

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU'S LA NOUVELLE HELOISE:  
SOME DOCTRINAL AFFILIATIONS

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SOME DOCTRINAL AFFILIATIONS

by

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Insensés qui vous plaignez sans  
cesse de la nature, apprenez que  
tous vos maux vous viennent de  
vous. (Rousseau, Confessions, VIII,  
p. 460)

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS: This study is an investigation of  
parallels and extensions, in Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse,  
of Rousseau's social analysis as established primarily in  
the Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité parmi les hommes  
and Du Contrat social.

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## INTRODUCTION

Through the Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité parmi les hommes and Du Contrat social, the moral philosophy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau is articulated fully. Although each of these works has its own particular focus, taken together, they form a thematic whole: their central concern is the path toward, and the obstacles preventing, happiness for man in society. Julie, written in the wake of the second Discours and concurrently with Du Contrat social, ought to be seen as an imaginative and unified expression of Rousseau's moral philosophy. In his Julie, Jean-Jacques constructs a two-fold picture of society: Clarens and Paris are opposites. As extended, antithetical images within Rousseau's novel, they elucidate, with an eloquence unparalleled by the second Discours or Du Contrat social, Rousseau's social ideal, and the ugly reality diametrically different from it.

The function of the ensuing three chapters is to reveal some of the many philosophical affinities between Julie, on the one hand, and, on the other, the second Discours and Du Contrat social.

## CHAPTER I

### ASPECTS OF THE THEORETICAL BACKGROUND TO JULIE

It has perhaps become customary to view Julie as a novel lacking unity. Some of the ladies of the eighteenth century appreciated, in particular, the moral force attributed by Rousseau to the novel's heroine.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps Rousseau's depiction of Julie awakened in them a sense of the great ethical potential of their sex. The novel's contemporary appeal, especially among students of the eighteenth century, resides primarily in the social commentary and theory with which Saint-Preux's descriptions of Paris and Clarens are rich. I do not discount the intrinsic importance of these descriptions. Indeed, I propose to make of them the substance of the present study. I do, however, regret that any focus upon Saint-Preux's Paris and Clarens might create the erroneous impression that these parts of Rousseau's novel are virtually autonomous, that, in other words, the novel, is, in fact, three -- or more -- texts whose relationship to one another scarcely depends upon more than the characters common to each.

Dangers inhere to one's viewing Saint-Preux's Paris

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<sup>1</sup>M. Launay, Jean-Jacques Rousseau et son temps (Paris: Nizet, 1969), III, pp. 183-184.



and Clarens in a vacuum. Having read no part of Julie except these, one may readily perceive that Paris is a society most uncongenial to Rousseau, and that Clarens is a place where Rousseau might feel at home. One may form a general impression of the character of these two societies, and thereby conclude that, somehow, they are diametrically different from one another. However, the precise way in which they differ, and the significance of that difference, ought to be the critic's principal concern. And, as I shall attempt to show, understanding fully the difference and its implications requires that one look beyond Paris and Clarens, in part, at least, to portions of Julie which must have influenced greatly some of Rousseau's eighteenth-century female readers.

Anyone even slightly familiar with the texts for which Rousseau is most noted, will certainly be aware of his particular fondness for certain terms: bonheur, raison, vertu, honnêteté, and others, are to be found in profusion throughout his writing. One such term is especially important to the critic's systematic understanding of La Nouvelle Héloïse. Sagesse is said by Julie to have been one of the characteristics of the "pure love" enjoyed by her and Saint-Preux.<sup>2</sup> Saint-Preux attributes to Wolmar's sagesse

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<sup>2</sup>J.-J. Rousseau, Julie, ed. R. Pomeau (Paris: Garnier, 1960), I, p. 76.

the operation of the latter's Utopian society.<sup>3</sup> Rousseau defines sagesse as follows:

En quoi donc consiste la sagesse humaine ou la route du vrai bonheur? .....  
 ..... Le monde réel a ses bornes; le monde imaginaire est infini; ne pouvant élargir l'un, rétrécissons l'autre; car c'est de leur seule différence que naissent toutes les peines qui nous rendent vraiment malheureux.<sup>4</sup>

Saint-Preux and Julie are sages, so long as they succeed in containing their passion for one another.<sup>5</sup> At the moment when they are "livrés aux erreurs des sens",<sup>6</sup> when they foresake the enduring joys of sentiment for the transitory pleasures of sensuality, they lose contact with what Rousseau terms le réel, and descend into what is, for Rousseau, l'imaginaire. Rousseau seems to define le réel, or être, as that which touches the heart, and l'imaginaire, or paraître, as that which impresses only the senses.

Through the heart, man may perceive the principles of virtue, which are, for every man and at all times, the same.<sup>7</sup> Only through practising these principles can man

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., IV, 452.

<sup>4</sup>J.-J. Rousseau, Emile, ed. F. and P. Richard (Paris: Garnier, 1964), II, pp. 63-64.

<sup>5</sup>Rousseau, Julie, I, 76.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., I, 76.

<sup>7</sup>J.-J. Rousseau, Discours sur les sciences et les arts (Paris: Garnier, 1962), II, p. 24.

achieve personal happiness.<sup>8</sup> They are central to the religion of le vicaire savoyard,<sup>9</sup> and to that of Julie,<sup>10</sup> and are epitomized by Rousseau in the tenth of his Pensées d'un esprit droit et sentiments d'un coeur vertueux:

On n'à de religion qu'autant qu'on ne fait pas contre les autres ce que nous ne voudrions pas qu'ils fissent contre nous, et qu'on fait pour eux ce qu'on voudrait qu'ils fissent pour nous....Tout exercice de religion qui n'est pas fondé sur cette base, n'est qu'illusion et hypocrisie.<sup>11</sup>

Only through l'union et l'entendement des coeurs, in other words, through the dominion of the principles of virtue over the actions of men, can society be imbued with happiness.

However, the dominion of virtue must be achieved by man within himself.<sup>12</sup> Without what Rousseau terms force d'âme, man is prey to his most fearful enemies, those within him. To rid himself of these, and to gain force d'âme, man must contain his passions, and overcome his prejudices, the mistaken inclinations of the passions, the cause of self-enslavement. Then, he will attain sagesse, through reason,

<sup>8</sup>J.-J. Rousseau, Oeuvres complètes, ed. B. Gagnebin and M. Raymond (Paris: Gallimard, 1959-1969), II, 1308.

<sup>9</sup>Rousseau, Emile, IV, 348, 352.

<sup>10</sup>Rousseau, Julie, VI, 716-717.

<sup>11</sup>Rousseau, Oeuvres complètes, II, 1301.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., II, 1308, 1311.

and will realize that he cannot be happy, unless he seeks the happiness of others.<sup>13</sup>

Julie's submission to the passions of Saint-Preux evinces her detachment from the voice of the heart, and her abandonment to the impulses of the body. Her reason held in check,<sup>14</sup> Julie loses the sagesse she displayed so clearly before, in advocating a pure relationship between herself and Saint-Preux.<sup>15</sup> The judgment which formerly secured her happiness, is replaced by a preference for transitory pleasure. In the following passage, Julie speaks to Saint-Preux about their common égarement:<sup>16</sup>

Nous avons recherché le plaisir, et le bonheur a fui loin de nous....Nous ne sommes plus que des amants vulgaires; trop heureux si l'amour jaloux daigne présider encore à des plaisirs que le plus vil mortel peut goûter sans lui!<sup>17</sup>

For Julie, plaisir here means bodily satisfaction, the satisfaction of the passions. If Saint-Preux and Julie are amants vulgaires, it is because they have opted for sensual satisfaction, for physical self-gratification, at the expense of the happiness previously afforded them by their

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., II, 1273.

