, good sense, and proper judgement. This chapter focuses on the method of education Rousseau devises for Emile prior to his emergence into the social order. I argue that this stage of education correlates with Rousseau’s idea of the particular will, and therefore represents lessons which are essential to Emile’s future autonomy and civil freedom under the general will.

In chapter three I shift my focus to Emile’s entrance into the social order. At this time, he is still developing the particular will, however his *amour de soi* (self-love) expands to sentiments of compassion and humanity towards others. This second phase of education is aimed at the final objective of reason, for reason enables autonomy which liberates man from his individual freedom, the particular will, to civil freedom under the general will.

My project aims to illustrate the truth of two arguments. First, that Rousseau's system of education manifests as an emancipatory method, such that it allows for the growth of individual freedom, rooted in independence, into civil freedom, rooted in reason and autonomy. The progression from man's individual freedom to civil freedom directly parallels Rousseau's idea of the particular will and the general will in *The Social Contract*. Rousseau's the general will proves problematic because he offers only the alternatives of force or conditioning to create the civil state. Although Rousseau does not discuss his theory of education within his political philosophy, there is a powerful and inherent connection between the two. I therefore argue that Rousseau's political philosophy is based in his idea of emancipatory education, a method of education which allows man to be free within the civil state, without being subject to either a king, a social order or having been conditioned against his will.



## Chapter One: Political Philosophy and the Problem of Freedom

Rousseau's political philosophy exhibits a social contract theory aimed at the objective of civil freedom and equality. I identify three subjects within *The Social Contract* that exist at the core of his political thought and provide crucial to our understanding of man's progression towards civil freedom. The first of these, which I explore in part one of this chapter, is Rousseau's idea of the particular will; followed by the general will in part two. Rousseau's idea of the particular will refers to a child's individual freedom rooted in independence which eventually leads him to will the general will as his own. The transition of freedom rooted in independence to freedom rooted in autonomy is a crucial development within Rousseau's political theory, for man is only truly free living autonomous under the general will. Rousseau's discussion on the particular will therefore importantly precedes his discussion on the general will, and while he never uses the exact term "particular will", the individualistic essence of his first discussions in *The Social Contract* make clear the subject matter.

In part two I discuss Rousseau's idea of the general will, a will composed of the laws of the common good. These laws do not reflect majority rule, but rather forms an "association that defends and protects with all common forces the person and goods of each associate" (Rousseau, *The Social Contract* 164). The functioning of the general will therefore relies on each man's obedience to these laws. While the chronology of *The Social Contract* suggests an assured transition from the particular will into the general will, I argue that the idea of the particular will as presented it in *The Social Contract* seems incompatible with the general will. There appears to be a missing link which

guarantees freedom under the general will for every man; given that Rousseau suggests the likelihood that only select men come to will the general will, and therefore the others must be “forced to be free” (167).

The remaining subject which I discuss in part three of chapter one, is Rousseau’s idea of civil religion. Rousseau recognizes the unique tie between religion and state law, and identifies three sorts of religion. He discerns the good and bad features associated with each of these religions and concludes that none of the three prove suitable nor desired. In chapter one I therefore argue that within Rousseau’s political philosophy he does not provide a suitable means through which man can achieve civil freedom. The general will, as considered in *The Social Contract*, specifically fails to secure civil freedom such that it results in either forced freedom or conditioned freedom. Although I assert that the particular will and the general will seem incompatible within Rousseau’s social contract theory, to understand them on an individual basis is crucial for the evolution of this project.

#### Part One: The Particular Will

The first line of Rousseau’s *The Social Contract* reads, “Man is born free and is everywhere in chains. He who believes himself master of others does not escape being more of a slave than they” (156). Rousseau believes man is “everywhere in chains” because he is ruled by a government which does not reflect his individual will. In accepting political mastership over his individual will his freedom is restricted, for Rousseau believes that the will innately connects to freedom. This correlation gives

reason for his discourse on the particular will, that which precedes the general will, for man must come to know himself, his natural needs and wants, if he is to willingly submit to a common social order and attain civil freedom.

Rousseau first discusses the individual will in terms of the natural bond between a child and his father. He speaks of the familial bond as the only alliance from which every man emerges as equal and free as his counterpart. Therefore a child does not give up his freedom but only his utility; a service which naturally exists but only temporarily: “Once the children are freed from the obedience they owed the father and the father is freed from the care he owed his children, all return equally to independence” (157). If they are to remain in this bond, however it will no longer be a natural relationship but one “maintained only by means of agreement” (157).

As this natural bond dissolves there follows a stage most crucial to a child’s life, during which independence is fostered and freedom maintained. Childhood independence is important because it conditions future autonomy: “This common liberty is one consequence of the nature of man. Its first law is to see to his preservation; its first concerns are those he owes himself; and, as soon as he reaches the age of reason, since he alone is the judge of the proper means of taking care of himself, he thereby becomes his own master” (157). To correctly development a child’s particular will he must learn self-care and proper judgment, traits which foster his independence and bring him to the age of reason.

Strength is another important component of childhood independence, a quality which Rousseau discusses in terms of the dangers that accompany having either too much or too little. Rousseau associates excessive strength with the pursuit of force, claiming

that he knows not what morality nor sense of duty can result from it (159). He believes that man's subjection to force "is an act of necessity, not of will", and is therefore a cautionary reaction rather than a duty (159). Rousseau's distinction between acting out of necessity versus duty is most central to his discussion on the development of childhood independence and freedom. Necessity infers dependency, thus childhood necessity must be carefully directed such that he becomes dependent on things rather than wills. For if man is to subject himself under the will of another, he gives up his liberty and hinders the development of his strength, independence and freedom.

Rousseau expands his discussion on necessity and force by relating them to his ideas of authority and alienation: "Since no man has natural authority over his fellowman, and since force does not give rise to any right, agreements alone therefore remain as the basis of all legitimate authority among men" (159). The agreement which manifests between a child and father sources from a natural sense of duty as opposed to necessity or force. A father's position of influence over his child does not threaten the child's freedom and is therefore a legitimate form of authority. Since no man has natural control over another, alienation can only be induced by he who wills it for himself.

Rousseau believes alienation is an "illegitimate and null act", and parallels it with the likes of slavery: "To alienate is to give or to sell. A man who makes himself the slave of someone else, does not give himself; he sells himself, at least his subsistence" (160). Rousseau believes that self-alienation only results from either physical or mental weakness; such that man is forced into slavery or lacks the wits to know better (160). Assuming, however that we are only speaking of lawful authority, it remains true that man alone has the right to renounce his liberty: "Even if each person can alienate himself,

he cannot alienate his children. They are born men and free. Their liberty belongs to them; they alone have the right to dispose of it” (160). Liberty coexists alongside freedom and independence at the core of the particular will, and to dispose of it is “renouncing one’s dignity as a man, the rights of humanity, and even its duties” (160).

The development of the particular will not only secures a man’s ability to reason and self-govern, but likewise allows him to learn the laws of humanity which are grounded in equality. Although Rousseau’s political discourse on the particular will is brief, it importantly highlights the preservation of childhood independence, freedom, and liberty, as essential to the progression of morality, autonomy, and reason. Childhood freedom is rooted in independence and civil freedom in autonomy, therefore to effectively self-govern and attain ultimate freedom, one must first learn self-reliance.

## Part Two: The General Will

Rousseau preconditions his introduction to the general will by referencing Hugo Grotius, a Dutch jurist, on natural law: “A people, says Grotius, can give itself to a king. According to Grotius, therefore, a people is a people before it gives itself to a king” (163). Rousseau thus asserts that we must begin by examining “the act whereby a people is a people”, for “it is the true foundation of society” (163). Rousseau reasons that to achieve such commonality among men would be impossible without the existence of an intelligence which orders it (Rousseau, *Emile* 276). In Tracy Strong’s *The Politics of the Ordinary*, he helps elucidate the idea of commonality; beginning with an examination of

Rousseau's idea of society: "Society *is* constructed for Rousseau; but it is constructed in a way such that it is only available to human beings in a manner that dehumanizes human beings" (Strong 33). Society not only prevents men from knowing the true nature of being, but similarly coerces them to believe that what they are living and seeing every day is natural (31).

