

THE THERAPIST AND THE LAWGIVER: ROUSSEAU'S POLITICAL VISION

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The Hand that inflicts the Wound is alone the Hand that
can heal it.

Hegel

With the recent observance of the two hundredth anniversary of the death of Jean-Jacques Rousseau it is not surprising that we are witnessing a resurgence of interest in his thought. More profound than a mere celebration of such an event, however, is the fact that Rousseau still speaks to us with a vividness that few since him can command. He, perhaps more than any other political philosopher epitomizes in both his writing and personal life the ongoing struggle of modern man attempting to achieve a meaningful life in a society that appears increasingly complex, alienating and de-humanizing. Rousseau captures the essence of this struggle because he is both attracted to and repelled by modernity in all of its manifestations.

Paris, the symbol of modernity, is both loved and hated by Rousseau. He can speak in lyrical phrases of the simple, happy existence of the noble savage, or of an historical golden age existing prior to the dawn of modern alienation. He can even advocate policies for the prevention of the "progress" that leads to modernity, as in his proposals for the constitutions of Corsica and Poland. He can do this realizing all the while that progress and modernity are inevitable. Not only are they inevitable, but they are ultimately desirable, for it is from the base of the modern condition of alienation that individualized human beings can realize the potential of their species. As Gustave Lanson stated Rousseau's dilemma: "How can civilized man recover the benefits of the natural man, so innocent and happy, without returning to the state of nature, without renouncing the advantages of the social state?"¹ Similarly, Marshall Berman has poignantly captured the paradox of modernity "... in which the potentialities for the self-development of men had multiplied to infinity, while the range of their authentic self-expression had shrunk to nothing."²

Given the nature of the problem it is not surprising that Rousseau's writings have generated a wide range of interpretations as to what message or messages he was attempting to communicate.³ Rather than search for some type of authoritative resolution of those conflicting interpretations it seems more appropriate to view his works as representing an ongoing struggle with a terribly complex series of problems. He was, we think, attempting to engage

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all of us in a dialogue concerning the seemingly enigmatic existence of modern man.⁴ This is an attempt to participate in that dialogue.

In what follows we will argue initially that Rousseau consistently pursued *political* remedies for the dilemmas of modernity. This is in spite of his personal longing for individual isolation and his rapturous descriptions of unsocialized primitive man. Second, we contend that he advocated two *types* of political remedies, often proffered in a somewhat confusing manner but nonetheless clearly articulated and differentiable. One remedy, modeled on Sparta, is in effect the political representation of Rousseau's longing for the childlike innocence associated with natural man. The other involves his attempt to posit the way towards a solution to the problem of modern man as epitomized by the cosmopolitan, alienated Parisian. We shall pursue these two "models" by an examination of two contrasting styles of political leadership that are exhibited throughout his works. These two conceptions of the role of the leader (hereafter referred to as "the lawgiver" and "the therapist")⁵ provide the basis for the two analytically as well as historically separable ideas of community. Finally, we will argue that Rousseau knew that his "Spartan solution" was inevitably temporary; that despite the anguish and struggle it entailed, therapy and the Moral Community were the sole solutions to the dilemmas of modern man.

Political Solutions

For all of his famed individualism and his occasional attempts to withdraw from the complexities of his society, Rousseau realized that men were necessarily tied to one another in a social and political context. Even in the *First* and *Second Discourses*, where he was strongest in his condemnation of the inequalities that social organization and modernity had produced, Rousseau knew that "...for men like me, whose passions have forever destroyed their original simplicity, who can no longer be nourished on grass and nuts..." a solution to the dilemmas of modern life did not lie in a return to a more "simple" atomistic mode of existence.⁶ The concept of the general will of the *Social Contract*, the society of Clarens in *Julie*, and the proposed constitutions for Corsica and Poland, while they may differ markedly in their character, all reject the possibility of a non-political solution to modern ills. Each of these is a model of a potential society; each required the conscious use of political decision-making to bring it about.

It is well known that Rousseau was enamored with the idea of citizenship, preferring to be called "Citizen" over all other forms of address. Indeed, Diderot could invoke his rage by chiding Rousseau for withdrawing from the complexities of Parisian life to lead a temporary "hermit-like" existence while continuing to insist on being called "citizen."⁷ The point is that in spite of personal misanthropic tendencies that surfaced periodically throughout his

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life and which led him to retire as best he could from political and social contact, Rousseau ultimately knew that the only solution to modernity lay in acts of political will. Even his model for authentic man, the carefully nurtured Émile, while he might be able to subsist in an inauthentic society, could do so only as an "amiable stranger", incomplete, stagnant, and stunted in his growth for lack of a polity of like-minded men. "Émile is not made to live alone, he is a member of society, and must fulfill his duties as such. He is made to live among his fellowmen . . ."⁸