<sup>14</sup>Rousseau, Julie, I, 70.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., I, 24-25.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., I, 70.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., I, 76.

unselfish -- and purely spiritual -- union.<sup>18</sup> In the ensuing remarks to Saint-Preux, Julie suggests that unrestrained passion is clearly the enemy of love, and of the forces of the heart, exclusively through which love is possible:<sup>19</sup>

Ressouviens-toi de ces moments délicieux où nos coeurs s'unissaient d'autant mieux que nous nous respections davantage, où la passion tirait de son propre excès la force de se vaincre elle-même, où l'innocence nous consolait de la contrainte, où les hommages rendus à l'honneur tournaient tous au profit de l'amour.<sup>20</sup>

Later, Julie observes that no longer do she and Saint-Preux communicate openly with one another. The entendement des coeurs of the lovers is broken by the seductiveness of paraître, and their correspondence adopts an artificial aura, reflecting the vanity of passions unchecked by reason and force d'âme. Letter thirty-one of part one of La Nouvelle Héloïse, from Saint-Preux to Julie, is a case in point. In it, one finds examples of the art and coloris symptomatic, for Julie, of the degeneration of her relationship with Saint-Preux.<sup>21</sup> Most heavily laden with preciousness is the following extract from that letter,

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., I, 25.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., I, 25.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., I, 76.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., I, 75-76.

in which Saint-Preux describes the condition in which he has found Julie:

J'étais hier dans la chambre de ta mère, elle me quitte un moment; j'entends des gémissements qui me percent l'âme; pouvais-je à cet effet méconnaître leur source? Je m'approche du lieu d'où ils semblent partir; j'entre dans ta chambre, je pénètre jusqu'à ton cabinet. Que devins-je, en entrouvrant la porte, quand j'aperçus celle qui devrait être sur le trône de l'univers, assise à terre, la tête appuyée sur un fauteuil inondé de ses larmes? Ah! j'aurais moins souffert s'il l'eût été de mon sang! De quel remords je fus à l'instant déchiré! Mon bonheur devint mon supplice; je ne sentis plus que tes peines, et j'aurais racheté de ma vie tes pleurs et tous mes plaisirs. Je voulais me précipiter à tes pieds, je voulais essuyer de mes lèvres ces précieuses larmes, les recueillir au fond de mon coeur, mourir, ou les tarir pour jamais.<sup>22</sup>

In her response to the letter from which the above passage is taken, Julie characterizes what Saint-Preux has said as de vains discours.<sup>23</sup> Her comment is apt, for it captures the essence of a letter whose style is often strained, and whose general effect relies upon a mixture of rhetoric and quasi-melodrama.

Rousseau exhorts man to control his passions.<sup>24</sup> He does not suggest that they should, or even that they could, be destroyed. For Jean-Jacques, the passions intend only one object: "L'amour du bien-être est le seul mobile des

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., I, 74.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., I, 76.

<sup>24</sup>Rousseau, Emile, IV, 348-349.

actions humaines".<sup>25</sup> Still, the undoubted rightness of their aim does not ensure the success of their means.

It is significant to note that the seduction of Julie and Saint-Preux by paraître parallels, in several respects, Rousseau's description, in the second Discours, of the degeneration of social man. Rousseau speaks of man's procuring, for the first time, articles of property. He refers to this development as the first step toward social inequality. Here, for the first time in human evolution as depicted by Rousseau, man misuses concern for his own well-being, preoccupying himself with objects which, though seemingly possessed by, actually possess, him. Here, for the first time, man becomes the slave of appearances. The object which seems attractive today, tomorrow, offers no attraction, but man, to whom the object then appears to be necessary, insists upon seeing it as a need.<sup>26</sup>

No one can appreciate fully Rousseau's analysis of the nature and effects of property, unless the first three sentences of part two of the second Discours are carefully read and fully understood:

Le premier qui ayant enclos un terrain s'avisa de dire Ceci est à moi, et trouva des gens assez

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<sup>25</sup>J.-J. Rousseau, Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité parmi les hommes (Paris: Garnier, 1962), II, p. 68.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., II, 70.

simples pour le croire, fut le vrai fondateur de la société civile. Que de crimes, de guerres, de meurtres, que de misères et d'horreurs n'eût point épargnés au genre humain celui qui, arrachant les pieux ou comblant le fossé, eût crié à ses semblables: "Gardez-vous d'écouter cet imposteur; vous êtes perdus si vous oubliez que les fruits sont à tous, et que la terre n'est à personne!"<sup>27</sup>

One should note that the founder of the principle of property is described by Rousseau as an impostor, in other words, as someone giving the appearance of being what, in fact, he is not. Clearly, Rousseau suggests that like the first landlord, the first property, and all subsequent acquisitions of land and other commodities, indicate the triumph of appearance over reality, of deceit over truth.

Natural man did not recognize the existence of property.<sup>28</sup> He was not sage, for he had no appearances to separate from what was real, but neither was he depraved, for he felt only the impulses, or passions, with which he was naturally endowed, in the interest of his happiness.<sup>29</sup>

The implications of Rousseau's observation that "l'homme qui médite est un animal dépravé",<sup>30</sup> are many, and important to any systematic synthesis of his thought. For

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., II, 66.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., I, 42, 46.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., I, 48-49, 63.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., I, 45.



Rousseau, property, the implements leading to its creation, and the development of a social hierarchy based upon the principle of property, are all abstractions -- paraître. They are the result of abstract thought; they are the product of the imagination. Whereas prior to the advent of property and its attendant evils, man enjoyed a stable existence,<sup>31</sup> social man, committed to a world governed by abstraction, is always becoming, and never is.<sup>32</sup> His environment is one in which, as Julie observes to Saint-Preux, "nul objet n'a le temps de faire une profonde impression, et où la multitude des goûts énerve la force des sentiments".<sup>33</sup> Property in essence is, for Rousseau, identical in nature to those first commodités procured by man.<sup>34</sup> Today, it appears to be pleasing; tomorrow, it offers no pleasure, but, infallibly, appears to be something without which one cannot live. Society, by Rousseau's definition, an organization of human beings governed by the abstract principle of property,<sup>35</sup> inevitably lacks the

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., I, 43; II, 72.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., II, 91.

<sup>33</sup>Rousseau, Julie, I, 79.

<sup>34</sup>Rousseau, Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité parmi les hommes, II, 70.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., II, 66.

coherence of the state of nature. Human nature is informed by the capriciousness of the values inherent to society.<sup>36</sup>

Ceasing to recognize, in the ever-changing and ever-different form of the world he has created for himself, the world humanity once knew, and in which humanity was meant always to live, man ceases to know himself -- and his fellows.<sup>37</sup> As man becomes unable to identify himself as essentially the same as all other men, the pity which formerly moderated his passions,<sup>38</sup> is debilitated.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, his passions have ceased to be controlled by objects appropriate to his well-being: while, once, all he needed and sought, according to Rousseau, was food, rest, and the occasional companionship of a woman,<sup>40</sup> he now has new needs, and new passions directing him toward the fulfilment of those needs,<sup>41</sup> Somehow, the new passions extend his search for satisfaction too often beyond the capacities of

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., II, 91-92.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., I, 60.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., I, 58, 60.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., I, 60; II, 77.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., I, 49.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., II, 76, 91.

his body and mind.<sup>42</sup> The new passions are, it seems, the enemies within oneself to which Rousseau attributes the weakness and attendant unhappiness of man. Certainly, their danger, for the individual and for society as a whole, resides in what they cause man to become: as Rousseau describes the nature of human interdependence, a phenomenon directly related to the institution of property, one sees man become as artificial as the "needs" he pursues. What he cannot achieve through himself, he achieves through others, too often by causing himself only to appear to be useful to his fellows.<sup>43</sup>

Civilized man, as portrayed in the second Discours, has lost the balance between passion and pity, the source of stability within the human species in the state of nature. He lacks sagesse, which would distinguish his real needs, those within his reach and an actual source of happiness, from the chimerical, or apparent, needs enslaving him to himself, and to the rest of society. In other words, civilized man suffers from what Rousseau identifies as the source of human misery: l'âme faible.<sup>44</sup> He is the prisoner of illusion.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., II, 76, 91.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., II, 76.

<sup>44</sup>Rousseau, Oeuvres complètes, II, 1273.

