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ÉTUDES SUR *L'ÉMILE*

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Jean TERRASSE

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THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF ÉMILE: SYMBOLIC MEDIATION IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF ROUSSEAU

by Raymond Bazowski

In his correspondence Rousseau once remarked that while he might never be able to adequately express the unique vision afforded him on the road to Vincennes, that singular experience nonetheless informed and gave coherence to all his subsequent writings. Yet whenever interpreters undertake the task of re-assembling Rousseau's several arguments into a seamless whole, they invariably encounter paradoxes which do not easily yield to any transcending resolution. Thus the promise of a healing political morality which has always been the tantalizing underside of Rousseau's various indictments of knowledge and power seems forever fraught with contradictions. For instance, in his most famous political work, the problem of reconciling justice and utility leads to a strange paralogism. The ostensible difficulty with the *Social Contract* is that the radical estrangement of rights to a community which forms the basis of a General Will serves to obscure the status of a public morality to the extent that it presupposes the very conditions of rational willing which the General Will is supposed to effect.

Of course one can argue that even if Rousseau's "contract" cannot, in the end, tell us how to break the chains that bind us, it still remains valuable as an analysis of those conditions of a *de jure* state reflecting the activities of autonomous men capable of acting according to self-prescribed laws. But even in this qualified sense Rousseau's contractual argument is not free of difficulties. For even as he portrays autonomy as a precondition and consequence of rational willing, Rousseau cautions that such political liberty is vouch-safed only in rare circumstances where political geography, economic development and customs and manners, conspire to produce the appropriate political virtues. With these qualifications Rousseau attempts to wed, in an uneasy fashion, a universalistic prescription for rational willing

with a sociological and psychological analysis of human interaction.

If one moves to Rousseau's other great "pedagogic" work, the controlled education of *Émile*, both the terms of the problem and the conditions necessary to overcome it initially appear radically different from those adumbrated in the *Social Contract*. Early in the *Émile* Rousseau announces that his pedagogic task involves a choice between forming a man or a citizen, a choice which is exclusive since the orders of willing in these two existential situations are the inverse of each other. In his subsequent lessons in education Rousseau does seem to give the impression that rather than a citizen, it is an independent, self-governing individual who is being trained. Through the careful manipulation of environment and appropriately administered precepts, a judicious tutor appears to be able to inoculate his pupil against the kind of viral society described in the *Second Discourse*. True, this tonic example of a good ontogenesis might well reflect the possibility of a healthy phylogenesis, but this merely raises the question of what a society of *Émiles* would look like.

One of the most persuasive answers to this question has been supplied by Ernst Cassirer, whose avowedly Kantian interpretation of Rousseau continues to be highly instructive. According to Cassirer, Rousseau's philosophical revolution consisted of transforming the theodicy problem into an historical question and then indicating that it is man's capacity for self-determination which ultimately decides his freedom and goodness. The rational law of the General Will illuminates this historical potential for freedom and goodness where a self-willed duty is at once generalized and made objective in a political community. Although he conceded that Rousseau was unable to theoretically break the hold of eudaemonism, Cassirer nevertheless maintained that in the last instance Rousseau's equation of reason and morality led him to dispense with the question of happiness and utility, the better to concern himself with the dignity of man. In light of this alleged abandonment of eudaemonism, it is not surprising that Cassirer should find renunciation as the prototypical act underlying Rousseau's vision of a new ethical and political order: "He did not believe in the unrestrained surrender to passion but demanded of men the power of renunciation. The meaning and worth of life disclosed themselves to him

only in that power.”¹

For Cassirer, the fact that Rousseau allowed, at least philosophically, for the sacrifice of the passions to reason, makes it easier to fit the *Émile* in with the rest of his works. *Émile*, quite simply, is being educated to be a “citizen among those who are to be.”² Inasmuch as *Émile*'s education predisposes him to the ideal polity of the *Social Contract*, we are made to witness the formation of a will that can confront a disordered society with a categorical duty, an unconditional will to renewal. The whole of the *Émile* thus turns on this explosive translation of precept into possibility.