Given this, it is not surprising that some of the most apparently contradictory aspects of Rousseau's thought are to be found in his political prescriptions. On the one hand, we are presented with the aforementioned model of Sparta: a simple, relatively primitive, agricultural community which is and should remain isolated from commerce with the external world; a society composed of unsophisticated, selfless citizens who lack any conception of their individuality. The Spartan model remained with him throughout his life, manifesting itself in many forms — the society of Clarens with its rigid role differentiations and the constitutional projects for Corsica and Poland being only several examples. On the other hand, in the *Social Contract* and elsewhere, we are presented with the model of an association of self-willing individuals, binding themselves to one another to produce a moral community governed by the general will. Such a community requires a continuing process of self-definition, an absence of either social stratification or rigid role differentiation — quite different, it would seem, from Sparta.

These and similar conflicting tendencies in his thought have led students of Rousseau into misleading debates over the fundamental nature of his political teachings. He is seen by some scholars as the advocate of highly authoritarian regimes, perhaps even as one of the earliest spokesmen for a sophisticated form of modern totalitarianism. Berman argues that Rousseau eventually abandons his quest for authentic politics, indeed, offers us "escape from freedom". In contrast, he is and was viewed as the intellectual father of the French Revolution, the committed democrat (or republican) who provided a basis for modern concepts of political and economic equality.

Whatever the word selected to define a system where politics is central in controlling both the public and private lives of members of the state, there is little doubt that both of the models in Rousseau's thought require total political control. Julie and Wolmar legislating for the community at Clarens, Rousseau himself performing that function for Poland, the general will "forcing men to be free", all demonstrate that whether man wills it or not, society permeates the totality of his being; hence, politics must be the central aspect in the life of modern man if he is to attain moral freedom. Yet to equate the society at Clarens with the type of association advocated in the *Social Contract* would clearly be an error. There are significant differences which can best be seen through two distinct — but ultimately complementary —

conceptions of political leadership that are intertwined in Rousseau's writings.

The Lawgiver

Rousseau lived in an age that exhibited tremendous social contrasts. In terms of life style and social-political organization, the discrepancies between Paris and the countryside were great indeed. Further, the intellectual legacy of Montesquieu, to whom Rousseau was greatly indebted, was still prevalent. The notion of cultural relativism was still new and Rousseau was caught up in it, blending it, however, with an historical perspective. His reading and personal life exposed him to a wide variety of cultures and institutions, and his writings are full of examples of the extreme contrasts between living conditions and life styles. He further insisted that institutions, particularly political institutions, reflect the proclivities of the people involved with them. The institutions and practices of Haut Valais, however desirable they might be in the abstract, were simply not suited for the cities and villages down the mountain: "One must know thoroughly the nation from which one is building; otherwise the final product, however excellent . . . in itself, will prove imperfect . . ."9 Consequently, Rousseau advocated quite different political solutions in different situations and called for different methods of implementation, depending on the historical condition of the potential body politic. Institutions that might be ideally suited to Corsicans or French peasants simply would not do for Parisians. In more contemporary terms, the conditions of economic and social development in a potential polity limit the range of alternatives. Those areas in the early stages of development require political rules generated by one man from without — a law-giver.

Rousseau was thoroughly familiar with the idea of the lawgiver or the "founding father" in earlier political thought, particularly as it was manifested in the Platonic philosopher-king and the Machiavellian prince. His works are filled with positive references to the virtues of those persons who, through acts of personal will, produce stable and enduring polities. Perhaps his praise of Moses, Lycurgus and Numa is most illustrative.

I gaze out over the nations of the modern world, and I see numerous scribblers of laws, but not a single legislator. But among the ancients, I find no less than three legislators so outstanding as to deserve our special mention: Moses, Lycurgus, and Numa, all of whom concerned themselves mainly with matters that out doctors of learning would deem absurd. Yet each of them achieved a kind of success which, were it not so thoroughly supported by evidence, we should regard as impossible.¹⁰

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Moses changed a "herd of servile emigrants into a political society" whose laws endure "as strong as ever" even though the nation "no longer existed as a body"¹¹; Lycurgus legislated "for a people already debased by servitude" and "vice" and "fixed upon them a yoke of iron, the like of which no other people have ever borne", in order to found the Spartan empire¹²; and Numa, Rousseau tells us, is incorrectly recorded by historians as "merely an innovator of rites and religious ceremonies" when, in actuality he, not Romulus, "was the real founder of Rome".¹³

The achievement of the lawgiver is, then, to produce institutions and prescribe policies that are well-suited to the particular conditions of a society and fit the propensities of its people. Given the general condition of the people he is dealing with in the proposed constitutions for Poland and Corsica, it is understandable why Rousseau advocated policies that seem to be at odds with values expressed elsewhere in his writings. The model for these relatively primitive societies is Sparta, and Rousseau is to be their Lycurgus. Under primitive conditions with non-industrialized men, he advocates an agricultural economy, avoidance of urbanization, reasonably strict role differentiation, lack of commerce with other states, simple art and culture, appropriate "Spartan" military virtue, and numerous other highly restrictive measures. All of these are advocated in the name of producing stability in the state and happiness for its people. Indeed, Rousseau warns Poland and other similarly situated nations:

If what you wish is merely to make a great splash, to be impressive and formidable, to influence the other peoples of Europe, you have before you their example: get busy and imitate it. Cultivate the sciences, the arts, commerce, industry . . . Do all this, and you end up with a people as scheming, violent, greedy, ambitious, servile, and knavish as the next, and all of it at one extreme or the other of misery and opulence, of license and slavery, with nothing in between.¹⁴

The "happiness" involved in the Spartan model is, however, of a very simplistic nature, to be found only through limitation and lack of knowledge of alternatives. The people living under those conditions would be happy and the institutions stable only to the extent they were able to avoid the complexities of modernity. As we shall argue at another point, Rousseau, in spite of his advocacy, knew that the stability of the Spartan model was temporary. For the moment, what is clear is that persons who had been exposed to modern society with its inequalities, its preponderance of *amour propre*, its extreme diversity, could *not* achieve happiness or a meaningful life

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under the Spartan model: "grass and nuts" are no longer nourishing. One cannot envision Rousseau himself existing in his proposed Corsican society — he knew too much, had been exposed to too many things, was a creation of modern society. Perhaps the best example of such a condition is to be found in the person of Julie in Rousseau's romantic novel of the same name.

The story is reasonably familiar. Julie, having seen the possibility of a potentially authentic existence through her affair with St. Preux, is forced by society (in the person of her father) to renounce that love and marry the Baron de Wolmar, becoming mistress of his land and people. She responds to this denial of her potential self with what Berman calls an "escape from freedom".¹⁵ She and Wolmar jointly become the legislators for the estate at Clarens, benign despots who use many of Rousseau's Spartan policies to produce a stable society wherein an unreflective, simple happiness abounds. And to insure that their children never suffer the pain and anguish of self-denial, Julie has arranged for them to be educated in the manner of Émile, and by his tutor. As the returned St. Preux describes the environment, "... what a pleasant and affecting sight is that of a simple and well-regulated house in which order, peace and innocence prevail, in which without show, without pomp, everything is assembled which is in conformity with the true end of man!"¹⁶ Such a society works rather well for everyone except Julie, for in her love for St. Preux, she had discovered the possibility of a more complex and meaningful life. All the while she tries to submerge herself in the role of lawgiver, she retains a secret garden, an Elysium, wherein her imagination and private thoughts have full play. Here she symbolizes alienated and repressed modern "man", tragically existing, but not living, in a Corsican society.

The project of Clarens fails, not for the general public, but for Julie herself. St. Preux is summoned back to Clarens, and she is graphically confronted with the fact that she remains Julie, still in love, and that her project of self-repression as Madame de Wolmar involved a denial of her potential as a human being. The important point here is not that the carefully legislated society of Clarens is a failure, but that it is a failure for Julie, who cannot deny her ongoing love. Indeed, after her convenient death, the society goes on lamenting her loss, but with continuing stability and relative happiness. Clarens, as a partial representation of Rousseau's Spartan model is designed for the prevalent condition of its "citizens", but it could never work for a Julie who has experienced the possibility of a truly authentic life. Indeed, one can argue that Julie must die, for her continued presence as a person who has experienced authenticity is a threat to the very society she has participated in founding.

It should be emphasized here that the type of situation resulting from the acts of the lawgiver is properly described as intensely political. That is, political authority is extensively used to control the lives of citizens. While their tacit consent to such arrangements is required, the range of control

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available to the lawgiver is wide indeed. In the *Third Discourse*, for example, Rousseau argues for a ban on fine arts and letters, believing, much as Plato before him, that they were corrupting influences on the people; and, from an economic perspective, he would legislatively insure men's liberty through the prevention of "... inequalities of fortunes; not by building hospitals for the poor, but by securing the citizens from becoming poor"¹⁷. It is the ability of one "citizen . . . to buy another" that creates the ruinous inequality which lies at the root of all social decay.¹⁸ However, the types of limitations imposed here are significantly different from those encountered elsewhere in Rousseau's thought. They are primarily *external* forms of control through laws and institutions, and Rousseau realizes that a more effective means of control is not over men's bodies, but over their hearts and minds. The entire nation must be infused with a spirit that is established through the use of religion, education, custom and habit. Indeed, Rousseau prophesies that such a national spirit will enable Poland to live on even when its territory is occupied by Russia.¹⁹ This type of control, although total, is essentially different from the domination produced by modernity. In a closed society composed of men with non-individualized selves, be it Poland, Corsica, Clarens or Geneva, it is still possible for the Julies and Jean-Jacques to escape. Rousseau's failure to return to Geneva before the city gates are locked for the night forces him to find another society in which to exist. Julie's escape is of a more permanent nature, but she does escape. Through death, Julie flees from a world that suffocates her capacity to love, and rushes into a new world where she will eventually be reunited with Saint Preux. As Professor Shklar succinctly sums up Julie's end: "Death also is a path to peace."²⁰