And so it is that the veil of amour-propre<sup>45</sup> is overlaid upon the face of man, and the veil of society, upon the face of nature.

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<sup>45</sup>Rousseau, Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité parmi les hommes, 118.

## CHAPTER II

### SAINT-PREUX'S PARIS AND THE SECOND DISCOURS

To appreciate fully Saint-Preux's depiction of Paris, one must recall, from the second Discours, Rousseau's eloquent declamation against the institution of property. Speaking to all mankind, Rousseau inveighs: "Vous êtes perdus si vous oubliez que les fruits sont à tous, et que la terre n'est à personne!"<sup>1</sup> The spirit of nature, and the mechanisms of the natural world, serve only one end: the well-being and continuance of nature in toto. If the fruits of nature are not shared by all men, this end is not served. As Rousseau describes the state of nature, one perceives a highly organized structure, with a rationale which is, everywhere and always, the same. The components of that structure complement one another: the purpose of each participates in the purpose of nature as a whole.<sup>2</sup> Nature is Rousseau's condition of être, and all human activities and creations inconsistent with the purpose of nature are Rousseau's conditions of paraître.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Rousseau, Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité parmi les hommes, II, 66.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., I, 37, 42-43, 45; II, 67.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., II, 76.

Rousseau contends that men in the state of nature have no relationship with one another, and, therefore, no allegiances threatening their rôle within the natural order.<sup>4</sup> Social man, Rousseau maintains, is part of an artificial structure, one not intended by nature, one, hence, inessential -- and potentially inimical -- to nature's order.<sup>5</sup> However, even social man is a creation of the natural world; by his very nature, he is inescapably part of the natural order,<sup>6</sup> and, though he may seek to undermine that order, he cannot find happiness in doing so.<sup>7</sup>

Social man contains, within his heart, in the form of the principles of virtue, the spirit of the natural structure of which he is a part.<sup>8</sup> However, without another very important gift of nature, reason, the virtuous and natural voice of the heart is silenced by the impetuosity of the passions.<sup>9</sup> In endowing reason, nature seeks to compensate for the deleterious effect, on the passions, of

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., I, 57, 61.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., II, 72.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., II, 72.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., II, 73.

<sup>8</sup>Rousseau, Emile, IV, 348-349.

<sup>9</sup>Rousseau, Oeuvres Complètes, II, 1269.

the artificial concerns peculiar to social man, the paraître upon which society is based.<sup>10</sup> Through reason, social man may perceive that in society, as in the state of nature, the natural order, manifest in the well-being of all men, must be maintained, if the individual is to achieve lasting happiness.<sup>11</sup> Through reason, social man may perceive that the balance of nature is necessarily destroyed by his artificial pursuits, and that though these pursuits are characteristic of social life, they are completely inconsistent with his interests and those of society as a whole.<sup>12</sup>

In essence, then, reason is, for Rousseau, as natural as the constant and infallible inclinations of the human heart: when permitted by force d'âme,<sup>13</sup> reason takes the experience of man, and uses it to affirm the certain rightness of what the heart always recommends.<sup>14</sup> Indeed,

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<sup>10</sup> Rousseau, Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité parmi les hommes, II, 66.

<sup>11</sup> Rousseau, Oeuvres Complètes, II, 1273.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., II, 1273.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., II, 1273.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., II, 1301.

Ibid., II, 1306.

Rousseau, Discours sur les sciences et les arts, II, 24.

Rousseau, Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité parmi les hommes, I, 60.

it is through a process of raisonnement, based upon actual personal experience, that Rousseau establishes the moral views of the second Discours:<sup>15</sup> Since the advent of paraître is responsible for the advent of human misery, only the conquest of paraître will induce a world in which men may be happy.

" . . .peut-être la ville du monde où les fortunes sont les plus inégales, et où règnent à la fois la plus somptueuse opulence et la plus déplorable misère."<sup>16</sup> Even in so abbreviated a description as this, the depravity, disorder, and imbalance of Saint-Preux's Paris are readily perceived. Superfluity and want coexist there, and, as will be demonstrated, the latter is a direct consequence of the former. Although the misery of the Parisian poor is not a focus of Saint-Preux's analysis of Parisian life, every element of that analysis serves to account for poverty within a society clearly capable of providing for all its members.

Undoubtedly, the structure of Parisian society, as depicted by Saint-Preux, bears no resemblance whatsoever to the benevolent mechanisms of nature, outlined by Rousseau in the second Discours. Precisely because l'entendement des coeurs is not the basis for the relationship of

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<sup>15</sup>Rousseau, Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité parmi les hommes, 40.

<sup>16</sup>Rousseau, Julie, II, 208.



Saint-Preux's Parisians to one another,<sup>17</sup> in Paris, "voir les choses comme elles sont",<sup>18</sup> "juger sainement des choses du monde",<sup>19</sup> are impossible tasks. The essential weakness of the Parisians whom Julie comes to know through Saint-Preux's letters to her, is that they lack force d'âme and, therefore, sagesse. Theirs is a world of appearances,<sup>20</sup> a world in flux,<sup>21</sup> one, hence, in which, according to Julie and the moral philosophy of the second Discours, the humanitarian force of sentiment is overcome.<sup>22</sup> In conformity with the thought-pattern of the second Discours, the alienation in Saint-Preux's Parisians of the natural human qualities productive of order and happiness in society, is a result of their common pursuit of "frivoles objets",<sup>23</sup> paraître.

Saint-Preux's Paris is a uniform society; however,

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., II, 207.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., II, 233.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., II, 209.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., II, 232-233.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., II, 232-233.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., I, 79.

Rousseau, Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité parmi les hommes, II, 91.

<sup>23</sup> Rousseau, Julie, II, 233.

its uniformity is not based upon the ethic of the heart, an ethic the same for all men,<sup>24</sup> but rather upon convention.<sup>25</sup> In describing the Parisians he has met as "autant de marionnettes clouées sur la même planche, ou tirées par le même fil",<sup>26</sup> Saint-Preux conveys the "apparente régularité"<sup>27</sup> of Paris. Alike in speech, in dress, and in behaviour,<sup>28</sup> Saint-Preux's Parisians give the appearance of being equal. Nevertheless, beneath these masks of convention, the natural physical and intellectual differences among them, unchecked by the only true basis for human equality, the voice of the heart,<sup>29</sup> work to produce real deprivation, the price of artificial splendour. As Saint-Preux observes, toward the end of one of his letters to Julie about Paris, "en tout pays les gens chargés de beaucoup d'affaires sont toujours repoussants et sans commisération; et Paris étant le centre des affaires du plus grand peuple de l'Europe, ceux qui les

<sup>24</sup>Rousseau, Discours sur les sciences et les arts, II, 24.

<sup>25</sup>Rousseau, Julie, II, 226-227.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., II, 227.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., II, 227.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., II, 250.

<sup>29</sup>Rousseau, Discours sur les sciences et les arts, II, 24.

font sont aussi les plus durs des hommes".<sup>30</sup> Saint-Preux adds, in reference to the women of Paris:

. . .il est certain qu'elles ont du penchant au bien, qu'elles en font beaucoup, qu'elles le font de bon coeur, que ce sont elles qui conservent dans Paris le peu d'humanité qu'on y voit régner encore, et que sans elles on verrait les hommes avides et insatiables s'y dévorer comme des loups.<sup>31</sup>

Saint-Preux's mention of the bonté of certain Parisian women does little to alay the repulsiveness of commerce based upon unbridled amour-propre. Certainly, most of what Saint-Preux says about Paris is scarcely so unsettling as his image of les hommes d'affaires, who, if given free rein, would destroy one another. And yet, all of Saint-Preux's treatment of Paris is concerned with the superfluity and vanity in which, as the second Discours effectively illustrates, les hommes d'affaires are interested, above all.