The conceptual warrant for such a Kantian interpretation is sufficiently strong to accept much of this argument. Certainly Cassirer's identification of renunciation as the quintessential act whereby Rousseau's natural man is converted into a moral/political being is on the mark. But it is not evident that renunciation and its transformational effect operate in the same way in the *Social Contract* and in the *Emile*. What is evident is that there is a structural similarity in the terms of transformation. In the *Émile*, just as in the *Social Contract*, a form of individual desire is transformed or modified, and in both cases this transformation initially requires an external force in the person of a legislator or a tutor. The crucial transformational role which such an external force plays does, however, raise certain difficulties for a simple Kantian reading of Rousseau since it begs the question of autonomy if autonomy is seen to issue from what is, in all essentials, the heteronomous command of an external will. To be sure, this same problem arises in Kant's own philosophy when he is led to consider the actualization of a kingdom of ends in time and space. The result, in Kant, is a not altogether unambiguous philosophy of history where nature and reason are presumed to collaborate in such a way that evolving social institutions, or simply legality itself, prepare the way for moral transformations. While the legality associated with political institutions can only impinge on man's external actions, it does nonetheless serve an educative or disciplinary function in the sense that the constraints of law habituate men toward a reciprocal respect and thus prepare them for the exercise of a moral liberty. The key here is time or history which ameliorates

1. Ernst Cassirer, *The Question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969), p. 81.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 123.

the radical disjunction between the passions and a self-willed duty through a gradual yet progressive process of acculturation. Of course the problem still remains, in this philosophy of history, of just how a leap can be made from the external conditioning of legality to the internal conditions of moral willing.

If Rousseau's reflections on man's moral/political condition are to be compared with those of Kant, it would seem that it is precisely this notion of a leap from external conditioning to interiorized prescription which requires special attention. Given Kant's own acknowledgement of its inspirational value, it is the *Émile* which recommends itself most to such comparison. In this text Rousseau supplies all the familiar Kantian ingredients for a transformational leap: desire, will, reason, education and time. But a careful examination of the *Émile* shows that Rousseau's treatment of a moral leap issues in a dilemma which jeopardizes any transformation. In what follows I should like to explore the nature of Rousseau's transformational dilemma, primarily as it is revealed in the *Émile*, and the implications this dilemma has for a progressivist (i.e. Kantian) doctrine of politics and morality.

From Thetis to Circe

The *Émile* is a truly synoptic book. In it can be found all the themes traced elsewhere in Rousseau's writings magisterially compounded into an "education manual." As an aid for the understanding of this text Rousseau provided a series of illustrations which set off each individual book. These illustrations (consisting of Thetis plunging Achilles into the river Styx, Chiron training the child Achilles to run, Hermes engraving the elements of the sciences on the columns, Orpheus teaching men the worship of gods, and Circe giving herself to Ulysses) represent, in condensed mythological form, the essential objects and modes of teaching in the *Émile*.

This symbolic treatment of education affords us several ways of dividing up Rousseau's text. For example, there are three chronologically and substantively different sources of education – nature, things and man. Alternatively, there are three different faculties to be aroused – the senses, reason and the heart. But the division which dominates the book is occasioned by the advent of puberty, for the tutor apportions his time between providing for a negative and a positive education according to a

child's sexual development. Properly conceived, each education will nourish a natural curiosity.

A child's first education should be directed towards and encourage a simple utilitarian curiosity where only use values are inculcated. This education is negative because it involves a vital defensive action designed to inhibit those superfluous values associated with *amour propre*. Thus the appropriate vocation of a negative education is precisely the prevention of this quintessentially social problem by impressing upon a child that he is dependent on things, not wills. This task, however, is complicated by the very conditions by which a child forms its identity. It is memory, Rousseau claims, which allows an infant to extend an identity to all moments of its existence and thus give rise to an individual ego properly speaking. But the being formed by memory can also sustain imagination and imagination produces that most dangerous species of anticipation: "Foresight, which takes us ceaselessly beyond ourselves and often places us where we shall never arrive." (Bloom, 82)

For Rousseau, this problem of identity is a critical moment charged with diverse possibilities. The formation of an ego as distinct from a sensorium means a recognition of time. This human time implies comparisons, rendering present sufficiency dangerously relative. For this reason the tutor must take it upon himself to become the master of comparisons. In tendering a negative education he seeks to erase time, to restrict that imagination which by its own force leads one beyond the present. An expansive imagination which excites desires incapable of fulfillment leads to unhappiness, something which the tutor can prevent by teaching his pupil how to measure his needs by his capacities. The rule of negative education is, therefore, to encourage that equilibrium between power and desire which can yield a freedom where one "wants only what he can do and does what he pleases." (84)

Since the whole of negative education is directed towards the cultivation of an enlightened self-interest, its success is contingent on the separation of the child from the baneful influences of society. It is only from this favoured standpoint that he can acquire an uncorrupted basis for judgement through a recognition of necessity. Such judgements, however, prove insufficient for dealing with all his desires. With the onset of puberty, the most formidable of all his passions, sexual desire, is awakened, and consequently the very form of education must be altered.