Rousseau believes that society has been conditioned to reflect inequality and deceit, and while he speaks of the true nature of man he determines man's return to the egalitarian state of nature impossible. To assure men the equal right to freedom and political virtue, Rousseau therefore suggests the need to form an entirely new state, the civil state. The civil state therefore aims to allow for a return to nature on rational grounds, and is a state founded on the basis of commonality. The common is a space in which "I am in just the same way as you are," however it is "determined by the actuality of being different" (34). The idea of commonality speaks to a shared space in which everyone exists distinctly, yet equal; in essence this *is* the general will.

Rousseau reasons man's need for a social contract circumstantial to having "reached the point where obstacles that are harmful to (his) maintenance in the state of nature gain the upper hand" (Rousseau 163). This experience is mutual among men, and "since men cannot engender new forces, but merely unite and direct existing ones, they have no other means of maintaining themselves but to form by aggregation a sum of forces" (163). Rousseau suggests that this aggregation, "whereby a people is a people", yields the social contract, a system only effective given each man's willingness to participate within it. Therefore, an alliance must be constructed that preserves man's liberty while also allows him to entrust it to others: "Find a form of association that

defends and protects with all common forces the person and goods of each associate, and, by means of which, each one, uniting with all, nevertheless obeys only himself and remains as free as before” (164). This association transpires as the general will, for the condition presented in the preceding quotation reflects the core idea of the social contract.

The general will is not the equal will of all nor does it reflect a majority rule, it exclusively provides an alliance through which men can unify while maintaining their individual freedom and independence. The general will is composed of the laws of the common good; laws which reflect the common interests willed by each member of the political community. These laws are integral to the general will and preserve the affect that man’s compliance to the law merely reflects self-compliance; thus “in giving himself to all, each person gives himself to no one” (164). Therefore, in eliminating whatever is not essential, Rousseau presents the terms of the social contract as follows: “*Each of us places his person and all his power in common under the supreme direction of the general will; and as one, we receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole*” (164). Under the general will each man equally surrenders his particular will and childhood freedom, only to gain “the equivalent of everything he loses, along with a greater amount of force to preserve what he has” (164). The movement from the particular will to the general will reflects a transformation from freedom as rooted in childhood independence to freedom embedded in reason and autonomy.

We have established each man’s submission to the general will as the act “whereby a people is a people”; we must now consider the conditions of this assembly. The private persons which compose the state are called *citizens* “insofar as they are participants of the sovereign authority”, and *subjects* “insofar as they are subjected to the

laws of the state” (165). Under these terms each citizen has a dual commitment “as a member of the sovereign toward private individuals, and as a member of the state towards the sovereign” (165). Given that each man obeys his individual will prior to submitting to the general will, it is possible that man only takes advantage of his rights as a citizen, and refuses to acknowledge his mutual duty as a subject (167). While man is willing to partake in sovereign authority, he therefore does not want to be constrained by the laws of the state, thus refusing submission to the general will.

As conveyed, the social contract is only effective given each man’s participation within it, thus Rousseau returns to the topic of force: “Thus, in order for the social contract to avoid being an empty formula, it tacitly entails the commitment – which alone can give force to the others – that whoever refuses to obey the general will, will be forced to do so by the entire body. This means merely that he will be forced to be free” (167). The application of force is one of two ways conceived in Rousseau’s political philosophy aimed to secure the efficiency of the general will and thus common freedom. The practice of forced freedom, however is contradictory to the very idea of freedom, for to force man against his individual will procures him neither genuine happiness nor freedom. This method surfaces as a result of the near impossible objective of creating a state under which every man is equally free and autonomous.

### Part Three: Civil Religion

The second way to assure the success of the general will is through a sort of religious conditioning, which Rousseau’s calls civil religion. To introduce the idea of



civil religion Rousseau provides a historical account of the relation between politics and religion. Rousseau asserts that in pagan cultures, each state did not distinguish its gods from its laws, therefore “political war was theology as well” (243). Based on the unique link between each religion and the laws of the state that authorized it, “there was no way of converting a people except by enslaving it” (244). The emergence of paganism, “a single, identical religion throughout the known world”, resulted in a separation between the political and theological system” (244). The combination of political and religious mandate was intrinsic to every state, therefore the separation of these systems resulted in state division and government partition. In his chapter “On Civil Religion”, Rousseau therefore seeks to locate a religion through which state unity can be restored.

Rousseau asserts that religion can be divided into two kinds, “namely, the religion of the man and that of the citizen” (246). Rousseau likewise hints at a third sort of religion which is most unusual, the religion of Roman Christianity; on which he asserts: The third is so evidently bad that it is a waste of time to amuse oneself by proving it. Whatever breaks up social unity is worthless. All institutions that place man in contradiction with himself are of no value” (247). Therefore, Rousseau shifts his focus to the religion of the citizen and the religion of man. He briefly goes through the good and bad qualities of each: “it unites the divine cult with love of the laws”, “men, in being the children of the same God, all acknowledge one another as brothers”, “being based on errors and lies, it deceives men”, etc. (247). Rousseau continues to go back and forth in this manner until he concludes: “Considered, from a political standpoint, these three types of religion all have their faults. (247). Rousseau therefore transitions to a discussion on his idea of civil religion, a theory which embodies the unification of politics and

theology: “Now it is of great consequence to the state that each citizen have a religion that causes him to love his duties” (249). Each man’s individual dogmas must therefore align with the duties of a citizen.

A man’s independent ideology does not concern the sovereign “except to the extent that these dogmas relate to morality and to the duties that the one who professes them is required to fulfill towards others” (249). A man’s religious dogmas must reflect what Rousseau calls “sentiments of sociability”, thus while they are inherently individualistic they must comply to the social responsibility which each owes the order. In the case that man’s dogmas do not reflect his duties as a citizen it is the right of the sovereign to intervene: “While not having the ability to obligate anyone to believe them, the sovereign can banish from the state anyone who does not. It can banish him for not being impious but for be unsociable, for being incapable of sincerely loving the laws and justice, and of sacrificing his life, if necessary, for his duty” (250). If a man’s principles do not align with the laws of the state, and he refuses to go against his will to condition their unity, then his state expulsion is assured.

Here emerges the second alternative through which men come to exist equally free under the general will, and again the method proves dissatisfying. Rousseau’s idea of civil religion does not utilize force; however, it deploys the opposite through exclusion. Neither does Rousseau’s employment of force nor religious conditioning provide a righteous means through which all men can come to will the general will as their own. While Rousseau emphasizes the importance of the particular will within his political philosophy, he likewise falls short of providing a clear account of how the particular will preconditions man’s submission to the general will.

## Chapter Two: Freedom, Independence and the Particular Will

For the remainder of my project I will focus on *Emile*, Rousseau's unique treatise on childhood education in which he devises a distinct method of education. This method aims to mature Emile from his childhood innocence into the age of reason, a progression embedded in the transition of freedom as independence to freedom as autonomous. Although Rousseau does not address education within *The Social Contract*, I argue that his political philosophy is based in his idea of emancipatory education. The progression of Emile's education parallels the transition which manifests in *The Social Contract* from the particular will to the general will.

The brevity of Rousseau's discussion on the particular will in his political philosophy produces an uncertainty of the conditions and importance of the particular will. While he discusses it in terms of a child's sense of duty, freedom, and independence, he does not clearly delineate how these conditions are fostered in a child. Rousseau crucially neglects to identify the incorrect development of the particular will as the error which results in man's forced freedom or religious conditioning. For in Rousseau's educational philosophy he clearly indicates that if Emile's education were to be misguided such would result in his departure from the path of freedom.

In my examination of *Emile*, I explore Rousseau's idea of emancipatory education and as I progress through his method I aim to show the innate connection to his political thought. *Emile* is essentially divided into two sections, each reflecting a new stage of life. The first stage encompasses birth through the age of fifteen, a phase during which Emile

is isolated in nature. The second stage represents his emergence into the social order in which he continues his education into his early twenties, after which he emerges a well-reasoned, autonomous man. These two stages do not directly correlate with Rousseau's idea of the particular and general will; for man does not come to will the general will until the very end of his education. The majority of *Emile* therefore outlines the progression of man's particular will, first as it develops in isolation and then within the social order.