Saint-Preux's analysis of Parisian life is not centred upon the egotistical machinations whereby one man, interested in possessing more than he needs, contrives to separate his neighbour from the very stuff of his subsistence. However, such an image is implicit throughout Saint-Preux's letters about Paris, for in them is painted in detail a world removed as far as possible from the

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<sup>30</sup>Rousseau, Julie, II, 255.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., II, 255.

concerns germane to the survival of man; painted, in other words, is a world which must be supported at the expense of "les gens de l'autre monde".<sup>32</sup> In the second Discours, Rousseau traces the development in man of a concern for objects superfluous, and, therefore, detrimental, to his own well-being and that of society as a whole. In Julie, the focus of the second Discours is sharpened and extended: Saint-Preux's Paris is a world in which the abstract principle of property is carried to its farthest extreme. There, everything is abstract, without meaning, without fixed or enduring value, like property per se, as described by Rousseau in the second Discours.<sup>33</sup>

In the course of his description of the Parisian theatre, Saint-Preux observes:

Vous diriez que la France n'est peuplée que de comtes et de chevaliers; et plus le peuple y est misérable et gueux, plus le tableau du peuple y est brillant et magnifique.<sup>34</sup>

Saint-Preux's argument seems to be that the well-being of l'autre monde is directly disproportionate to the amount of magnificence available to satisfy the capricious tastes<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., II, 229.

<sup>33</sup>Rousseau, Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité parmi les hommes, II, 70.

<sup>34</sup>Rousseau, Julie, II, 229-230.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., II, 210, 244.

of the "privileged few". Here, it is necessary to restate Rousseau's definition of sagesse:

Le monde réel a ses bornes, le monde imaginaire est infini; ne pouvant élargir l'un, rétrécissons l'autre; car c'est de leur seule différence que naissent toutes les peines qui nous rendent vraiment malheureux.<sup>36</sup>

Two natural and absolute truths, related to Rousseau's articulation of the principle of virtue,<sup>37</sup> are suggested by this definition: first, the well-being of all men in society is contingent upon the uncompromising efforts of each toward satisfying the natural, or "real", needs of society as a whole;<sup>38</sup> secondly, superfluity, or paraître, the product of the imagination, interferes with, and confounds, the unanimity of purpose required of men, if society is to be stable, and capable of providing for all its members.<sup>39</sup> Neither of these truths informs Saint-Preux's Paris.

C'est le premier inconvénient des grandes villes que les hommes y deviennent autres que ce qu'ils sont, et que la société leur donne pour ainsi dire

<sup>36</sup>Rousseau, Emile, II, 64.

<sup>37</sup>Rousseau, Oeuvres complètes, II, 1301.

<sup>38</sup>Rousseau, Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité parmi les hommes, II, 83.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., II, 89-90.

un être différent du leur.<sup>40</sup>

Of all the observations made by Saint-Preux about Paris, none conveys, more precisely or fully than this one, the essence of that city. Saint-Preux's Paris is wholly unnatural;<sup>41</sup> it has no spiritual dimension.<sup>42</sup> Its conversations, its theatre, the relationship of its men and women to one another, in short, all of its aspects, demonstrate the relative, illusory qualities of property, as characterized by Rousseau. Saint-Preux's Paris strikes the senses,<sup>43</sup> but is incapable, by its very nature, of touching the heart.<sup>44</sup>

Introducing Julie to the Paris with which he has become familiar, Saint-Preux develops a compound, or extended, metaphor. The feelings of Saint-Preux's Parisians are like clothing. They are taken up, and presently discarded, as would be any item of property which has ceased to serve its purpose.<sup>45</sup> The rules, judgments, and

<sup>40</sup>Rousseau, Julie, II, 251.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., II, 248.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., II, 211-212.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., II, 232-233.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., II, 233.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., II, 209.

principles, espoused by the Parisians of one coterie,<sup>46</sup> are like fashions in dress. The sole arbiter of their worth is taste. Valued in one social circle, and ridiculed in all the others, they reflect no more absolute truth than would a contention that the colour blue is objectively more beautiful than the colour red.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, Saint-Preux even likens to clothing the very souls of his Parisians. Saint-Preux observes that according to the house in which his Parisian is a guest, he must appropriate a particular soul, as would a lackey a particular uniform, upon securing employment with a new master. It is also customary, Saint-Preux adds, for his Parisian to give up his appropriated soul at the end of his visit, again, as would any lackey his uniform, upon termination of his employment.<sup>48</sup>

Saint-Preux observes that in Paris, evil is expressed "en chanson ou en épigramme".<sup>49</sup> Similarly, sentiment is conveyed there "en grandes maximes générales, et quintessencié par tout ce que la métaphysique a de plus subtil".<sup>50</sup> In other words, evil is not reviled and withstood

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., II, 210.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., II, 210.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., II, 210.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., II, 224.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., II, 226.

by the heart, but, instead, is given a certain allure, by being associated with pleasant sounds, whose appeal is only to the ear. Likewise, sentiment, whose domain is the heart, is reduced to, counterfeited by, cleverly contrived phrases, appreciated not for their truth -- they convey none -- but merely as fine verbal architecture. Surely, in Saint-Preux's Paris, "toute la morale est un pur verbiage",<sup>51</sup> superfluity, adornment -- paraître. Saint-Preux describes the language of the Paris he knows as jargon,<sup>52</sup> vain formulaire, raffinements inconcevables. Such language distorts and masks those who use it:<sup>53</sup> ". . . sans y songer, on prends des manières assortissantes aux choses qu'on dit . . .".<sup>54</sup>

As described by Saint-Preux, the Parisian theatre is solely an extension of the artificial, property-orientated social élite who control its existence. As Saint-Preux's Parisians are inert,<sup>55</sup> and in many other ways like the commodités central to their existence,<sup>56</sup> so is their theatre.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., II, 226.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., II, 225, 227.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., II, 227.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., II, 252.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., II, 209, 226-227.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., II, 229.



Its productions consist of gilded actors,<sup>57</sup> a great amount of oration, and very little action.<sup>58</sup> Just as Saint-Preux's Paris is characterized by artificial people who speak at -- and not to -- one another,<sup>59</sup> and who, therefore, cannot evince any common purpose, so the actors of the Parisian theatre are isolated, mechanical illusions, and not integral parts of a theatrical experience whose function is to bring to its audience some aspect of the truth of life.<sup>60</sup> Saint-Preux remarks that the Parisian actor always thinks more about his audience than about himself as the character he supposedly represents.<sup>61</sup> Clearly, the actor is like all of Saint-Preux's Parisians in being autre que ce qu'il est. Like them, he has been separated from his spiritual dimension. He is nothing more than an article of property, who, quite fittingly, refers to himself with the impersonal pronoun,

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., II, 229.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., II, 230.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., II, 211.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., II, 231.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., II, 230.

on.<sup>62</sup> His primary purpose is to please his patrons.<sup>63</sup> As a dramatic performer, he has no responsibility to convey the ethic of nature.<sup>64</sup> Like the carriages without which Saint-Preux's Parisians cannot exist,<sup>65</sup> the Parisian actor is only the means whereby his patrons may congregate to exchange comments as vain as the play occasioning them.<sup>66</sup> In essence, then, the theatre of Saint-Preux's Paris is merely a sensual experience. It appeals to the eyes and to the ears, but not to the heart.

Saint-Preux's analysis of the appearance and manner of the Parisian women with whom he is acquainted, complements, and reinforces, the impressions of Paris induced by his treatment of the conversation and theatre characteristic of that city. The essence of Saint-Preux's remarks on this subject is that the dress and attitudes of the Parisian lady disguise and overpower all that is natural about her. Sight of her may assault the eye;<sup>67</sup> her voice may assault

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., II, 231.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., II, 230.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., II, 231.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., II, 229.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., II, 231.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., II, 245-246.

the ear;<sup>68</sup> no part of her can touch the heart.<sup>69</sup> Her clothes are designed to reshape her body, according to an abstract -- even grotesque -- concept of fitting appearance.<sup>70</sup> Her use of makeup serves the same end: its function is not to enhance natural features, but rather to produce an impression distinguishing the lady, however unbecomingly, from the women of l'autre monde.<sup>71</sup> Like her appearance, her demeanour is not a response to natural inclinations; instead, it is symptomatic of her desire for novelty -- at any expense.<sup>72</sup> Here, echoes of Rousseau's description of social man as a creature always "becoming" and never "being"<sup>73</sup> ought to be perceptible.