But in the modern societies of Paris and London there is no exit: the all-pervasive, invisible control is *self-induced*. Rousseau was among the first to understand how the most total domination can be exercised by the individual *on himself* — all under the guise of autonomy or freedom. Modern authority is the "most absolute" in that it "penetrates into a man's inmost being, and concerns itself no less with his will than with his actions."²¹ And so, when Rousseau addresses the problem of cosmopolitan Paris and perceives the possibility of an association of authentic individuals, his prescriptions are quite different. The lawgiver of Poland is supplanted by the therapist who induces people to transform themselves and will true community. Clarens provides an example of *external* control for purposes of stability and a kind of childlike happiness, whereas a moral community for modern man requires the internal consensual willing of self-defining individuals. Leadership is still necessary, at least in the initial stages of the formation of a true community, but it is leadership of a different sort.

The Therapist

As Rousseau was acutely aware, *amour-propre* was an inevitable product of culture *per se*. In spite of his numberless statements detailing the pain and misery resulting from vanity, he also claimed that the golden age "... must have been the happiest and (most) durable epoch."²² It seems then that *amour-propre*, this "relative sentiment ... which inclines each individual to have greater esteem for himself than for anyone else, inspires in men all the harm they do to one another ...", can be benign as long as it does not become part of a never-ending, systematically extracted price for mere social existence.²³ This is precisely what takes place with the introduction of bourgeois property relations. Quoting the "wise" Locke, Rousseau writes: "... where there is no property, there is no injury."²⁴ Part II of the *Second Discourse*, itself an imaginative chronicle of man's ongoing history of self-estrangement, begins with the stark recollection of the monumental moment when private property was instituted, civil society founded and modernity forever established.

The first person who, having fenced off a plot of ground, took it into his head to say *this is mine* and found people simple enough to believe this, was the true founder of civil society. What crimes, wars, murders, what miseries and horrors would the human race have been spared by someone who, uprooting the stakes or filling in the ditch, had shouted to his fellow-men: Beware of listening to this imposter; you are lost if you forget that the fruits belong to all and the earth to no one!²⁵

As if to console himself over this fateful event, Rousseau laments: "But it is very likely that by then things had already come to the point where they could no longer remain as they were. For this idea of property, depending on many prior ideas which could only have arisen successively, was not conceived all at once in the human mind."²⁶ The development of the human mind, the use of language, the forming of hunting associations, the progress of "industry" beyond the point of meeting the barest biological needs of men, all were prerequisites to the institutionalization of property relations and the beginning of modern times. Moreover, pride and "a sort of property" were also necessary to the creation of modernity. The former first appeared in the species, then in the individual; and the "sort of property" Rousseau discusses are the implements of survival developed by nascent man.²⁷ Although he acknowledges that quarrels and fights resulted from even these minor changes in circumstances, they were infrequent and short-lived. More important, in Rousseau's philogenetic account, these alterations occurred prior to the creation of the family, which Rousseau describes as giving "... rise to the

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sweetest sentiments known to men . . .”²⁸

As long as men were “content with their rustic huts . . . to sewing their clothing of skins . . . [to applying] themselves only to tasks that a single person could do . . . they lived free, healthy, good and happy insofar as they could be according to their nature . . .” An ontological being, Rousseau knew that man could not remain in this primitive, albeit noble, condition. The next historical epoch was far more costly than the first.

But from the moment one man needed the help of another, as soon as they observed that it was useful for a single person to have provisions for two, equality disappeared, property was introduced, labor became necessary; and vast forests were changed into smiling fields which had to be watered with the sweat of men, and in which slavery and misery were soon seen to germinate and grow with the crops.²⁹

The sporadic, random violence of pre-modern society is exchanged for a constant, systematic, all-inclusive exploitation of man by man, where “smiles” are now extracted by the sweat of others.

Given the changes in the political milieu caused by this institutionalization of exploitation through bourgeois property relations — e.g. the use of class distinctions, increasing urbanization and commercialization — the modern bourgeois society needs more than a giver of laws to help men return to themselves. These men are products of alienation which they brought, however unknowingly, upon themselves. Their alienation is self-induced. So too must be the cure. Modernity, with its estranged men, needs a leader who can act as a political therapist, confronting, cajoling, and even coercing men to find and develop their true selves, because only then can they create a vital, moral community.