While the particular will is eventually to be overcome, each person must have the particular will subordinate to the general will so they can come to freely will the laws of the state. To create a free man is a process; one can only determine another man's freedom through the use of force or stipulation which is unnatural, thus freedom must be learned over time. To educate Emile into a free-spirited, self-thinking, curious little rascal, is a crucial precondition to his eventually attainment of civil freedom under the general will. In chapter two I focus on the method of education Rousseau devises for a child prior to his socialization. This chapter unfolds in four parts, each correlating with a trait that I identify as crucial to Emile's childhood development; the traits are as follows: strength, correct allotment of necessity, good sense, and proper judgement. I argue that the correct development of these four traits allow for the maintenance of Emile's childhood freedom and independence, while also crucially prepare him for his future ability to reason and autonomy. While Rousseau does not explicitly discuss *amour de soi* (self-love) in the first books of *Emile*, its importance is engrained within the lessons of childhood. The idea of self-love should be retained, for it connects to Rousseau's pivotal idea of *amour-propre* which appears later in his method.

## Part One: Strength

Rousseau emphasizes the importance of childhood naivety and curiosity such that it results in youthful happiness. Rousseau poses the rhetorical question, “Who among you has not sometimes regretted that age when a laugh is always on the lips and the soul is always at peace?”; thus suggesting that while possible, one should cherish such simplistic happiness (Rousseau, *Emile* 79). Emile spends the first fifteen years of his life isolated in nature; for Rousseau suggests that happiness is fostered in nature where children are guided by their curiosity, and guarded against the otherwise influence and authority of others. Encouraging a child’s independence enables his education to manifest from within: “We begin to instruct ourselves when we begin to live. Our education begins with us” (42). A child’s ability to self-instruct is most crucial to Rousseau’s method of education, for self-instruction guided by instinct and curiosity allows for a child’s future autonomy.

Rousseau’s emphasizes the important effect that a child’s experiences and interactions within his surroundings have on his education. He compares the education of nature to the education of society, deeming that of society a “barbarous education which sacrifices the present to an uncertain future” (79). In prioritizing the future over the present the lessons and experiences most crucial to a boy’s natural development are lost. There are specific lessons intended for both children and men; to teach a child those meant for men reflects misguidance and results in a child’s confusion. Not only is the

education of society geared towards future conditions and achievements, but it likewise results in a child's dependency on wills rather than his learned self-sufficiency.

Rousseau asserts that a child's dependency and weakness can be triggered the moment he is born and is contingent on the manner in which his first tears are dealt with: "Their first voices, you say, are tears. I can well believe it. You thwart them from their birth. The first gifts they receive from you are chains" (43). Rousseau's reference to "chains" corresponds with the first line of *The Social Contract*, implying that from birth a child is directed against his particular will. Rousseau criticizes the role of the nurse as well as the doctor, for if not for our dependency on their services we would have learned how to maintain our health and well-being without the aid of others.

In pampering a child one interferes with the development of the particular will, thus obstructing the growth of his strength and independence. Rousseau warns against the continuation of such treatment for he senses impending authoritarian tendencies: "The first tears of children are prayers. If one is not careful, they soon become orders. Children begin by getting themselves assisted; they end by getting themselves served" (66). If to respond incorrectly to a crying infant their tears can quickly transform from a cry for help to a command for service; beginning a chain of dependency and prompting a child's first ideas of authority. Rousseau's method of education aims to prevent the development of such dependencies, prejudices, and habits, to preserve the particular will.

The difficult objective to prevent these customs from manifesting in *Emile*, prompts Rousseau to declare this first phase of life the most challenging time of childhood education: "The most dangerous period of human life is that from birth to the age of twelve. This is the time when errors and vices germinate without one's yet having

any instrument for destroying them; and by the time the instrument comes, the roots are so deep that it is too late to rip them out” (93). Inhibiting the formation of such errors and vices is the aim of Emile’s early childhood education; or as Rousseau declares, “to prevent anything from being done” (41). To accomplish this endeavor Emile must live in isolation until the age of fifteen, or until he is ready to join the social order and advance his education and freedom.

Having outlined the objective of the first phase of Emile’s education, I will now shift my focus to the four traits which I identify as crucial to the development of the particular will. To foster Emile’s independence and ability to self-instruct relates equally to the growth of his physical and mental strength. Emile’s bodily strength however must be developed prior to the strength of his soul. Rousseau claims “a frail body weakens the soul,” therefore a child must combat potential weakness with vigor to assure his physical as well as his moral well-being. Rousseau uses the opposing example of the technique used to educate children in society to show the vital importance of Emile’s acquired strength.

Rousseau claims that those raising children in society “would gladly cripple them to keep them from laming themselves” (43). In providing constant protection to an infant one suppresses the crucial development of his natural strength. Contrary to what is experienced in society Rousseau requires that Emile: “Observe nature and follow the path it maps out for (him). It exercises children constantly; it hardens their temperament by tests of all sort; it teaches them early what effort and pain are” (47). Hardening a child’s temperament is necessary for him to attain freedom. Childhood freedom is rooted in

independence which is not easy to embody, thus to be truly self-reliant Emile must generate the greatest amount of strength naturally possible.

These traits are best developed in nature because of Emile's seclusion from others, thereby minimizing the likelihood that he grows dependent on those around him: "Men are made not to be crowded into anthills but to be dispersed over the earth which they should cultivate. The more they come together, the more they are corrupted" (59). The more men are brought together the more they grow dependent on each other and the services that life in society provides. The early development of Emile's strength is as crucial to his persona as it is to his independence, for wickedness is contingent on weakness: "All wickedness comes from weakness. The child is wicked only because he is weak. Make him strong; he will be good" (67). The excellence of Emile's cognition is therefore contingent on the evolution of his childhood strength. Emile's senses progress alongside his natural strength during the first phase of his life. Before a child can walk or physically interact with his surroundings his "sensations are purely affective" (62). Rousseau uses a simple example of food and sleep to exhibit how these customs can lead to the restriction of one's freedom. The prevention of habit begins as early as Emile's infancy, even food and sleep should not be measured too exactly for such desires will soon come from habit rather than need.

In developing habit, the body becomes restricted from a young age, habit that is hard to break later in one's life. Rather only natural habit is to be exercised in a boy: "Prepare from afar the reign of his freedom and the use of his forces by leaving natural habit to his body, putting him in the condition always to be master of himself and in all things to do his will, as soon as he has one" (63). Children want to touch and handle



everything, a restlessness which no parent or guardian should oppose themselves to (64). Children grow strong from their restlessness which renders their future courage: “It is at this age that one gets the first lessons in courage, and that, bearing slight pains without terror, one gradually learns to bear great pains” (78). Emile’s courage therefore emerges from his strength, and similar to freedom and independence, it cannot be achieved on impulse but must be attained through continual learning. I have illustrated the inherent connection between strength, childhood independence, and freedom, and therefore the development of the particular will. I will now examine the topic of necessity which directly correlates with Rousseau’s discussion on strength, for it relates to a child’s adopted dependency on things rather than wills.

## Part Two: Necessity

Rousseau’s discussion on necessity concerns a child’s developed dependency on things rather than wills (people). While Rousseau advocates self-sufficiency he acknowledges that a man’s well-being relies partially on his access to external utilities. Man must accept necessity and learn to direct it correctly, for if to become dependent on other people he sacrifices his independence and freedom. To begin our exploration of Rousseau’s idea of necessity let us return to his analysis of the crying infant. The manner in which first tears are dealt with determines a child’s either assumed strength and independence or weakness and dependence. Opposing the traditions of society, Rousseau asserts that Emile’s mentor, Jean-Jacques, should respond to crying as follows: “So long as he cries, I do not go to him. I run as soon as he has stopped” (77).

Jean-Jacques' refusal to caress a crying Emile, indicates the first effort aimed at preventing Emile from becoming dependent on others. In waiting for Emile's crying to cease before approaching him, Jean-Jacques causes his tears to become ineffective (77). Most crucial to Rousseau's discussion on necessity is his distinction between being dependent on things versus wills, it being the former which Rousseau aims to foster in Emile. It is through an individual's first movements that one becomes aware of oneself in relation to the exterior: "It is only by movement that we learn that there are things which are not us, and it is only by our own movement that we acquire the idea of extension" (64). As a result of Emile's first idea of extension there must follow a careful effort to avoid the possibility that he become dependent on the wills of others.