Because the young Émile has not yet acquired any basis for judging this most limitless and potentially most dangerous desire, his education must now be designed to redirect his sexual curiosity into something more benign. Educating sexual desire in effect means inducing sublimations.

This positive education at first requires a kind of delaying action where Émile's inchoate desire for an other is utilized by the tutor to introduce his pupil into a social world. Since the social world is the domain of *amour propre*, it is the tutor's task to create situations where his charge will make only beneficial comparisons. This means, in effect, an artificial nurturing of *amour propre* where, through selective encounters and the inculcation of morally edifying lessons of history and literature, Émile will learn to feel only compassion for his fellows. Feelings of compassion will serve to confirm in Émile a regard for man's common vulnerability, thus reversing the normal state of *amour propre*.

While the compassion and tolerance which Émile learns prepares him to live in society, these feelings are not sufficient to still all his desires. It is at the point when Émile's sexual desires become too importunate to be further mollified that the tutor finally agrees to instruct his student in the true nature of his most urgent passion. But the price for this initiation is a promise that if the tutor should ever make a categorical demand of Émile, the latter would unhesitatingly obey. With the securing of this agreement, Émile's education in sex begins. It is an education centred on a carefully wrought image. In explaining to Émile what the true object of his desire is, the tutor fashions a lofty ideal of love, going so far as to give this imaginary woman the name of Sophie.

Rousseau's tutor is well aware of the illusory nature of his Sophie; in fact this illusory quality is the very condition of a genuine moral education:

And what is love itself if it is not a chimera, lie and illusion? We love the image we make for ourselves far more than we love the object to which we apply it. If we saw what we love exactly as it is, there would be no more love on earth. (329)

In the hands of a well-versed tutor, illusions become the instruments of more necessary truths. Fixing Émile as a moral agent means devising those instruments which allow a new form of self-control to develop, something that now can only be accomplished by "suppressing his desires by his imagination." (*ibid.*)

The irony of this pedagogic imagination should not be lost. While Émile's first education was a controlled experiment in the suppression of the transcending force of imagination, the second reinstates imagination for this very force. Imagination now becomes essential to elaborate and sustain a desire for a mythical Sophie.

Émile's search for, discovery and courtship of Sophie provide the often mawkish materials illustrating the mythologizing power of imagination. With his ideal firmly implanted in his imagination, Émile is permitted to search out a mate. This search is primarily an occasion to refine his aesthetic judgements, all the while fortifying his cardinal moral judgement. His belated discovery and courtship of Sophie in turn reveal to him those features about men and women which contribute to a natural union. Sophie's embodiment of a woman's ideal qualities seals Émile's love, and the courtship ends with an agreement to marry. At this point, however, the tutor intervenes and demands a temporary separation. This, the tutor's first and only *command*, is undertaken to test Émile. A marriage which immediately gratified all Émile's desires could also destroy him if Sophie's virtue did not prove unimpeachable. A voluntary separation would thus symbolize a renunciation of the real for the ideal.

In deferring to the tutor's command, Émile proves himself at last a free and moral being, who, in fulfilling a long-standing promise, begins in effect to obey his own self-made laws. As a moral agent Émile now has responsibilities and spends his separation in travels where he must acquire the political knowledge necessary for a prospective husband and father. In the circumstances of his newly achieved maturity Émile is capable of rendering political judgements and is presented with a synopsis of the *Social Contract* to aid him in a search for a future homeland. Yet his travels merely impress on him the distance between 'principles of right' and actual principalities. Finally, declaring himself indifferent to place of habitude, since the only bonds he recognizes are those of necessity, Émile entreats his tutor: "Come then, give me Sophie, and I am free." (473) The tutor's response constitutes his last lesson to Émile: "He who does not have a fatherland at least has a country. In any event, he has lived tranquilly under a government and the simulacra of laws." (*ibid.*) The *Émile* concludes at long last with a happy marriage, the conception of a new life, and a fervent plea to the tutor to continue his counsel.