The formulation of the therapist’s role can be clearly seen in the character of the tutor in *Émile*. Here the therapist as tutor shapes, molds and transforms *Émile* from a selfless, savage-like infant into a modern, willing citizen-man. Previous commentators have noted Rousseau’s passage in the beginning of *Émile* where he appears to be offering his readers a choice between creating men or creating citizens.

Everything should therefore be brought into harmony with these natural tendencies, and that might well be if our three modes of education merely differed from one another; but what can be done when they conflict, when

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instead of training man for himself, you try to train him for others? Harmony becomes impossible. Forced to combat either nature or society, you must make your choice between the man and the citizen, you cannot train both.³⁰

Rousseau is obviously warning his readers that if they attempt to "combat either nature or society" and train the pupil "for others" as was the custom of the day, they will have to choose between a man or a citizen, or fail in trying to create both. But insofar as Rousseau's educational method does not "combat", but rather integrates or synthesizes nature and society, and thereby first educates man for himself, and only then for others, Rousseau as the tutor-therapist can indeed "train both"! More than just a Thoreauvian recluse, or a noble savage, or even a *zoon politikon*, this new being is both for himself and for others, both natural and social. He is a citizen-man. Émile's education thus symbolizes on the microscopic level the potential salvation for modern man. His education describes the path forward toward human authenticity.

From the beginning of his education, Émile's attention is focused on the building of a sense of self, a sense of Émile. With his first infantile movements he is permitted, under the watchful eye of the tutor, to "learn the difference between self and not self . . ." ³¹ Later, at the correct time, Émile experiences the "only natural passion"; *amour de soi*, self-love.³² This natural passion is the fountain for all future human emotions, passions, and feelings of beauty, justice and community love. This love of self, or selfishness is good in itself. Allowed to slowly ripen in Émile, this seed can bear the fruit of an authentic, happy and free man who interacts with other like-minded fellow-creatures in an authentic community.

A central point of Émile's developing self-love is the fact that the tutor provides the necessary breathing room for Émile to grow, to age, to mature naturally. Like the personae of "the legislator" in the *Social Contract* (but unlike the legislators of the Spartan model) Émile's tutor must play god; he must create a natural asylum, an incubator, outside the clutches of society where Émile is allowed to mature before he is ultimately returned to society. Rousseau is concerned with first creating "a grown child", for only then is "a grown man" possible.³³

Nature would have them children before they are men. If we try to invert this order, we shall produce a forced fruit immature and flavorless, fruit which will be rotten before it is ripe . . .³⁴

Living in semi-isolation, Émile is permitted — or rather, unknowingly forced

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— by the tutor to love and accept his own selfhood. As his body develops and gains self-sufficiency, Émile's speculative faculty develops. With the developing of reasoning power, he begins to "love those about him".³⁵ As his consciousness begins to extend, to project beyond his self, Émile begins the passage into manhood. This feeling comes as his heart is touched by the sufferings of his fellow-creatures — a feeling similar to the sensation of commiseration, or *pitié*, experienced by the noble savage of the *Second Discourse*. Although compassion is natural, it must be emphasized that Rousseau's society is based upon strength, not weakness.³⁶ Foreshadowing Nietzsche, Rousseau was able to transcend man's foolish tendency to let his compassion for the weak generate hatred for the strong. Rousseau's work, taken as a whole, celebrates the possibilities of meaningful, individual existence in a vital community, made possible by the emerging of strong, secure, ego-transcending adults.

My son, there is no happiness without courage, nor virtue without a struggle. The word virtue is derived from a word signifying strength, and strength is the foundation of all virtue. Virtue is the heritage of a creature weak by nature but strong by will; that is the whole merit of the righteous man; and though we call God good, we do not call Him virtuous because He does good without effort.³⁷

Aware of his self, conscious of other fellow-creatures like him, beginning to feel the natural stirrings of reason and conscience, Émile is "re-born". Prior to this, the student was ignorant of good or evil, right or wrong.

So long as his consciousness is confined to himself, there is no morality in his actions; it is only when it begins to extend beyond himself that he forms first the sentiments and then the ideas of good and ill, which make him indeed a man, and an integral part of his species.³⁸

His consciousness begins to develop; he now is ready to confront the world. In society Émile finds most men living the lives of marionettes, behind "masks" and "veils", always waiting for the curtain to go up and for a faceless power to pull their strings. Although a bit uneasy in his new surroundings, Émile realizes how silly these people are and how lucky he is.³⁹ Taken on a tour of Europe to examine various societies, he reaffirms his social nature. The tutor explains to Émile that he is duty-bound to help his fellow-creatures by being their "benefactor" and "pattern".⁴⁰ As a counter-cultural figure, Émile will

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represent what they all long to be. He alone is content to be himself, the master of his own destiny. Émile does not wish to be either "Socrates or Cato". He wants to be Émile.⁴¹ Unfortunately, other people are not as psychologically healthy for they always want to be other than, and outside of, their selves. This is true of Julie, as it was of Rousseau.