If Emile comes to consider people as instruments to utilize for personal benefit he will "make use of those people to follow (his) inclination and to supplement (his) own weakness" (67). If to appease his weakness through the enslavement of others, Emile is bound to become "difficult, tyrannical, imperious, wicked, (and) unmanageable-a development which does not come from a natural spirit of domination but which rather gives one to (him), for it does not require long experience to sense how pleasant it is to act with the hands of others and to need only to stir one's tongue to make the universe move" (67-68). The preceding quotation exemplifies how the use of others for personal benefit can create a chain of dependency and threads of tyranny.

The path of dependency and inequality reflects man's detachment from the particular will, therefore Rousseau devises four maxims that if followed correctly assure Emile's continued education and freedom. These maxims are directed towards Jean-Jacques, the teacher, as opposed to Emile. The first maxim reads: "One must, therefore,

let them have the use of all the strength nature gives them—a strength they could not know how to abuse” (68). The first maxim reflects the emphasis Rousseau designates to strength as a trait to be developed in Emile. It is crucial that Emile develop his strength as much as nature allows before receiving aid, however once this state is reached he must be aided when necessary: “One must aid them and supplement what is lacking to them, whether in intelligence or strength, in all that is connected with physical need” (68). The second maxim thus acknowledges that despite Emile’s natural strength, there are certain needs that he alone cannot satisfy. The existence of needs which must be gratified by things exterior to oneself, is a reality intrinsic to every individual that one should not resist: “Do not rebel against the hard law of necessity; and do not exhaust your strength by your will to resist that law” (83). Emile should not drain his strength by trying to resist necessity, but rather accept the things which are crucial to the progression of his strength.

Jean-Jacques must be careful to only provide Emile with the supplements, food, shelter, clothing, etc., that are necessary for his well-being, thus avoiding excess; the third maxim reads: “One must, in the help one gives them, limit oneself solely to the really useful, without granting anything to whim or to desire without reason; for whim, inasmuch as it does not come from nature, will not torment them if it has not been induced in them” (68). When providing aid to Emile, Jean-Jacques must limit the goods supplied only to those which his good health is contingent on. If to spoil Emile, granting things out of impulse, such actions will only provide later anguish to his body and soul. The true necessities of life are those which come directly from nature; the final maxim obliges Jean-Jacques to distinguish which of Emile’s desires come from nature versus opinion: “One must study their language and their signs with care in order that, at an age

at which they do not know how to dissimulate, one can distinguish in their desires what comes immediately from nature and what comes from opinion” (68). In his infancy Emile does not know how to deceive, thus Jean-Jacques is able to separate which of Emile’s desires originate from nature and which originate from opinion, eliminating the latter.

Each of these maxims reflect an important instruction meant to ensure the continued development of the particular will. The importance of each of these four maxims is conveyed in Rousseau’s final discussion on strength and necessity, as they relate to his ideas of authority and freedom. He calls upon Emile to construct himself from within, for freedom and power “extend only as far as (his) natural strength, and not beyond” (83). The greater Emile’s natural strength the more substantial his independence, and likewise expands his power and freedom.

Rousseau illuminates the relationship between necessity and freedom by broadening his examination on the contrast between desires which emerge from nature versus opinion. Rousseau categorizes the things which oppose nature as slavery, illusion, or deception (83). He suggests that even domination, which is typically viewed as a form of power, “is servile when it is connected with opinion, for you depend on the prejudices of those you govern by prejudices” (83). Freedom does not result from having authority over others, but rather “master and slave are mutually corrupted;” each having become dependent on the prejudices of the other, are together stripped of their autonomy (85).

To only cultivate the needs which come from nature, man must remain completely detached from the opinions and intentions of others: “The only one who does his own will is he who, in order to do it, has no need to put another’s arms at the end of his own; from which it follows that the first of all goods is not authority but freedoms.

The truly free man wants only what he can do and does what he pleases” (84). In remaining true to his particular will Emile continues to foster his childhood freedom. Rousseau’s compelling interest in equality is apparent in his discussion on authority and freedom. If to achieve a state founded on equality, an objective reflected in Rousseau’s idea of the civil state, children must be educated against the use of wills for personal benefit. While children are thereby taught to depend on things rather than wills, this sort of dependency comes with limits. If to employ an “excess of rigor and an excess of indulgence,” one likewise obstructs nature’s direction: “the child who has only to want in order to get believes himself owner of the universe; he regards all men as his slaves” (87). Indulgence, even if aligned with natural inclination, results in despotism and corruption.

### Part Three: Good Sense

The development of childhood strength and correct allotment of necessity correspond to a child’s physical development; development which teaches self-sufficiency. Rousseau indicates that producing a strong body precedes the maturation of mind and soul. Having begun to development his strength Emile is now ready to receive his first lessons in good sense and proper judgement. Emile’s lessons in strength and necessity correspond to his continued independence, while his lessons in good sense and judgement relate to his future reason and autonomy. This progression reflects the development of the particular will, which eventually emerges subordinate to the general will, to allow Emile to attain civil freedom.

Most crucial to the development of Emile's good sense is that he only pursue the opinions and interests that emerge directly from his own curiosity. On the contrary, if he were to engage with ideas projected onto him by others, their unfamiliarity would result in his misjudgment. This possibility is most likely to transpire between an adult and child: "This lack of attention on our part to the true meaning which words have for children appears to me to be the cause of their first errors; and these errors, even after cured of them, have an influence on their turn of mind for the rest of their lives" (74). The danger is less that the child not understanding the first speeches given to him, but rather that he will "have another meaning than ours without our being able to perceive it" (73). This misunderstanding between an adult and child is the cause of a child's first errors; errors that will survive in a child for the remainder of his life. To limit such exposure in order to preserve his unique maturation, is one of the greatest challenges of early childhood. Rousseau thus deems the most useful rule of all education "not to gain time but to lose it", to minimize the likelihood of error (93).

To avoid error "the child who wants to speak should hear only words he can understand and say only those he can articulate" (73). Accordingly, one must limit a child's vocabulary: "It is a very great disadvantage for him to have more words than ideas, for him to know how to say more things than he can think" (74). Each of these mandates set forth by Rousseau correlate with his belief that early childhood education should have very little structure or formal lessoning. If to develop Emile's intellect at a pace which exceeds his ability to understand, than his learning becomes both ineffective and detrimental to his overall progress. It is better that Emile has few ideas and is good as

comparing them, rather than be so overwhelmed with vocabulary that he is unable to formulate opinions of his own.

A most unorthodox element of Rousseau's method of education is his complete rejection of books prior to a certain age. He believes that "reading is the plague of childhood," thereby he liberates Emile from the great misery of reading (116). Emile must know how to read, however until he reaches a time when books becomes useful he will 'hardly know what a book is' (116). Not only does Rousseau disapprove of obliging children to read because of the boredom it provides, but most importantly because books inhibit a child's ability to think and future reason for oneself: "Our first masters of philosophy are our feet, our hands, our eyes. To substitute books for all that is not to teach us to reason. It is to teach us to use the reason of others. It is to teach us to believe much and never to know anything" (125). A child's good sense, like his independence, cannot be taught on whim but evolves with experience. If to be able to reason and self-govern as a man, Emile must first be able to think and act independently as a boy. Rousseau refers to the process of learning to think for oneself as "an art that is very long and very hard," it is "the art of being ignorant" (126). This art form allows Emile to discover and grow himself from within.

During the first phase of Emile's life his senses are purely physical; a physicality reflected in his restlessness and urge to experience and know his surroundings. As his physicality and awareness progress, so does his curiosity; therefore the prevailing motive is to correctly direct this curiosity. The important distinction between a boy's natural inclination versus opinion is not only relevant to Rousseau's discussion on necessity but likewise to his discussion on good sense. A child's good sense relates to his cognition

rather than physicality, thus Rousseau places good sense in the context of learning: “There is an ardor to know which is founded only on the desire to be esteemed as learned; there is another ardor which is born of a curiosity natural to man concerning all that might have a connection, close or distant, with his interests” (167). To continue the development of the particular will Emile must only be guided by his natural curiosity and individual inclination. Rousseau delineates the first rule of curiosity as follows: “The innate desire for well-being and the impossibility of fully satisfying this desire make him constantly seek for new means of contributing to it” (167). Curiosity is a natural inclination that “develops only in proportions to our passion and our enlightenment” (167). If the progression of Emile’s curiosity is conditional on the equivalent progression of his interests and insights, then each must be maintained and directed with caution if to properly advance Emile’s education.