The Mediations of Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Every story set in time points to its own sequel. The *Émile* confirms this rule by giving the hint of an epilogue in its very first image. The persona of the tutor, it will be recalled, was symbolized by Thetis, who, in plunging Achilles into the river Styx, sought to make him invulnerable. Rousseau singles out two consequences of this act which forewarn us that the serenity of *Émile's* household may in fact be false. First, Thetis' very intention involves an irony: "By dint of arming Achilles against peril, the poet takes from him the merit of valour." (55). Secondly, the attempt itself inevitably proves vain: "But, dear *Émile*, it is in vain that I have dipped your soul in the Styx; I was not able to make it everywhere invulnerable. A new enemy is arising which you have not learned to conquer and from which I can no longer save you. This enemy is yourself... In learning to desire, you have made yourself the slave of your desires." (443)

In order to understand how these two remarks figure in a sequel, it is necessary first to come to some conclusion about the *Émile* itself. The immediate political conclusion that can be drawn from this massive educational treatise is that *Émile* is *not* being educated to live in the society described by the *Social Contract*. This becomes evident upon consideration of the manner in which *Émile's* will is shaped in the course of his education. The chronology of *Émile's* training reveals that there are three levels of willing which need to be ordered. At each level, an ordered will becomes tantamount to living under the rule of necessity. Thus with negative education *Émile* learns to adequate his will to the rule of physical necessity. With positive education, two new levels of willing are introduced. First, *Émile's* ordering of his sexual desire implies a moral willing which accedes to self-imposed and hence "necessary" laws. Finally, in acquainting himself with the principles of political right, *Émile* learns the conditions under which an individual will can be made to be conformable with civic necessity.

Of course the problem remains in reconciling these three orders of willing. If the *Émile* does represent what initially was given as an impossible task, then one should witness the emergence of a being who is both man and citizen. The difficulty in creating such a harmonious individual, on Rousseau's own admission, is that there is an hierarchical relationship among the different levels of willing. Therefore for the General Will to

be effective, civic necessity must be pre-eminent. But Rousseau also acknowledges that this is the reverse of a natural order of willing. What is left then in the *Émile* is a kind of compromise. Allowing that *Émile* is not to be the citizen of the *Social Contract*, Rousseau intimates the kind of political association his pupil can expect by evoking the pleasures of a patriarchal and rustic life. With the family as the fundamental political unit, the primary political symbol becomes the boundaries of a self-sufficient paternal home. If this microcosm of an autarkic order is multiplied, it easily gives over to Rousseau's celebrated description of the peasant village of Neufchatel: "an entire mountain covered with dwellings, each one of which constitutes the center of the lands which belong to it, so that these houses, separated by distances as equal as the fortunes of the proprietors, offer to the numerous inhabitants of this mountain both the tranquility of a retreat and the sweetness of society."³

Instead of the total alienation of the *Social Contract*, Neufchatel recalls that primitive society of the *Second Discourse* which enjoys a momentary equilibrium before the advance of history finally destroys any semblance of independence. By this same measure, it is obvious that the arcadian compromise of Neufchatel represents something different from Kant's cosmopolitan state. Cassirer's identification of Rousseau's experiment in morality with political renewal appears too much freighted with the projections of Kant's philosophy of right.

Still, it is undeniable that there is a strong formal similarity between Rousseau's and Kant's deliberations on the structure of willing. What is common to each of Rousseau's levels of willing is the concept of order and at each level, order requires renunciations. But even in this, it is still not clear whether Rousseau's understanding of renunciation is the same as Kant's. Kant's renunciation is unequivocal; against all heteronomous desires stands the rule of reason enunciated as the categorical imperative. As an historical projection this means that the passions must be sacrificed to reason and hence culture. With Rousseau the question of renunciation is more ambiguous. This is because Rousseau presents us with a dual vision of renounced desire. The first involves a restrictive movement which channels desire into a present plenitude. As *Émile*'s tutor declares:

3. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Letter to M. D'Alembert on the Theatre*, trans. with an introduction by Allan Bloom, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1960), p. 60.