Had Rousseau written only of the proper mode of education for authenticity in children he could easily be castigated for his naive efforts. Others before him had similarly talked of wiping the slate clean as a necessary prerequisite to begin the creation of the good community. But Rousseau also provides a solution for the Julies of the world, those who have penetrated the veils of modern society and discovered the possibility of an authentic life. After all, if the slate will not wipe itself clean, it must be forced to do so. Rousseau sensed that the world was composed of numerous people like himself, like the Savoyard vicar, like Julie. He realized that Europe was on the verge of revolution and, while without direction it would be fruitless, revolution with the proper leader could be therapeutic for those with hidden selves. In a sense, then, the tutor-therapist of *Émile*, who practices a sort of preventive medicine, must become the leader-therapist (Rousseau simply calls this character "The Legislator") of the *Social Contract* who must devise psyche cures for a society of patients who do not know they are ill, but nevertheless despair of a cure. Hence, the leader-therapist must force those modern alienated men to weather the storm of their own souls and be free.

In the *Social Contract*, Rousseau's central character is called "The Legislator" even though he actually does not legislate at all: "He who frames laws, then, has or ought to have no legislative right . . ." The Legislator may propose laws and institutions, but he cannot dispose: "the people themselves have this incommunicable right . . ." It is no wonder Rousseau describes the Legislator as having "an authority that is a mere nothing".⁴² And yet the Legislator of the *Social Contract* is supposed to exercise god-like qualities in order to "transform", to "change human nature", to "alter man's constitution in order to strengthen it", so that each estranged individual becomes a responsive human being.⁴³ How can he do this? Obviously, through legislation alone he can not transform man. But, as a therapist who leads men to their own self-enlightenment, their own self-understanding, he most assuredly can.

The first step of the therapy is essentially negative, destroying the conventional wisdom and common-sense notions of the day. The therapist will show men that appearances are deceiving. Indeed, Rousseau begins the *Social Contract* with the enigmatic observation that "Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains. One believes himself the master of others, and yet he is a greater slave than they."⁴⁴ He declares that "the English people thinks that it is free, but is greatly mistaken . . . it is enslaved";⁴⁵ that all modern nations think that they are free because they have no slaves, when in reality they are the real slaves;⁴⁶ that society has "enfeebled" man, making him only

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“seem to be happy”; that man is “scarcely ever himself and is almost a stranger to himself”; that he “is ill at ease when he is forced into his own company”; and that “not what he is, but what he seems, is all he cares for”. All of these are poignant examples of self-deception.⁴⁷

Confronted with the harsh reality of living outside himself, modern man is in mental crisis. He can attempt to escape à la Julie, he can be reborn like Émile, or perhaps even saved as was the tutor at the hands of the Savoyard priest. This is a period of crisis, a time of upheaval, that is full of danger and potential for both the society and the individual. Lycurgus comes to Sparta during a period of civil war and out of “its ashes . . . regains the vigour of youth”.⁴⁸ So, too, for the individual: at the abyss of death he can be saved, reborn with the help of the therapist.⁴⁹

To be sure, this is no easy task to “change human nature” and “strengthen” man’s constitution.⁵⁰ It is, nevertheless, a theme which runs throughout Rousseau’s work. Although this metamorphosis can be found in both *Émile* and the *Social Contract*, Rousseau captures it most clearly in the *First Discourse*.

It is a grand and beautiful sight to see man emerge from obscurity somehow by his own efforts . . . rise above himself; soar intellectually into celestial regions; traverse with giant steps, like the sun, the vastness of the universe; and — what is even grander and more difficult — come back to himself to study man and know his nature, his duties, and his end . . .⁵¹

Returning into himself, man can begin anew. He can become a psychologically healthy individual who is comfortable and happy with himself. After all, “What good is it to seek our happiness in the opinion of another if we can find it within ourselves?”⁵² No longer threatened, but now enhanced by his fellow-creatures, man is ready to determine his own station in life. The outgrowth is an authentic, moral community cemented together with fresh, *self-imposed* chains of love, brotherhood and respect. Freed from institutionalized *amour-propre*, egoism, and pathological dependence, the new citizen-man sees others as an extension — rather than a limitation — of his own self. Together these authentic individuals will their general and particular futures on behalf of all. The particular and general will are, after all, but exact correlatives. This change in the individual self will be genuinely reality altering. He too, like the leader-therapist, will be able to “see”; he too will be able to reason, and to will his own best interest. This gestalt shift will change the individual’s relationship with himself, his fellow-creatures, and his world. Obviously the therapist’s treatment, be the patient Émile or Julie, is not

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one of merely helping his ward to cope with a sick society — of somehow humanizing the inhumane. On the contrary, the reborn, authentic individual will stand as a perpetual threat to inauthenticity. He will, therefore, alter society so that it becomes a healthy environment in which every man, including himself, can live. Radical therapy of the private self is political indeed!