Following the development of the five basic senses ensues Emile’s common sense, or what Rousseau terms a “sort of sixth sense” (157). It is common “less because it is common to all men than because it results from the well-regulated use of the other senses, and because it instructs us about the nature of things by conjunction of all their appearances” (157). Having exercised the five general senses, the objective is now to transform Emile’s sensations into ideas, without leaping all at once from objects of sense to intellect (168). The cultivation of Emile’s good sense occurs after the cultivation of his physical senses, but prior to the age of reason. Rousseau claims: “There is a chain of general truths by which all the sciences are connected with common principles out of which they develop successively” (172). This chain is one for philosophers, or men of reason, and manifests in the civil state under the general will.



At this stage, however, Emile has not yet reached the age of reason, thereby he is guided by curiosity rather than principle. Good sense is grounded in patience, for to pressure Emile past his ability to understand threatens his development: “To arm him with some vain instruments which he will perhaps never use, you take away from him man’s most universal instrument, which is good sense” (178). In pressuring Emile ahead in his education his childhood experiences and sentiments are threatened. Emile’s good sense is developed in “respect to those relations in which he himself has actually participated” (178). Rousseau parallels the development of Emile’s good sense, guided by his curiosity, with his eventual ability to reason. While good sense does not yet relate to morality, because Emile knows not the meaning of the term, it provides crucial to the cognitive aspect of the particular will which in time matures into reason.

#### Part Four: Judgement

A child’s ability to judge well is the final trait which I identify as crucial to the development of the particular will. Emile neither fully progress nor utilizes his judgement until his transition into the social order, for men are the subjects of his judgement. Although Emile is not yet practicing proper judgement the development of this ability begins at a young age in relation to the growth of his senses. In this section I explore Rousseau’s idea of judgment and argue that a child’s ability to judge well directly correlates with his future sentiments of compassion and ability to reason.

Rousseau’s aim to prevent inaccurate or unclear ideas from reaching Emile is to avoid the formation of prejudices: “Reason and judgement come slow; prejudices come

in crowds” (171). Rousseau asserts that all of man’s errors come from his judgements, thus if not to judge he will never be mistaken (204). The formation of judgements is however inevitable when encountering others, thus the task is to teach Emile to judge well (205). In learning to judge well Emile must first be able to “verify the relations of each sense by itself;” this verification allows for the transformation of each sensation into an idea (205). Rousseau claims that ideas which have been formed by authentic sensations “will always conform to the truth” (205). According to this method we use our independent senses to validate our judgements.

Rousseau proposes there are three different educations, one which comes from nature, one from things, and one from men; to achieve perfection in each they must all be related (38). The education of nature exists outside our control, thereby the other two “must be directed toward the one over which we have no power” (39). If to relate everything back to the original dispositions of man we must return to the natural state of our senses before they became “constrained by our habits” and “more or less corrupted by our opinions” (39). To return man’s senses to their natural state, however is impossible, and it is on this basis that Rousseau devises his method of education; a method which assures that Emile’s senses will neither be constrained nor corrupted by external influence.

I previously discuss Rousseau’s uncommon view on the incorporation of books into childhood education, for he believes “they only teach one to talk about what one does not know” (184). Rousseau however acknowledges that books are intrinsic to every child’s life, therefore once Emile reaches an age at which they become useful he will be introduced to *Robinson Crusoe*. For an extended time this book will “alone compose his

whole library,” for Rousseau believes *Robinson Crusoe* is a clear depiction of natural education: “Robinson Crusoe on his island, alone, deprived of the assistance of his kind and the instruments of all the arts, providing nevertheless for his subsistence, for his preservation, and even procuring for himself a kind of well-being - this is an object interesting for every age and one which can be made agreeable for children in countless ways” (184).

The premise of *Robinson Crusoe* reflects the overall objective of Rousseau’s method of childhood education: to create a self-sufficient, strong individual, who alone can secure a sort of well-being by following his natural curiosity. In isolation Crusoe is guarded against the opinions and biases of others. Rousseau acknowledges that although Emile will not exist in a state of isolation, it is on the principle of this state that he should come to judge all others: “The surest means of raising oneself above prejudices and ordering one’s judgements about the true relations of things is to put oneself in the place of an isolated man and to judge everything as this man himself ought to judge of it with respect to his own utility” (185). *Robinson Crusoe* teaches the importance of making use of individual utility and provides a basis on which to properly judge men.

By the age of fifteen Emile is well on the path to becoming a free-spirited, strong, independent boy. Emile has accepted the presence of necessity and does not waste his energy trying to overcome it (161). He has developed a dependency on things rather than wills, which has allowed him to grow his independence and progress his natural senses. Emile is full of chatter, impulsive in his questioning, and confident in his uniqueness (159). While he does not invest in memorization, he is mature with experience; Emile “never follows a formula, does not give way before authority or example, and acts and

speaks only as it suits him” (160). The development of Emile’s strength, correct allotment of necessity, good sense, and proper judgment, has secured his childhood freedom rooted in independence, and has prepared his transition from seclusion into the social order. Alongside freedom, *amour de soi* exists at the core of Rousseau’s method of childhood education. The criteria that Emile spend the first fifteen years of his life in seclusion reflects Rousseau motive to prevent interference with the development of Emile’s independence, self-love, and freedom. Emile continues to develop the particular will upon his entrance into the social order; advancement which allows for his eventual autonomy and civil freedom under the general will.

### Chapter Three: Freedom, Autonomy, and the General Will

In chapter 3, I now address Emile's entrance into the social order, a transition which reflects a gradual movement away from individual freedom associated with the particular will, to civil freedom attained under the general will. This chapter is divided into two parts; the first of which focused on Rousseau's idea of *amour-propre*. At this stage in Emile's education his *amour de soi* takes on a double valence, such that there is an expansion of self-love to a new recognition of self-worth and respect. Emile's embracement of *amour-propre* require that he give up a portion of his particularity to be replaced by the element of self-esteem. The movement from *amour de soi* to vanity is "useful but dangerous" as it is the first step away from individual freedom towards civil freedom (244). Emile's movement from private to public transitions his freedom from being rooted in childhood independence to his imminent ability to feel compassion towards others. Emile's sentiments of compassion and pity prepare him for civil freedom, for he now knows the likes of living among men.

In part two of this chapter, I examine Rousseau's idea of the "age of reason". Rousseau suggests that Emile's movement into the social order is prompted by his natural inclination to reproduce, thus to preserve and progress mankind. In part one we see Emile mature into a moral citizen, by fully developing his *amour de soi* and *amour-propre*. Emile is now ready to learn the laws of fidelity through his love for woman. His love for a distinct other is the final step in the evolution of the particular will, from which his reason and autonomy directly manifest. Amidst Emile's relationship with Sophie, the ideal woman Rousseau fabricates for Emile, he breaks routine to travel the world; an experience which allows him to become versed in all form of government and public

morals (458). These explorations open his mind to pure reason and essentially yield the dissolution of the particular will; as Bloom claims in the introduction, “(Emile) is, in effect taught the social contract” (Bloom, *Emile* 27). Having observed other governments, Emile is now able to discern the makings of a state which will allow for the preservation of public virtues through common law. This newfound reason determines man to will the general will as his own, and claim his autonomy and civil freedom. Man is now truly happy, for happiness lives in his ability to be a law-giver. He has imposed the laws of necessity, reason, and fidelity, on himself; therefore unifying his sense of duty and inclination to produce the ideal.

#### Part One: *Amour-Propre*

The first phase of Rousseau’s method of education concerns the evolution of *amour de soi*; a time in a child’s life when his education revolves entirely around his independence, curiosity, and free-spirit. Rousseau’s idea of *amour-propre* emerges during the second phase of Emile’s education, as it entails self-comparison to other men. Emile must continue his lessons in proper judgment and learn the art of comparing if he is to remain true to himself and endure his freedom. Rousseau introduces *amour-propre* as an essential precursor to man’s civil freedom, for it teaches him to live among others while maintaining his independence. Emile must therefore leave the comfort of isolation and come to know the other: “It is now that man is truly born to life and now that nothing human is foreign to him. Up to now our care has only been a child’s game. It takes on true importance only at present” (Rousseau, *Emile* 212). While Emile’s early childhood

education is crucial to his overall maturity, it mostly concerns the development of his basic senses; an exercise which Rousseau considers child's play compared to the lessons which are to follow. Man's natural passions are "the principal instruments of (his) preservation," and self-love is the principle passion from which all the others emerge (212). Not only do the passions preserve man, but they free him; thus freedom persists alongside the development of the passions during this second phase of life (212).