I have not raised my *Émile* to desire or to wait but to enjoy; and when he extends his desires beyond the present, his ardour is not so impetuous that he is bothered by the slowness of time. He will not only enjoy the pleasures of desiring but that of going to the object he desires, and his passions are so moderate that he is always more where he is than where he is not. (411)

But this same tutor also proclaims the superiority of another form of desire which stands in sharp contrast to this vision of tranquility:

You have enjoyed more from hope than you will ever enjoy from reality. Imagination adorns what one desires but abandons it when it is in one's possession. Except for the single Being existing by itself, there is nothing beautiful except that which is not. (447)

Although this evocation of a suspended anticipation might suggest Kant's notion of regulative ideas, it really speaks to a different kind of problem. In valuing the not over the is, the ideal over the real, Rousseau rescues a hitherto proscribed imagination, although not necessarily for its directive power. While the kind of desire born of imagination serves to identify man's condition diacritically, as centred around a lack, this lack is not simply that initial condition leading to a moral, intellectual or historical ascent. Rather, in approving the transcending power of imagination, Rousseau invests anticipation with an existential worth of its own outside of any of its effects. This existential worth can best be illustrated by comparing anticipatory desire to constricted desire.

The curious thing about Rousseau's two polar attempts at reaching an accommodation with desire is that they both are supposed to eventuate in happiness and in each case happiness is related to an experience of time. In the first instance, where desires are proportionate to capacities, the experience of time approximates pure duration. In the second instance, where anticipation is preferred to possession, the experience is one of timelessness. In both cases, time as a succession of discrete moments charged with regret and anxiety are avoided. For Rousseau, the trick to happiness, as it were, is to find a way of moving from one existential state to the other, all the while effecting an elision of pathological human time. In the *Émile* this transition with its corresponding elision is supposedly accomplished by the tutor's arbitration of *Émile's* sexual desire. Yet, if the foreboding contained in the Achilles image means that the happy conclusion of the *Émile* is illusory, then

it is necessary to scrutinize more closely the critical role of the tutor in bridging his pupil's desires.

A significant clue to the highly ambiguous function of the tutor can be found in Rousseau's projected sequel to the *Émile*. Although Rousseau never completed *Les Solitaires*, what he left behind leads to the suspicion that the tutor cannot simply disappear with the stage machinery. For after the tutor removes himself from an active direction of his charge, the serenity of the *Émile* household soon collapses. Moved to emulate Parisian customs, *Émile* soon destroys his healthy desires while Sophie becomes pregnant by another. Renouncing his wife, *Émile* then turns to a life of vagabondage and simple occupations. In his travels he is captured and sold into slavery where he eventually leads a strike which alerts his master to the benefits to be gained from a more enlightened treatment of his slaves. Such practical wisdom recommends *Émile* to the ruler of Algeria, where, as the last letter breaks off, he becomes a political advisor.

The fall of the house of *Émile* shows how hard it is to sustain the strenuous ardours of imagined desires, an effort which hitherto had been ameliorated by the tutor's presence. Without his aid it seems that *Émile* can only find a secure measure of composure through the attenuation of his desires. One might conclude from all of this that an external force is a permanent necessity if the renunciations which constitute anticipatory desire are to yield a happy stasis. But clearly the tutor's task was complete; he could offer no further ministrations. The failure of the full happiness of the *Émile* household to maintain itself suggests that the very conditions by which the tutor induced those necessary transformations contain an underlying tension which admits of no resolution.

This tension can be illustrated by briefly referring to Rousseau's epistolary novel, *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. The whole book revolves around Julie's tests of virtue. Her moral journey leads from an illicit liaison with St. Preux to an enforced marriage with Monsieur Wolmar, and her subsequent moral regeneration at Clarens. Although this story is much too complex to afford anything but an extended commentary, there are several features of Julie's moral transformation which bear directly on the dilemma of *Émile*. One of the most striking passages in the whole book occurs when Julie, apparently having reconciled her former passion for St. Preux with her current virtuous life, reflects on her static happiness:

I am surrounded by everything which concerns me; the whole universe is here for me... I see nothing which extends my being and nothing which divides it... my imagination has nothing to do, I have nothing to desire; to feel and to enjoy pleasure are for me the same thing;⁴

Then in an abrupt change of tone, she makes the invitation:

O Death, come when you will! I fear you no longer... there are no more new emotions for me to experience, you have nothing to rob me of.⁵

More astonishing yet, she complains of a most strange ailment:

I see everywhere nothing but reasons for contentment, and I am not content. A private languor has crept into the depths of my heart... there remains in it an idle force which it knows not how to employ. This pain is singular, I admit, but it is no less real. My friend, I am too happy; happiness bores me.⁶