It is through the idea of the general will articulated in the *Social Contract* that Rousseau attempts the harmonious resolution of the tension between the self and the social. When these individuals coalesce, submitting themselves to the general will, it is the same as submitting to, or obeying their own selves. In Rousseau's words: "each giving himself to all, gives himself to nobody."⁵³ Moreover, these new men are much freer under the social arrangement; they are freer than man in bourgeois society, or man in the state of nature.⁵⁴ When all these healthy, loving individuals are thus united, the society runs smoothly; whenever a matter needs the attention of the body politic, it takes but one man — any member of the society — to propose the remedy: As Rousseau puts it, he will merely "give expression to what all have previously felt".⁵⁵

In the *Social Contract*, the leadership styles of lawgiver and therapist are both evident. In a sense, that book can be seen as exhibiting a developmental, historical pattern from an externally controlled society to one based on the internal willing of citizens. Initially, the *law-giver* will create institutions, formulate laws, manipulate religions, invent customs and habits to begin the external control over men's actions, hearts and minds. The role of the law-giver is especially important for newly born, semi-feudal societies still in their infancy, made up of pre-modern, self-less men, but he must also be present in the early stages of the development of modern communities. He prepares the objective conditions which are necessary, though insufficient, for human emancipation. After all, economic equality and self-sufficiency are prerequisites of freedom.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, Rousseau knew that in time — after a period of ripening — the *therapist* would have to come on the scene to treat the subjective condition. That is, to help those potential citizen-men grow into themselves. The therapist could not do otherwise given the unique power of the human mind — the ability to dream. In *Émile*, Sophie is prepared by the tutor to be Émile's mate for life. Although given an essentially different, albeit natural, education suited for her future "wifely" station, the tutor realizes that even he cannot preclude her from using her imagination. Whether locked in a dark room by herself or forced to marry Baron de Wolmar, the Sophies and Julies can still dream.⁵⁷ And that Sparta must fall is inevitable.

The need for the therapist, therefore, is already present in the nature of man. Under the tutelage of the therapist (Rousseau's "Legislator" of the *Social Contract*), individuals will see that their own best particular interests are embodied in the general will. When individuals define their roles in society, they will now do so in the particular and universal interest of every citizen in

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the community. At that time the leader-law-giver-therapist will be able to fade into the background and watch the ongoing development of the authentic society of free, willing citizen-men. The transformation from a slave of instinct and society into a morally free and communal being is now complete.⁵⁸

We stated earlier that it could be demonstrated that Rousseau had a clear conception of the type of community that was best for man. In a strict sense that is not true, for "best" is to some extent contextually defined. What is clear, however, is that the chains of modernity are a prerequisite for a truly *human* community of self-willing individuals. Pre-modern Corsicans might be happy in their innocence, providing the appropriate external controls are instituted by a wise law-giver, but Rousseau knew that such a solution was temporary at best, and ultimately inhuman. He could long for such a remedy, even prescribe its implementation, all the while knowing it was ultimately impossible. Just as men had been dragged from their primitive existence into inequality and *amour-propre* by forces they could neither control nor even understand, so Corsicans would dream, come in contact with other societies and destroy their innocence.

Today's reader of Rousseau may still undergo the painful process of self-understanding at the hands of the therapist, for in the final analysis it is Rousseau, as author, who plays this crucial part. Although he explicitly tells his readers of certain objective requirements of true community, he more importantly raises certain unanswered — but answerable — questions in the readers' minds. Like Plato in *The Republic*, Rousseau knows that the only real dialogue is between author and reader: so too, Rousseau carries on a dialogue with us; so too, he carries a touch which ultimately cannot force us to be free, but can shed light on the way out of our cave.

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Notes

1. Lanson, Gustave, "L'unité de la pensée de Jean-Jacques Rousseau", *Annales de la Société Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, VIII (1912), p. 16 as quoted by Peter Gay in his introduction to Ernst Cassirer, *The Question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1967, p. 19. To give another perspective, Hendel finds the problem to lie in the tension created by Rousseau's desire for the good life, and his efforts "... to set men free from their own tyranny, tyranny within as well as without". C.W. Hendel, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Moralist*, London: Oxford University Press, 1934, II, 323. John Charvet, *The Social Problem in the Philosophy of Rousseau*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1974.
2. Berman, Marshall, *The Politics of Authenticity* New York: Atheneum, 1972, p. 153.
3. For a collection of interpretations, see Guy H. Dodge, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Authoritarian Libertarian?*, Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath, 1971.