Emile's first sentiment is to love himself for "we have to love ourselves to preserve ourselves" (213). Emile's entrance into the social order reflects a shift which results in a second sentiment sourced from self-love: "to love those whom come near (us)" (213). Rousseau associates this sentiment with a child's likeliness to only recognize people based on the assistance they provide (213). The benevolent child soon becomes envious and dishonest, for through these observations he becomes aware of inclination and duty (213). He becomes reliant on others to fulfill his needs, and if one is to thwart the fulfillment of such desires, the child's confusion translates to anger and sentiments of disobedience (213).

Emile however remains on the path of freedom by solely relying on himself for his preservation. Having entered society, the passions are no longer limited to those of *amour de soi*, but likewise Emile must navigate those of *amour-propre*. To prevent against the emergence of the unpleasant, irritable passions which can be born from *amour-propre*, Emile must "have few needs" and "compare himself little to others" (214). Given that *amour-propre* relates to one's self-respect or esteem, the unpleasant passions to which I refer concern the possibility that narcissistic or vane qualities emerge in man.

Rousseau asserts that man is naturally attracted to woman, and it is this inborn tendency which draws him out of isolation: “As soon as man has need of a companion, he is no longer and isolate being. His heart is no longer alone. All his relations with his species, all the affections of his soul are born with this one. His first passion soon makes the other ferment” (214). While man’s need for a companion draws him out of seclusion, he exists in the presence of others long before he knows the principles of companionship. Before man learns to love he must learn to judge, and likewise he must compare before he can prefer (214). We must therefore progress through the lessons of *amour-propre*, which essentially relate to compassion, before we can address the concerns of love or reason. The correct development of *amour-propre* relates to individual freedom; in that it teaches Emile to live among men while maintaining his independence.

Emile’s emergence out of isolation is prompted by his need for other men, a need which manifests from his weakness: “It is man’s weakness which makes him sociable; it is our common miseries which turn our hearts to humanity; we would owe humanity nothing if we were not men” (221). It is the common miseries between men which draw them together (221). While men are capable of sentiments of pain and pleasure, they tend to connect over the idea of common suffering as opposed to happiness. Suffering posits a need for the other and generates in man feelings of pity, while “the sight of a happy man inspires in others less love than envy” (221). Emile’s idea of the origin of happiness among men is crucial, for if he is deceived on this topic he will never truly come to know men (222). The objective is to direct Emile’s *amour-propre* such that it emanates goodness rather than conceit or envy, thus egotism (221).



Rousseau is careful to only allow for the development of ideas rather than feelings during Emile's childhood; keeping his abilities minimal so to avoid the possibility of confusion or the formation of false comparisons or judgements. The first sentiment that Emile experiences, without yet knowing what it means, is pity (222). Man's sentiments of pity and suffering emerge only in relation to other men: "In fact, how do we let ourselves be moved by pity if not by transporting ourselves outside of ourselves and identifying with the suffering animal, by leaving, as it were, our own being to take on its being?" (223). Although Emile experienced suffering in isolation, which grew his strength and independence, he had no concept that he was suffering. To know suffering, man must judge his own feelings of pain in accordance with those of another, likewise pity only emerges from understanding another man's anguish. Emile is now familiar with the sentiment of suffering and pity, though he cannot yet reason the what he feels.

Following these sentiments of anguish, the objective is to foster the human heart by growing Emile's goodness, humanity, and sympathy, while preventing the emergence of envy, hate, and brutality (223). Rousseau formulates three maxims which correlate with this aim, the first reads: "It is not in the human heart to put ourselves in the place of people who are happier than we, but only in that of those who are more pitiable" (223). In comparing himself only to those whom are less affluent man avoids feelings of dissatisfaction and envy, for it is inherent to resent those whom appear more prosperous than oneself. Rousseau, however asserts that these feelings do not emerge towards every person whom appear happier than we, and gives the example of those whom live the rustic or pastoral life: "the charms of seeing those good people happy is not poisoned by envy" (223). Rather, we become interested in these lives because they mirror a condition

that we would one-day hope to fulfill (223). The first maxim pertains to man's tendency towards humanity; he is to be shown despair and made to fear it (223). This develops in him a sense of humanness towards those who suffer, while simultaneously prompts him to "cut out his own road to happiness, following in no one else's tracks" (223). The combination of Emile's sense of humanness with his desire to remain independent, assures his continuation to civil freedom.

While Emile must learn about compassion, which involves comparing himself to others, Rousseau does not intend for Emile to imitate or follow after any man, for this would threaten his individual freedom. The second maxim reads: "One pities in others, only those ills from which one does not feel oneself exempt" (224). Man cannot pity those alien to him, therefore Emile must not regard the suffering of others from a position of greater prestige (224). If not threatened by the possibility of poverty or suffering one will never come to understand these conditions.

This truth is why Rousseau believes that kings and noble men are so harsh on the poor, "because they have no fear of becoming poor" (224). Those whom do not regard humiliation and hardship as alien conditions, are more humane and generous because they know what it feels like to suffer (224). Emile must be taught that "the fate of these unhappy men can be his" (224). The future is unforeseen; Emile must be able to adapt to various conditions, and must not rely on any external assistance which could endanger his freedom.

The final maxim refers to how man interprets misfortune: "The pity one has for another's misfortune is measured not by the quantity of that misfortune but by the sentiment which one attributes to those who suffer it" (225). Man does not judge one's

misfortune on quantity but rather on the relation he has to the individual whom is suffering. This maxim returns us to man's ability to judge well and is most crucial to his benevolence. The way man chooses to regard misfortune depends on his individual inclination and assumption about "truth as it may appear". Rousseau uses the example of a cart horse to illustrate how man's perceptions can result in misguided judgments: "One hardly pities a cart horse in his stable because one does not presume that the horse, while eating his hay, thinks of the blows he has received and of the fatigues awaiting him" (225). Man bases the pity he feels on the presumptions which he has about the horse, however he knows little about the reality of the horses' condition and possible anguish that it experiences. Similar assumptions occur on a human basis, such that the affluent are unfazed by the ill they do to the poor because of their belief that men of such low rank "feel nothing of it" (225).

In opposition to this widespread and easily adopted attitude, Rousseau presents an alternative way for Emile to regard his fellow men. Emile is to acknowledge and respect men no matter how different they appear from himself, for difference does not convey inferiority:

You will see that although their language is different, they have as much wit and more good sense than you do. Respect your species. Be aware that it is composed essentially of a collection of peoples; that if all the kings and all the philosophers were taken away, their absence would hardly be noticeable; and that things would not be any the worse. In a word, teach your pupil to love all men, even those who despise men. Do things in such a way that he puts himself in no class but finds his

bearings in all. Speak before him of humankind with tenderness, even with pity, but never with contempt. Man, do not dishonor man! (226)

It is in accordance to the principles of compassion and humanity to which Emile's young heart should be developed (226). The advancement of Emile's ability to judge well alongside his proficiency in self-comparison, awakens feelings of compassion while also teaches him to remain steadfast to his unique development.

In Rousseau's concluding remarks on the three maxims of compassion he conveys the necessity to respect all men despite their differences. Having entered the moral order, the task is now to "show him men by the means of their differences"; from which ensues "the measurement of natural and civil inequality and the picture of the whole social order" (235). The aim no longer remains to shield Emile from events that are likely to unfold in society, but rather to teach him how to navigate the challenges that accompany social life. While the maturation of Emile's independence and individual freedom exist at the core of the particular will, as his education progresses so must these conditions. Rousseau asserts that in society "it is less the strength of arms than the moderation of hearts which makes men independent and free" (236). The progression of man's civil freedom therefore more closely relates to his mentality rather than his physicality.

Rousseau distinguishes between de facto equality that emerges in nature and is "real and indestructible," as opposed to de jure equality that emerges in the civil state and is "chimerical and vain" (236). To evaluate equality among men in the civil state "we must begin by knowing the human heart" (236). To know man, Emile must see him act, and to judge man well, he must do so apart from the prejudices of others (237). Rousseau claims that in society men "show their speeches and hide their actions. But in history

their actions are unveiled” (237). Rousseau is not implying that Emile should solely turn to history to know the actions of men, but rather he should independently observe and judge men to precondition his ability to live freely among them.