If, as Saint-Preux contends, the ladies of Paris have ceased to be women,<sup>74</sup> it is because they are part of a society which values artificial distinctions among men,

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., II, 246.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., II, 244.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., II, 243-246.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., II, 244-245.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., II, 245.

<sup>73</sup> Rousseau, Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité parmi les hommes, II, 91.

<sup>74</sup> Rousseau, Julie, II, 245.

distinctions afforded only by property -- paraître,<sup>75</sup> to the detriment of the natural qualities common to all human beings. As observed in chapter one of the present study, part of the argument of the second Discours is that social man's unending pursuit of property causes him to become, in one sense, the property of what he pursues. In other words, the property-orientation of social man dehumanizes him, by suspending his freedom.<sup>76</sup> A parallel argument is implicit in Saint-Preux's treatment of the rôle of fashion in the life of the Parisian lady. Although it may seem that she controls the façade adopted by her, in fact, this is not so, for it is impossible to distinguish between the lady and the façade, the latter being all which can be discerned.<sup>77</sup> Fashion, like property per se, emerges, not as "means", but as "master". Through it, man must become autre que ce qu'il est.

The most important facet of Saint-Preux's description of Paris is, perhaps, his analysis of the relationship between the Parisian gentleman and the Parisian lady. There, the most unsettling effects of Parisian society are examined in detail. As demonstrated, Saint-Preux's Paris is a world

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<sup>75</sup> Rousseau, Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité parmi les hommes, II, 91.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., II, 76.

<sup>77</sup> Rousseau, Julie, II, 251.

whose most prominent -- and most telling -- feature is its impenetrable, ostentatious surface. The most disturbing quality of that surface is its inherent and realized ability to overcome all that is natural and right in the human being. Continuing to develop this theme in his description of the way in which the sexes relate to one another in the Paris he knows, Saint-Preux skilfully prepares his reader to understand fully why, in that city, there can be "la plus déplorable misère".<sup>78</sup>

Saint-Preux's first observation about the nature of that relationship is that the Parisian lady cannot live without the constant attention of a number of suitors. The effect of this need and of its fulfilment, Saint-Preux notes, is that she comes to think, speak, and act like her suitors, and they, like her.<sup>79</sup> Clearly, in relation to the second Discours, this need must be seen to be of the order of those to which Rousseau ascribes "la décrépitude de l'espèce".<sup>80</sup> Like all of the needs which, in Rousseau's view, characterize the weakness and attendant degeneration of social man,<sup>81</sup>

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., II, 208.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., II, 247.

<sup>80</sup>Rousseau, Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité parmi les hommes, II, 72.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., II, 76.

the one cited by Saint-Preux effectively counteracts the natural human qualities upon which the stability of the state of nature and of any benevolent society is based. In one of her letters to Saint-Preux, in a letter contained in part one of La Nouvelle Héloïse, Julie speaks about the natural and proper differences between men and women. She remarks:

Je . . . ne saurais imaginer un modèle commun de perfection pour deux êtres si différents. L'attaque et la défense, l'audace des hommes, la pudeur des femmes, ne sont point des conventions, comme le pensent tes philosophes, mais des institutions naturelles dont il est facile de rendre raison, et dont se déduisent aisément toutes les autres distinctions morales. D'ailleurs, la destination de la nature n'étant pas la même, les inclinations, les manières de voir et de sentir, doivent être dirigées de chaque côté selon ses vues. Il ne faut point les mêmes goûts ni la même constitution pour labourer la terre et pour allaiter les enfants.... Ces vaines imitations de sexe sont le comble de la déraison; elles font rire le sage et fuir les amours.<sup>82</sup>

Seen against these criteria, the assimilation described by Saint-Preux is an acute deviance from the principles of nature, of reason, and of sagesse. As Julie characterizes the proper differences, in nature and, accordingly, in activity, between men and women, Rousseau's state of nature should come to mind. There, the inherent differences among the species serve both the welfare of each species and that

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<sup>82</sup>Rousseau, Julie, I, 102-103.

of the whole of creation. There, a harmonious matching of the peculiar needs of each variety of creature both to its peculiar abilities and to the fruits of its environment, induces a pervasive well-being which society cannot hope to surpass.<sup>83</sup> No society may attain the benevolent order of the state of nature, unless based upon the naturally diverse -- and, therefore, concordant -- qualities inherent to men and women. This is Julie's belief -- and, clearly, Rousseau's<sup>84</sup> -- but it is unrecognized in Saint-Preux's Paris.

As La Profession de foi du vicaire savoyard amply demonstrates, Rousseau sees natural order in the human realm as the product of certain controls divinely set within man. These make the human being "semblable à Dieu",<sup>85</sup> attuned to the altruistic purpose of God as manifest in nature. That purpose, Rousseau maintains, serves all men better than could any other.<sup>86</sup> Rousseau's divinely formed, internal human controls -- Saint-Preux refers to them as

<sup>83</sup>Rousseau, Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité parmi les hommes, I, 42, 45; II, 67.

<sup>84</sup>J.-L. Lecercle, Rousseau et l'art du roman (Paris: Armand Colin, 1969), pp. 73, 120.

<sup>85</sup>Rousseau, Emile, IV, 354-355.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., IV, 348-350.

his "divin modèle"<sup>87</sup> -- are the only means whereby man may be a sovereign being.<sup>88</sup>

In Saint-Preux's Paris, the concept of man as a sovereign being, as a creature exempt from external control, is understandably unknown. As already shown, Saint-Preux's Parisians are entirely controlled by paraître, by what lies outside themselves, and, therefore, appear to one another only as "objects". Undoubtedly, Saint-Preux's Parisians are not sovereign beings, for their artificial preoccupations deny them contact with Saint-Preux's "divin modèle".<sup>89</sup> Without that contact, and, hence, without the continuity and harmony of purposes which it brings to all men, Saint-Preux's Paris must be "un chaos".<sup>90</sup>

The theme of the human being as "object" is central to Saint-Preux's characterization of the relationship between the Parisian lady and the Parisian gentleman. Inasmuch as the Parisian lady seeks only her own satisfaction in surrounding herself with célibataires and aventuriers,<sup>91</sup> her suitors appear as merely the property of their mistress.

<sup>87</sup>Rousseau, Julie, II, 233.

<sup>88</sup>Rousseau, Emile, IV, 354-355.

<sup>89</sup>Rousseau, Julie, II, 233.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., II, 207.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., II, 247.



Their function is not to love, as might a sovereign being; instead, it is only to amuse, as might any toy.<sup>92</sup> Indeed, the Parisian lady has many suitors,<sup>93</sup> just as she must have many other items of property, many gowns, for example. It is not surprising that, as Saint-Preux observes, the words "love" and "lover" have been removed from the vocabulary of the society about which he writes.<sup>94</sup> These terms belong only to inviolate human beings; they have no meaning to men or to women whose human nature has been placed in check by a wholly artificial environment.

Defining the natural rôles of men and women, Julie symbolizes that of man as "l'attaque", and that of woman as "la défense".<sup>95</sup> For Julie -- for Rousseau<sup>96</sup> -- the proper function of the female nature is to check and to balance the male nature, just as within the individual human being, the force of pity is intended to check and to balance the force of amour de soi.<sup>97</sup> Hence, the separate natures of

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., II, 248.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., II, 247.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., II, 248.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., I, 102.

<sup>96</sup>Lecerclé, Rousseau et l'Art du roman, 73, 120.

<sup>97</sup>Rousseau, Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité parmi les hommes, I, 58, 60.

the two sexes are defined by their natural relation to one another. Understandably, then, to denature the male is to denature the female. This argument is supported fully by Saint-Preux's suggestion that the Parisian suitor regards his mistress as an object -- as she, him. If he finds a new patrona, one who offers more advantages to him, he rejects his old one,<sup>98</sup> as he might any article whose function is better filled by another. Clearly, the relationship of Saint-Preux's Parisians to one another is purely physical, or sensual, like their relationship to their theatre, and to the words they speak. Everything outside the self is envisaged by Saint-Preux's Parisians as the means to their individual ends, and not as an end in itself, as "object", and not as "sovereign being".