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4. On the subject of his own consistency Rousseau had no doubts: "All that is daring in the *Contract social* had previously appeared in the *Discours sur l'inégalité*; all that is daring in *Émile* had previously appeared in *Julie*." *Confessions*, Livre IX, *Oeuvres complètes*, Hachette ed., [Paris, 1871-77], VIII, pp. 290-91. And in *Rousseau juge de Jean-Jacques*, Troisième dialogue (Hachette ed.), IX, p. 287 Rousseau claimed that "one great principle" was evident in all his works. Cf. Claude Ake, "Right, Utility, and Rousseau", *Western Political Quarterly*, 20:1, (March) 1967, pp. 5-15, who notes that although there are many "antithetical strands" in Rousseau, he is actually only a "poor systematizer" whose contradictions are really complementary.
5. For recent studies using the concept of "therapy" see James M. Glass, "Political Philosophy as Therapy: Rousseau and the Pre-Social Origins of Consciousness", *Political Theory*, 4 (1976), 163-83; and Gertrude A. Steuernagel, *Political Philosophy as Therapy*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979.
6. Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, *The Second Discourse* from *The First and Second Discourses*, trans. by Roger D. Masters and Judith R. Masters, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964, p. 202, which is Rousseau's fn. 1. All quotes from these Discourses are taken from the above.
7. "Adieu, Citizen! A very singular citizen a hermit is!", Hendel, p. 248.
8. Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, *Émile*, trans. by Barbara Foxley, New York: Everyman's Library, 1974, p. 292.
9. Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, *The Government of Poland*, trans. by Willmore Kendall, New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1972, p. 1.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 67.
15. Berman, pp. 231-64.
16. Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, trans. and abridged by Judith H. McDowell, University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1968, p. 301.
17. Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, "Political Economy", from *The Social Contract plus the Dedication from the "Second Discourse" and "On Political Economy"*, rev. trans. ed. with introduction and notes by Charles M. Sherover, New York: New American Library, 1974, p. 271. All quotes from the *Third Discourse* and *The Social Contract* are from the above.
18. *The Social Contract*, p. 85.
19. *The Government of Poland*, p. 10.
20. Shklar, Judith N., *Men and Citizens*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1969, p. 69. Although this treatment is dominated by the author's view that Rousseau saw the prospects for human fulfillment to be both fatal and tragic, the work presents many unique and penetrating insights into all of Rousseau's major writings, especially the generally neglected *La Nouvelle Héloïse*.
21. *Political Economy*, p. 263.
22. *The Second Discourse*, p. 151.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 222.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 141-42.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 142.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 144, 149, 146.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 147. This entire *Discourse*, when coupled with *Émile*, is in many ways analogous to contemporary efforts to describe human evolution. Cf. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. and ed. by James Strachey New York: W. W. Norton, 1962, and Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1966.

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29. *Ibid.*, pp. 151-52.
 30. *Émile*, p. 7.
 31. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
 32. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
 33. *Ibid.*, p. 122.
 34. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
 35. *Ibid.*, p. 174.
 36. Do not misunderstand: although Rousseau explains that initially it was man's weakness that made him sociable (for example: *Émile*, p. 182), this in no way alters the fact that he believed that an authentic society must be composed of individuals strong enough to integrate *amour-propre*, inequality and all the other factors that lead to social decay.
 37. *Ibid.*, p. 408.
 38. *Ibid.*, p. 181.
 39. *Émile* realizes that man is a silly creature because "The man of the world almost always wears a mask. He is scarcely ever himself and is almost a stranger to himself . . . Not what he is, but what he seems, is all he cares for." *Ibid.*, p. 191.
 40. *Ibid.*, p. 438.
 41. *Ibid.*, p. 205.
 42. *The Social Contract*, p. 67.
 43. *Ibid.*, p. 65.
 44. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
 45. *Ibid.*, p. 161.
 46. *Ibid.*, p. 163.
 47. *Émile*, p. 191.
 48. *The Social Contract*, p. 71-3.
 49. Cf. Shklar, p. 134. "The man [Wolmar, the tutor or the Legislator] who wants to mould a people needs the same qualities as a father who rules his children or a tutor who is capable of raising a child properly. And in a sense all are *soul-surgeons*, men who prevent or cure the diseases that affect the human heart in every society." (Emphasis added). See also p. 174 where Shklar refers to the legislator as "that master psychologist".
 50. *The Social Contract*, p. 65.
 51. *The First Discourse*, p. 35. "At the beginning of this second period we took advantage of the fact that our strength was more than enough for our needs, to enable us to get outside of ourselves. We have ranged the heavens and measured the earth; we have sought out the laws of nature; we have explored the whole of our island. Now let us return to ourselves . . ." *Émile*, p. 155.
 52. *The First Discourse*, p. 64.
 53. *The Social Contract*, p. 25.
 54. *Émile*, p. 425.
 55. *The Social Contract*, p. 175.
 56. See above.
 57. As an apprentice, Rousseau himself became addicted to dreaming in order to escape the boredom and misery of his trade.
 58. *The Social Contract*, p. 31.
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