Emile comes to know men through self-comparison that which exists at the core of judgment: “the relative *I* is constantly in play, and the young man never observes others without returning to himself and comparing himself with them” (243). If to judge well, Emile will never desire to be anyone apart from himself, however if misguided, *amour-propre* can be a dangerous instrument (244). If self-comparison were to result in Emile’s dissatisfaction with himself, this would revert his entire progression: “He who begins to become alien to himself does not take long to forget himself entirely” (243). Thus far Emile has remained steadfast on the path to civil freedom which has required a balance between complete independence and *amour-propre*.

There remains a last step before it can be said that Emile has truly mastered *amour-propre*. The final threat to Emile’s education is the possibility that he accredits his happiness to his own excellence: “He will say to himself, ‘I am wise, and men are mad.’ In pitying them, he will despise them; in congratulating himself, he will esteem himself more, and in feeling himself to be happier than them, he will believe himself worthier to be so” (245). Such error causes man’s *amour-propre* to reflect vanity rather than compassion. This error is feared most because once it has emerged, it is near impossible to destroy (245). Illustrating the intensity of this threat Rousseau claims, “I do not know whether I would not prefer the illusion of the prejudices to that of pride” (245). The primary phase of Emile’s education was aimed against the acquisition of prejudices while

the objective is now to prevent him from becoming overly prideful. Evidently, Rousseau's method of education aims to divert man from both pride and prejudice.

While each man holds a distinct mindset, Rousseau implies that when men are brought together there seems to emerge a common understanding and sense of order: "There is not a being in the universe that cannot in some respect be regarded as the common center around which all the others are ordered, in such a way that they are all reciprocally ends and means relative to one another" (276). Rousseau reasons that achieving such commonality would be impossible "without conceiving of an intelligence which orders it" (276). Rousseau refers to this intelligence as a powerful and wise will, which he senses but does not yet understand (276). Here Rousseau unites the idea of the particular will with the general will through a discussion on God: "This Being which wills and is powerful, this Being active in itself, the Being, whatever it may be, which moves the universe and orders all things, I call *God*" (277). Although Rousseau's idea of the general will is not yet relevant to his method of education, his mention of commonality refers us back to chapter one in which I discuss the general within the context of his political philosophy.

We can therefore begin to conceive of God as the divine, governing force, whom wills the laws of the common good; laws that lend man to distinguish good from evil. Rousseau furthers his discussion on judgment and the particular will as they directly correspond to freedom; a conversation which leads him to explain the origin of evil:

When I am asked what the cause is which determines my will, I ask in turn what the cause is which determines my judgement; for it is clear that these two causes are only one; and if one clearly understands that man is active in his judgements, and that his

understanding is only the power of comparing and judging, one will see that his freedom is only a similar power or one derived from the former. (280)

A man's individual will and judgement simultaneously condition one another, and likewise determine his future reason and civil freedom. Man's freedom exists in his ability to will what he deems suitable to him, thus "there is no true will without freedom" (280-281).

Rousseau expands this discussion by relating the origin of evil among men to freedom of will. While God's will does not ordain man's depravity it likewise does not prevent it "because it could not prevent (his evil doing) without hindering his freedom and doing a greater evil by degrading his nature" (281). Rousseau therefore asserts: "Man, seek the author of evil no longer. It is yourself" (282). Man's evil is indisputably his own doing, not the fate cast upon him by God (281). To establish a state founded on equality and virtue everything must be good; goodness which exists at the core of Rousseau's method of emancipatory education. We have now seen how a man's compassion and proper judgement relate to the development of *amour-propre*, for a man must acquire a sort of self-esteem without assuming an ego. If Emile is to live freely among men in the civil state, he must not elevate himself above others.

## Part Two: The Age of Reason

At this stage in Emile's education his temperament has fully formed, however his soul has yet to mature. Rousseau asserts: "We work in collaboration with nature, and while it forms the physical man, we try to form the moral man" (314). These two

educations however progress differently, therefore “the body is already robust and strong while the soul is still languorous and weak, and no matter what human art does, temperament always precedes reason” (314). While Emile reaches the age of reason by the age of twenty, this correlation is not inherent in every individual “thus for others the age of reason is only the age of license” (315). This maturation marks Emile’s divergence from the guidance of Jean-Jacques, whence he begins his search for a lover. This part will conclude my examination of *Emile*, and my project on Rousseau’s ideas of emancipatory education and civil freedom. The final elements which remains to be explored are the evolution of Emile’s reason and autonomy. Emile cannot attain civil freedom until his reason matures, and while his prior education crucially progressed his individual freedom, it is only a mere indication of what is to come.

“Since man must die, he must reproduce in order that the species may endure and the order of the world be preserved;” Rousseau terms this inclination “the true moment of nature” (316). Man’s natural need to reproduce commences his learnings in love, sex, and loyalty. It is at this moment in Emile’s education when he parts from the guidance of his teacher, Rousseau thus addresses Jean-Jacques, “He is still your disciple, but he is no longer your pupil. He is your friend, he is a man. From now on treat him as such” (316). This moment commences the final phase of Emile’s education during which there occurs a passage between the rights of nature and the laws of society. Prior to this point Emile has not departed from nature’s law, remaining in his first innocence, Rousseau however claims “I see this happy period about to end” (317).

Upon Jean-Jacques’ departure from Emile it is necessary “to disclose to him what he is and what I am, what I have done, what he has done, what we owe each other;” the I



here refers to Jean-Jacques (318). Emile must come to understand the essence of his education and guidance which provided for his distinct progression. While reason replaces the role of the teacher, Jean-Jacques is to remain a companion to Emile: “As long as he continues freely to open his soul to me and to tell me with pleasure what he feels, I have nothing to fear” (319). If Emile were to express discomfort, Jean-Jacques would be left with no alternative but to again assume the role of instructor so that Emile may not be instructed in spite of him (319).

The instructions to ensue must never to be forgotten, for Emile’s lessons in reason secure his autonomy and civil freedom (321). On reason Rousseau asserts, “One of the errors of our age is to use reason in too adorned a form, as men were all mind” (321). Too often do men strictly relate reason to the mind, thus to words rather than actions. Nor does reason exist solely in relation to actions, but rather the language of a strong soul is one that “persuades and make others act” (321). Having grown his temperament in accord with the particular will, the objective is now to strengthen his soul; a development that will allow his reason to take on the duality of mind and body.

The soul inherently relates to man’s ability to love, thus we shift our focus: “When one loves, one wants to be loved. Emile loves men; therefore he wants to please them. A fortiori, he wants to please woman. His age, his morals, and his project all unite to foster this desire” (337). Emile’s loving ability culminates his education and is fostered through the combination of the previous lessons which he has assimilated. Rousseau introduces the final book of *Emile* as “the last act in the drama of youth,” and begins by drawing distinctions between the societal roles of men and women. He illustrates these

differences by comparing Emile to Sophie, the ideal woman Rousseau devises for Emile (357).

Rousseau introduces the first principle of woman as follows: “Sophie ought to be a woman as Emile is a man—that is to say, she ought to have everything which suits the constitution of her species and her sex in order to fill her place in the physical and moral order” (357). Rousseau asserts that species and sex determine an individual’s character and physical and moral role in society, therefore suggesting that men and women are not identical. Nor are they viewed as equal, for while they each give to a common objective they do so in different ways: “From this diversity arises the first assignable difference in the moral relations of the two sexes. One ought to be active and strong; the other passive and weak. One must necessarily will and be able; it suffices that the other put up little resistance” (358).

Therefore man is active, strong, and willful, while woman is passive and weak. From this first discussion we can deduce that Rousseau believes that “woman is made specially to please man” (358). Rousseau suggests however that this inequality “is not a human institution,” thus it is “the work not of prejudice but of reason” (361). These roles have not been cast upon man and woman as society sees fit, but rather the separation of sexes and their associated characteristics have been produced on account of reason alone. Lastly, if the nature of man and woman are so different “it follows that they ought not to have the same education” (363). Rousseau’s method of emancipatory education which he meticulously outlines in *Emile*, is therefore not intended for a girl.