Saint-Preux's presentation of the institution of marriage, as regarded by his Parisians, conforms completely to all of his earlier remarks about the relationship of these people to one another. For them, marriage is "un lien où le coeur n'a point été consulté";<sup>99</sup> for them, marriage "n'a la force des moindres contrats civiles".<sup>100</sup> The Parisians about whom Saint-Preux writes, do not marry

<sup>98</sup> Rousseau, Julie, II, 250.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., II, 249.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., II, 249.

one another as human beings; rather, they marry "la fortune", or "l'état".<sup>101</sup> And, as Saint-Preux suggests, the marriage of "objects" does not occasion any sense of duty or responsibility.<sup>102</sup> Feelings of duty and responsibility are only possible between, or among, sovereign beings. And sovereignty is wholly inconsistent with the paraître pervasive in Saint-Preux's Paris.

Therefore, it is not difficult to understand why "la plus déplorable misère" is to be found there.<sup>103</sup>

To see what Saint-Preux says about Paris as significant only to an understanding of the particular people about whom he writes, at the particular time at which he writes, is to overlook the primary value, not only of this one section of Julie, but of the novel as a whole. Indeed, the close relationship of Julie to the second Discours and, as will be shown, to Du Contrat social, is demonstrated by the common concern of these texts with the serious problems that living in any sophisticated society poses for all men, at all times. By describing Paris, Saint-Preux endeavours to convey the essential features of any large city. He suggests this intention in the following

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., II, 249.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., II, 249.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., II, 208.

remarks to Julie:

Je n'ignore pas que les capitales diffèrent moins entre elles que les peuples, et que les caractères nationaux s'y effacent et confondent en grande partie, tant à cause de l'influence commune des cours qui se ressemblent toutes, que par l'effet commun d'une société nombreuse et resserrée, qui est le même à peu près sur tous les hommes et l'emporte à la fin sur le caractère originel.<sup>104</sup>

Saint-Preux argues that all men were essentially the same in their original state, and that, therefore, an environment inimical to human nature -- the city, for example<sup>105</sup> -- affects all men in the same way, wherever and whenever it develops. In the ensuing exhortation to Julie, Saint-Preux indicates that the real focus of his description of Paris is not upon what is peculiar to Paris -- as shown in the passage above, Saint-Preux sees all cities as essentially the same, without much cultural uniqueness or appreciable similarity to the countries of which they are, geographically at least, a part -- but, instead, upon the unchanging face of vice, as perceived in Paris, and as it might well be perceived in all other cities:

Veuille donc, ma charmante prêchese, distinguer ici l'observation philosophique de la satire nationale. Ce ne sont point les Parisiens que j'étudie, mais les habitants d'une grande ville; et je ne sais si ce que j'en vois ne convient pas à Rome et à Londres, tout aussi bien qu'à Paris. Les règles de la morale ne dépendent

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<sup>104</sup>Ibid., II, 218.

<sup>105</sup>See Rousseau, Emile, V, 579.

point des usages des peuples; ainsi, malgré les préjugés dominants, je sens fort bien ce qui est mal en soi.<sup>106</sup>

Rousseau's own experience of Paris, as presented in book four of his Confessions, is reflected in that of Saint-Preux. The hypocrisy, the illusory friendliness of the Paris encountered by young Jean-Jacques,<sup>107</sup> are presented faithfully in Saint-Preux's treatment of the city.<sup>108</sup> Like the impressions of Paris induced by Saint-Preux, those induced by Rousseau in his autobiographical novel not only tell the reader about the character of the French capital, but also form in him a comprehensive understanding of the nature and sources of malice, wherever manifest. In the Confessions, as part of his description of his experience of Paris, Rousseau speaks of le colonel Gaudard, to whose nephew he became tutor:

Ce colonel Gaudard au neveu duquel on m'avait donné, se trouva être un vilain vieux avare, qui, quoique tout cousu d'or, voyant ma détresse, me voulut avoir pour rien. Il prétendait que je fusse auprès de son neveu une espèce de valet sans gages plutôt qu'un vrai gouverneur.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup>Rousseau, Julie, II, 219.

<sup>107</sup>J.-J. Rousseau, Les Confessions, ed. J. Voisine (Paris: Garnier, 1964), IV, p. 180.

<sup>108</sup>Rousseau, Julie, II, 207-208.

<sup>109</sup>Rousseau, Les Confessions, IV, 181.

Gaudard is, perhaps, one of the persons through whose depiction Rousseau most effectively conveys the evils of amour-propre, and of a related and intense concern with paraître, with the superficialities of life. Gaudard has not within him one drop of charity, of fairness, or of humility. He is so concerned with his image, and with the monies through which he maintains the appearance of a worth he does not have inherently, that he seeks to retain Rousseau by paying him as little as possible for his services. Gaudard is described by Rousseau as the sort of man who sees the positions of people in society as relative, and who, therefore, makes himself important by making and keeping others as unimportant, as menial, as possible. This depiction ought to remind one of the very essence of Saint-Preux's Paris. Still, Gaudard is not to be seen as vile merely because he is Parisian; he is vile because he is part of the urban phenomenon. As Saint-Preux observes, "c'est le premier inconvénient des grands villes [my italics] que les hommes y deviennent autres que ce qu'ils sont, et que la société leur donne pour ainsi dire un être différent du leur".<sup>110</sup> For Rousseau, as for Saint-Preux, the city per se is evil, because of its inherently superficial values, and, consequently, because

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<sup>110</sup>Rousseau, Julie, II, 251.

of its dehumanizing effects upon man.

In his Confessions, Rousseau describes numerous persons who are not Parisian, but who have been perverted by the ways of the city, as detailed by Saint-Preux. Among them are la comtesse de Menthon, whose spitefully contrived verses recall the depraved poetry of Parisian society as characterized for Julie,<sup>111</sup> and M. de Tavel, whose subtle metaphysical arguments are reminiscent of the conventional discourse of Saint-Preux's Paris.<sup>112</sup>

As will be seen in chapter three of the present study, Du Contrat social, in conjunction with Saint-Preux's presentation of Clarens, offers what is, for Rousseau, the ideal and only solution to the universally significant problems articulated by the second Discours, and by the depiction of Paris in Julie.

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<sup>111</sup>Rousseau, Les Confessions, V, 221.  
Rousseau, Julie, II, 224.

<sup>112</sup>Rousseau, Les Confessions, V, 226-227.  
Rousseau, Julie, II, 226.

### CHAPTER III

#### CLARENS AND DU CONTRAT SOCIAL

One might best describe the Clarens of M. and Mme de Wolmar as a society in which Rousseau's social contract is enforced with optimum success. Rousseau's aim in formulating and articulating his Du Contrat social is to outline the means whereby man in society may enjoy all of the advantages of freedom and equality.<sup>1</sup> In setting Clarens before the eyes of his reader, Rousseau provides a pendant to Du Contrat social, describing a community whose very nature manifests the infinite desirability of practising that document's moral and political philosophy.