Julie's summoning of death in the face of complete happiness and her subsequent lament about being too happy dramatically highlights the kind of existential impasse in which she finds herself. As a young lover Julie had similarly called upon death, though then it was an existential anguish directed against time. Only death could secure her complete happiness for then it would be fixed in time without there ever being that inevitable day after. But this second call is concerned with a different problem. Julie, quite simply, cannot desire anymore. The effort of Wolmar had succeeded only too well in sublimating her desires. In assuming the perfect role of wife, mother and friend, Julie, in all her acts, becomes indistinguishable from the ideal of a virtuous woman. No longer having to constrict her desires to meet the exigencies of the moment, and alternatively, no longer being able to enjoy the happiness of sustained anticipation, Julie becomes a living "chimera". She becomes bored.

It is only when Wolmar absents himself from Clarens for one final test of her virtue that Julie regains her humanity. But the reawakening of her passions necessitates her real death, for it is only in a death-bed testament to Saint-Preux that she could reveal the reappearance of a fundamental division between her desires: "Everything which was subordinate to my will, was devoted to my duty. If my heart, which was not subordinate

4. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *La Nouvelle Héloïse* in *Œuvres complètes*, Vol. 2, (Paris: Bibliothèque de Pléiade, 1964), p. 689).

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*, p. 694.

to it, was devoted to you, that was my torment and not my crime."⁷ It was thus in the recognition of the permanent conflict between her passions and her duty that Julie was led in the end to accept her real death: "Have I not lived long enough for happiness and virtue?"⁸

The impasse which is Julie's life, and which can be transcended only in death, speaks profoundly to the transformational dilemma of Rousseau. What Julie discovers is that asceticism yields a satisfaction only as long as it involves tension and effort. Once desire becomes identical with will, once the rule of duty is fully internalized, the tension implicit in anticipatory desire disappears. Julie is left with something like a holy will, but with no purpose. She must either die or fall from a state of grace. This revelation points to the precariousness of each contrived transformation which an external force brings about. But the failure of transformation is not the fault of this external force. Rather, in showing the vulnerability of Julie's maternal virtue and Émile's paternal virtue, Rousseau hints that the metamorphosis of desire is destined to fail because of the very structure of desire. We are now in a position to see the inherent instability of this structure which is both the precondition of, and the ultimate barrier to, successful conversion.

In each of Rousseau's solutions to the problem of moral or political insufficiency, a consistent pattern emerges. In compact form, this pattern revolves around symbolic mediation. What is meant here by symbolic mediation is simply that between the immediacy of subject and object stands a mediating symbol which both distinguishes and relates the two. While Rousseau often gives the impression that he would like to undermine all mediations, it is nonetheless true that in his philosophic and literary works he resorted to the most intricate series of symbolic mediations. Indeed, for Rousseau these mediations are essential because it is only through them that a subject, whether moral or political, can be constituted.

This process of constituting a subject involves a movement from external mediation to internal mediation by way of a concentrated act which symbolizes anticipatory desire. To begin with, the external mediator is charged with creating, through example and artifice, an object of desire. Furthermore, it is up to the external mediator to turn all this into an internal mediation

7. *Ibid.*, p. 741.

8. *Ibid.*

through the medium of a symbolic action. So the tutor both elicits the image of Sophie and conspires to have Émile will this image for his own in a symbolic act of separation. Likewise, Wolmar both creates the image of domestic virtue and contrives to have Julie will this image as her own through a symbolic act of reunion. In all of this the external mediator, by his very presence, stands for the separation of subject and object, giving anticipatory desire its form. At the same time, his task can only be said to be done if the subject can eternally reaffirm this form. Clearly Rousseau's estimation was that the strains of a self-willed anticipatory desire were overwhelming. Either the distance between subject and object becomes erased through that perfect asceticism which effaces desire itself and beckons death, or else the ordered structure of anticipatory desire dissipates into *amour propre*, which can be salvaged only by a constriction of desire.

The problem of a final resolution with Rousseau is thus a problem of desire. To desire is to differentiate, and differentiation of an anticipatory desire which can renounce the real for the ideal and recognize this renunciation as always actual. Yet a successful conversion removes this recognition, leaving ordered desire which is pure form. In the end, the elliptical happiness of this purely formal desire forces Rousseau's subjects to effect their own escape and once again confront the problem of desire.

Raymond Bazowski
Carleton University (Ottawa)