Following these distinctions Rousseau aims to allow the reader to come to know Sophie as we have Emile. While this discussion is both intriguing and frustrating for a

feminist onlooker, it is neither necessary nor constructive for my argument. Likewise, in my reading of *Emile*, although there are clear gender distinctions and discriminations throughout the text, I aim to view Rousseau's project on emancipatory education and freedom as gender blind. I am not interested in the fact that Emile is a boy and Sophie is a girl; and while to ignore these distinctions may just as well posit a feminist critic, I aim to read Emile as an individual journey, pursued by a man or woman, to achieve civil freedom and political autonomy. I will culminate this chapter by showing the evolution of reason along with the process through which man attains civil freedom rooted in autonomy, and happiness rooted in love. I will illustrate this evolution in terms of Emile's liberation from the particular will into the general will, thus manifesting Rousseau's method of education as an emancipatory method.

Emile's education culminates in his reasoning ability, therefore Rousseau concludes by connecting his ideas of individual freedom and civil freedom along with autonomy and the general will. The topic of happiness is likewise central to Emile's life under the general will, however to ensure the authenticity of his happiness it must be approached with patience: "To seek happiness without knowing what it is, is to expose oneself to the danger of fleeing it and to run as many risks of finding the opposite of happiness as there are roads on which to go astray" (442). Emile must wait for the opportune moment to pursue his happiness, for if not to be patient he could go amiss. Emile must now focus on the development of the passions of his soul, those which arise from the appetites of his heart (443). Up to this point Emile has only learned to tolerate the laws of necessity: "You know how to endure the law of necessity and ills, but you have not yet imposed laws on the appetites of your heart, and the disorder of our lives

arises from our affections far more than from our needs” (443). To remain on the path of freedom Rousseau must learn to obey his heart as reason demands.

This process entails Emile’s departure not only from Sophie but from all conventions and possessions, for Rousseau asserts: “The fear of losing everything will prevent you from possessing anything” (444). To ensure Emile’s future happiness and freedom he must first leave everything he knows behind him and travel the world. It is during these explorations that Emile learns to be autonomous which leads to his civil freedom: “Up to now you were only apparently free. You had only the precarious freedom of a slave to whom nothing has been commanded. Now be really free. Learn to become your own master. Command your heart, Emile, and you will be virtuous” (445). Prior to the age of reason Emile had only experienced “precarious freedom,” for that was the limit of the particular will.

While Emile’s travel allows him the opportunity to observe the works of governments, he is scarcely concerned with issue of government, but only wishes to find the one most suitable to secure the rights of humanity. These rights reflect the laws of the common good that emerge under the general will as discussed in Rousseau’s political philosophy (458). I now turn to Rousseau’s idea of the social contract as presented in *Emile*. Rousseau’s method of education culminates in the assembly of reasoning men whom individually learn the art of self-governance, and therefore collectively renounce their individual freedom to claim civil freedom under the general will. In *Emile* the parallel remains to be drawn between the particular will, the divine will, and the general will, for to create a state founded on the rights of humanity there must be an integration of the three.

Rousseau provides a synopsis of his method of education, a method that assures the transition of individual freedom to civil freedom, and directly corresponds to his discussion on familial bond and the particular will within *The Social Contract*:

Assuming that one rejects this right of force and accepts the right of nature, or paternal authority, as the principle of societies, we shall investigate the extent of that authority, how it is founded in nature, and whether it has any other ground other than the utility of the child, his weakness, and the natural love his father has for him. Whether when the child's weakness comes to an end and his reason matures, he does not therefore become the sole natural judge of what is suitable for his preservation, and consequently his own master, as well as become independent of every other man, even of his father. For it is even more certain that the son loves himself than it is that the father loves his son. (459)

Rousseau affirms that from the maturation of reason naturally follows autonomy. If too parallel childhood weakness to the particular will, and reason and autonomy to the general will, thus Rousseau's method of education to his political philosophy, one may ask: Does this final movement into the general will make sense? When man self-wills does he will the general will? On the basis of *The Social Contract* and *Emile* I argue that this transition does makes sense, as I will spend the remainder of this chapter discussing. The alternative would be to consider this question from a practical perspective, outside of Rousseau's political and educational theory, to which I would respond differently.

As made clear within his method of education, Rousseau does not intend for his reasoning to be applied to any social or political system, for such deployment would go against the very nature of his project. I therefore remain steadfast to reaching the climax

of Rousseau's method, concluding: "Since the people is a people before electing a king, what made it such if not a social contract? Therefore the social contract is the basis of every civil society, and the nature of the society it forms must be sought in nature's transaction" (460). Given that the sovereign authority is the general will, "each man who obeys the sovereign obeys only himself" and "one is more free under the social pact than in the state of nature" (461). The social contract manifests only after man reaches the age of reason and acquires autonomy. Emile's newfound reason allows him to depict a form of government that will allow for the preservation of each man's freedom, happiness and uniqueness. As exhibited in *The Social Contract* the general will is founded on the laws of the common good, laws which reflect the divine will of God and distinguish good from evil. Emile's inclination, which sources from the particular will, and sense of duty, which arises from his compassion for others, therefore unite in reason and allow him to will the general will as his own.

Emile must finally return to Sophie, for it is the relationship between two distinct individuals that allows for each person's ultimate love and happiness. Their bond is grounded in the mutual solace each has in the divine will of God: "Sometimes on their walks, as they contemplate nature's marvels, their innocent and pure hearts dare to lift themselves up to its Author. They do not fear His presence. They open their hearts jointly before Him" (426). Thus man and woman unite under the laws set forth by the divine will of God and equally open their hearts to Him as they do to each other. Given their expected marriage Rousseau outlines the boundaries which constitute this bond: "No, my children, hearts are bound in marriage, but bodies are not enslaved. You owe each other fidelity, not compliance. Each of you ought to belong only to the other. But neither of

you ought to be the other's more than he pleases" (477). Marriage is not meant to restrict one's freedom, but rather teach the laws of fidelity and allow both partners to foster genuine happiness. Under these conditions man and women are free, happy and virtuous: "Happy lovers! Worthy couple! To honor their virtues and to paint their felicity, one would have to tell the history of their lives" (480).

Rousseau's unique method of education aims to progress Emile's childhood freedom to civil freedom, thus mature him from a free-spirited, independent rascal, into an autonomous, wise man. It is through Emile's eventual ability to reason that he is liberated from his childhood naivety, maintaining his freedom throughout. Rousseau's method of education encapsulates the growth of individual freedom into a man's ability to live freely among others, and therefore manifests as a method of emancipatory education. The progression from man's independent freedom to autonomous freedom directly parallels Rousseau's idea of the particular will and the general will in *The Social Contract*. The particular will addresses a sense of independent inclination alongside duty, while the general will concerns a common sense of obligation aimed at equal freedom. While the general will seemingly fails within Rousseau's political philosophy because it results in either forced freedom or a sort of religious conditioning, I have shown how Rousseau's method of emancipatory education offers a third way for man to be free under the general will. Rousseau's educational philosophy therefore exists at the core of his political philosophy, as it provides a way for man to attain civil freedom, without the use of force nor conditioning, and thus to live freely among others in the civil state.

## Epilogue: A Change of Perspective

I began my project by referencing Allan Bloom's assertion that "*Emile* is the outline of a possible bridge between the particular will and the general will" (27). From that point forward, I dedicated my project to developing his argument, to proving the possibility of this bridge. I therefore choose to return to the origin of this project and to conclude with Bloom:

*Emile* might seem to some ridiculous because it proposes a system of education which is manifestly impossible for most men and virtually impossible for any man. But this is to misunderstand the book. It is not an educational manual, any more than Plato's *Republic* is advice to rulers. Each adopts a convention – the founding of a city or the rearing of a boy – in order to survey the entire human condition. They are books for philosophers and are meant to influence practice only in the sense that those who read them well cannot help but change their general perspectives. (Bloom, *Emile* 28)

As an undergraduate at Bard, I have been offered varying perspectives on education, from the historical to the human rights perspective to the legal. While my interest in education was fostered through discussions with professors, peers, and community members, I had never been offered an emancipatory perspective prior to my senior year when I was introduced to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile*. I initially intended to approach my project from a practical perspective, to study a school system or the universal right to education. *Emile* prompted me to change my perspective and I see the evolution it engendered manifest in my everyday interactions and temperament. Rousseau has engrained in me the importance of independence and of compassion, and while his



system of education which allows for each man's political freedom is "virtually impossible for any man", to even be aware of such a liberating and humane method is a step towards a more enlightened understanding of education.

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