Rousseau's social contract, or "pacte social", is an agreement freely made by the citizens of a community, whereby the rights of the individual are given over to the community.<sup>2</sup> The function of the community is to define and to execute la volonté générale, whose concern must always be l'intérêt commun.<sup>3</sup> As is stated by Rousseau in chapter six of the first book of Du Contrat social, "chacun

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<sup>1</sup>J.-J. Rousseau, Du Contrat social (Paris: Garnier, 1962), I, p. 243.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., I, 243-244.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., II, 249-250; III, 293.



de nous met en commun sa personne et toute sa puissance sous la suprême direction de la volonté générale; et nous recevons encore chaque membre comme partie indivisible du tout".<sup>4</sup>

Rousseau insists that la volonté générale, whose concern is always l'utilité publique, should not be confused with la volonté de tous, which he defines as the combined personal interests of all the citizens of a given society. Rousseau concedes -- realistically -- that the majority of a community's citizens can make decisions the intention of which is to further the interests of la volonté générale, the effect of which, however, is harmful to l'intérêt commun, to the cause of freedom and equality.<sup>5</sup> Thus Rousseau does not support community government by representatives of the people, for popular representatives would be susceptible to the same weaknesses of judgment foreseen by Rousseau to be potential in the community as a whole.<sup>6</sup> Instead, he proposes government by the prince, whose function is to envisage goals of benefit to l'intérêt commun, and to devise means whereby these may be probably,

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., I, 244.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., II, 252-253.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., III, 277-278.

if not infallibly, achieved.<sup>7</sup>

It is important to note that Rousseau's prince is not the head of a community whose members enjoy privileges, hereditary or otherwise, commensurate with their proximity to the apex of a hierarchical social structure. Indeed, the prototype society of Du Contrat social is one in which every citizen is both subject and sovereign.<sup>8</sup> The prince, into whose hands control of the means to a common good is entrusted -- so long as he does not abuse his trust<sup>9</sup> -- possesses only those rights common to every citizen.<sup>10</sup> If he is in any way different from his fellows, it is only in that to him is granted the power of decision-making, which, in the hands of a people who are not des dieux, might easily be used, though perhaps unintentionally, to confound, rather than to further, l'intérêt commun.

Rousseau's volonté générale may be justly described as what society, as an aggregate structure, always wants, or always should want, for itself.<sup>11</sup> It may be expected that some of the individuals within society will seek to

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., III, 275-276.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., I, 245; II, 255.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., I, 243.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., II, 255.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., II, 255.

satisfy a volonté particulière inconsistent with what is best for society as a whole. Such self-seeking, though perhaps temporarily more advantageous to the individual than submission to la volonté générale, is ultimately harmful to him, as well as to society as a whole, since no one in society lives and acts in a vacuum, no one in society being able, therefore, to avoid suffering, along with his fellows, the destructive effects of his anti-social behaviour.<sup>12</sup> It is thus incumbent upon the prince to define the rôle of society's members in such a way as to assure that a common and beneficial end is being served by all citizens, including himself. In doing so, the prince is serving his own interests as one equal in a society of equals, thereby serving the interests of every member of society. The prince is thus a metaphor, a symbol, for what is ideally the will of society as a whole.<sup>13</sup>

The social organization of Clarens is a mise en pratique of the structure of ideas of Du Contrat social. M. and Mme de Wolmar supervise the operation of their little society according to the principle of l'intérêt commun. In expressing their attitude toward the cultivation of their land, Saint-Preux conveys strongly the egalitarian

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., I, 246.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., III, 283.

ethic of Clarens. He observes: "Ils ont pour maxime de tirer de la culture tout ce qu'elle peut donner, non pour faire un plus grand gain, mais pour nourrir plus d'hommes".<sup>14</sup> The Wolmars seek not only what is best for themselves, but also what is best for all the people who live with them at Clarens. Julie and her husband find their personal satisfaction and happiness in managing Clarens in the manner best suited to bringing an analogous satisfaction and happiness to the persons who live and work under their supervision.<sup>15</sup> The wisdom of M. and Mme de Wolmar perhaps best manifests itself in their realization of one of the most important truths of Du Contrat social, one implicit in every sentence of that document. Like Rousseau, they realize that the happiness and well-being of the individual in society cannot be divorced from the happiness and well-being of society as a whole. They understand that their society cannot flourish without the fervent support of all its members, and that without their benevolent direction, the potential for prosperity and happiness inherent to their fellow citizens, can never be realized.<sup>16</sup>

The genius of Julie and Wolmar as governing agents

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<sup>14</sup>Rousseau, Julie, IV, 424.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., IV, 424.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., IV, 448-449.

makes itself felt through their concern for the moral dignity of those whom they govern. Julie and Wolmar do not seek service out of compulsion, service in recognition of their control of the means of livelihood of their fellow citizens. The Wolmars are not served as persons allegiance to whom is an economic imperative. Instead, they are served as symbols of an ordered, stable, highly moral society, one the benefits of which accrue to all persons who place its well-being before all personal, private interests.<sup>17</sup> Saint-Preux effectively expresses the relationship of the people of Clarens to M. de Wolmar:

Quelque intérêt qu'ils aient à s'aimer ils en ont encore un plus grand à lui plaire; le zèle pour son service l'emporte sur leur bienveillance mutuelle; et tous, se regardant comme lésés par des pertes qui le laisseraient moins en état de récompenser un bon serviteur, sont également incapables de souffrir en silence le tort que l'un d'eux voudrait lui faire.<sup>18</sup>

Inasmuch as to do one's utmost to serve Wolmar is to do one's utmost to serve the society whose fortune is one's own, serving Wolmar is, in fact, serving one's self-interest. Realizing this, one is reminded of one of the sentences of Du Contrat social: "Chacun se donnant à tous ne se donne à personne".<sup>19</sup> Indeed, one serves oneself better

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., IV, 452.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., IV, 445-446.

<sup>19</sup> Rousseau, Du Contrat social, I, 244.

through serving Wolmar than through pursuing a course of self-interest which is not also beneficial to one's fellow citizens, for the potential of a unified society such as is symbolized by Wolmar, is far greater than the potential of any society's citizens exercised in disunion.<sup>20</sup>

Moving with Saint-Preux into the world of Clarens, one soon realizes that, there, amour-propre has been all but eliminated. Indeed, amour-propre is a disease infinitely harmful to any society such as is sought by Rousseau, since it inclines one toward avarice, toward seeking to have more than one's efforts earn, and, therefore, necessarily, toward attempting to take from others that to which they have a right.<sup>21</sup> In order that the Wolmars may assure themselves that Clarens will continue to be a society of freedom and equality, they must inculcate within those who would be a part of their society all of the values of l'honnête homme. As Saint-Preux notes, all those who enter Clarens, must be honest, must love their master, and must serve him at his will. Saint-Preux suggests that provided a member of the Clarens community is intelligent, he will be honest, will love Wolmar, and will serve him

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., I, 244.

<sup>21</sup>Rousseau, Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité parmi les hommes, 118.

unquestioningly.<sup>22</sup> To be honest seems to be, in Rousseau's terms, to serve willingly the principles of duty and virtue. Honnêteté seems to be, for Rousseau, a quality of the man whose primary allegiance is to his society. It is fully in keeping with the thought-structure of Du Contrat social that every would-be member of Wolmar's society show him love and unquestioned service, for Wolmar is the prince of Clarens, the symbol of a society of equals, the symbol of la volonté générale. Failing to love and serve him for what he represents, is tantamount to an assertion of amour-propre, of one's inability to see one's own interests as those of society as a whole.

Indeed, Wolmar's success as prince of Clarens results from his ability to command as if he commanded not. What he brings about in those lives he directs, is not truly subservience to his will, for he does not rule out of pride or vanity, but rather out of a sense of what living in society demands of the human being. The political philosophy forming the basis for Wolmar's government of Clarens, designed to hold amour-propre in check and to promote not only coöperation but also love among all citizens, is imposed not by Wolmar, but rather by the very nature of the human being, and by the demands that such a nature makes

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<sup>22</sup>Rousseau, Julie, IV, 427.

upon any political philosophy which would bring and keep men together of their own volition. Concerning the development of those who live and work at Clarens, Saint-Preux observes: "Si vous ne songez qu'à vous en les formant, en vous quittant ils font fort bien de ne songer qu'à eux".<sup>23</sup> These remarks clearly demonstrate Saint-Preux's -- and Wolmar's -- understanding of the inescapable function of the true prince: he must teach altruism, as the only viable means whereby the welfare of the individual citizen and of society as a whole may be assured. And he must teach by example, and not by dictum,<sup>24</sup> since his duty is not to legislate for others as an individual apart from, and superior to, everyone else, but rather as a citizen, as an equal, and as a symbol for what his society as a whole should be.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., IV, 428.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., IV, 451.

<sup>25</sup>In his Rousseau's Social Contract, An Interpretive Essay (Cleveland: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1968), pp. 20-23, Professor Lester Crocker offers a reading of Julie somewhat in contradiction to my own. Professor Crocker attributes to "an intellectual experiment in the technique and consequences of human engineering" (p. 20) Wolmar's highly successful government of Clarens. He characterizes Wolmar's power as that of "la main cachée" (p. 21), and the effects of that power, not as public freedom, but as public enslavement (p. 22). For Professor Crocker, Wolmar is a "manipulator" (p. 20). This, I think, is the central theme of his description of Clarens. I disagree with such an interpretation for several reasons.



Wolmar does nothing which is not directly beneficial both to himself and to all the people of Clarens. Striving

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The image of Wolmar as "manipulator" imputes to him -- implicitly, and, I find, incorrectly -- personal interests inconsistent with, separate from, those of the society he directs. Certainly, Professor Crocker is justified in describing Wolmar's administration of Clarens as anything but overt. Still, doesn't Wolmar's highly subtle, virtually imperceptible shaping of Clarens resemble the beneficent effect of Rousseau's nature upon natural man far more than the power of "big brother" over the "citizens" of Orwell's 1984? Saint-Preux notes, while at Clarens: ". . . la douce égalité qui règne ici rétablit l'ordre de la nature . . ." (V, 595). The order achieved at Clarens does not come from Wolmar, but, instead, only through him; the order achieved at Clarens is nature's -- and not Wolmar's. Wolmar is prince of Clarens only inasmuch as, through his initiative and subsequent efforts, the people of his society enjoy physical well-being and heartfelt peace (V, 591). As Rousseau notes, in part one of the second Discours, ". . . je voudrais bien qu'on m'expliquât quel peut être le genre de misère d'un être libre dont le coeur est en paix et le corps en santé" (p. 56). Clearly, Rousseau sees the complete satisfaction of body and soul as inseparable from the condition of freedom. For Rousseau, happiness is the total absence of suffering: ". . . désirer que quelqu'un ne souffre point, qu'est-ce autre chose que désirer qu'il soit heureux?" (Ibid., I, 59). Clarens is a society whose citizens are happy (V, 590-591). And, even if, as Professor Crocker maintains (p. 22), the freedom of Clarens is illusory, that matters little, for, surely, the human heart embraces only true happiness, and urges that any price be paid to achieve it.

It appears to me that on one notable occasion, Professor Crocker misleadingly translates part of one of Saint-Preux's remarks about Clarens. Here are both the passage in question and Professor Crocker's rendering of it. I have italicized the English verb used, I think, erroneously: ". . . je n'ai jamais vu de police où l'intérêt fût si sagement dirigé, et où pourtant il influât moins que dans celle-ci" (IV, 452). "I have never seen any government in which self-interest is so wisely manipulated and in which it notwithstanding has less influence than here (p. 21)." I find that Rousseau's use of diriger does not invite translation by any English verb so heavily laden with pejorative connotations as "to manipulate". Indeed, Rousseau

to make certain that his fellow citizens are paid both in proportion to the work they do, and in proportion to the number of years of satisfactory service they have shown him,<sup>26</sup> Wolmar is seeing to his own interests as a landholder. However, he is doing much more: he is channelling self-interest, the uncontrolled result of which is amour-propre, so that it functions as a constructive social tool, and not as a destructive, anti-social weapon. Receiving what they merit, and nothing more, the citizens of Clarens learn to appraise themselves realistically, according to what they can do, and not vainly, according to an illusory sense of self-importance, looking away from society for criteria by which to measure their worth. Wolmar's programme of Sunday games, through which the men of Clarens learn to value their skill more highly than the prizes their skill earns them,<sup>27</sup>

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uses the verb diriger -- and quite understandably -- to refer to the benevolent actions of nature upon man: Julie remarks, in book one of *La Nouvelle Héloïse*: ". . . la destination de la nature n'étant pas la même [aux hommes et aux femmes], les inclinations, les manières de voir et de sentir, doivent être dirigées [my italics] de chaque côté selon ses vues" (p. 103). Certainly, Professor Crocker would not translate diriger in the latter context by "to manipulate". I see no indication, in either the former or the latter context, that manipulation is a theme in Rousseau's *Julie*. ". . . la douce égalité qui règne . . . [à Clarens] rétablit l'ordre de la nature . . ." (V, 595). If manipulation is attributable to Rousseau's nature, it must be seen to be synonymous with beneficence.

<sup>26</sup>Rousseau, *Julie*, IV, 425, 428.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, IV, 436-437.

have the function of establishing, as the citizen's most important asset, those capacities which can please and serve both their possessor and society. He who has mental and physical strength and finesse is satisfying and useful, both to himself and to his fellow man. When one values one's skills more for the personal rewards they bring than for what they can achieve, directly and publicly, one is incapable of becoming optimumly skilful, and, hence, incapable of doing one's utmost for oneself and society. Rewards are of personal value only. When considered to be the primary motive for action, they serve to undermine one's concern for the social consequences of what one does, so long as all personal consequences are beneficial. By causing the citizens of Clarens to value the intangible above the tangible, bodily proficiency through the games just mentioned, virtue, responsibility to others and to oneself through the implicit teachings of his personal conduct, Wolmar inspires in them, without ever having to mention the words, respect for, and love of, the concept of a free and egalitarian society.

It is infinitely clear that Rousseau's liberté civile is fully enjoyed at Clarens, for all effort there is directed toward eliminating the oppression of the weak by the strong, toward eliminating giving to oneself through taking from others. What is, perhaps, not so clear is what Rousseau means when he speaks of "equality", in Du Contrat

social. Using Saint-Preux's description of Clarens as a key to the particular significance attached to the term by Rousseau, one may see first of all what is not meant. Rousseau certainly does not believe that all men have equal abilities, or common private interests. Wolmar and Julie are no less realistic than Rousseau, for, as Saint-Preux observes, they recognize that men and women have disparate interests and talents,<sup>28</sup> and that talents vary, both in kind and in degree, from person to person.<sup>29</sup> If men are equal in some way, but not through what they do, or the degree of competence with which they perform, then their equality must reside in their reasons for action, and in the zeal with which they undertake to act. One's experience of Clarens indicates that this is so. Commenting upon the vendanges at Clarens, Saint-Preux expresses most effectively the unanimity of spirit of that community's citizens:

Vous [milord Edouard] ne sauriez concevoir avec quel zèle, avec quelle gaieté tout cela [les vendanges] se fait. On chante, on rit toute la journée, et le travail n'en va que mieux. Tout vit dans la plus grande familiarité; tout le monde est égal, et personne ne s'oublie. Les dames sont sans airs, les paysannes sont décentes, les hommes badins et non grossiers. C'est à qui trouvera les meilleures chansons, à qui fera les meilleurs contes, à qui dira les meilleurs traits. L'union même engendre les folâtres

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., IV, 432.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., IV, 436-437.

querelles; et l'on ne s'agace mutuellement que pour montrer combien on est sûr les uns des autres. On ne revient point ensuite faire chez soi les messieurs; on passe aux vignes toute la journée.<sup>30</sup>

The work of harvesting is not wearisome to the people of Clarens. Though demanding, it is not suffered; rather, it is enjoyed, since each citizen labours as an essential part of a concerted effort, is loved by all for what he gives, and returns the love he is shown. Each citizen is equal, not through what he gives, for that is limited by nature, but rather through the spirit in which his offering is made, for that is not. Though the people of Clarens are unequally able to work toward the enrichment of their society, they are equal in willing to serve, as best they can, Wolmar and Julie, and the society which the latter symbolize. The equality of the people of Clarens is not physical, or intellectual, but instead moral.<sup>31</sup>

A recurrent metaphor within Saint-Preux's description of Clarens likens Wolmar's society to a family.<sup>32</sup> In the following passage, Saint-Preux speaks explicitly of the work of the ideal maître, implicitly of what he considers to be the *raison d'être* of Wolmar as prince of Clarens:

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., V, 593.

<sup>31</sup> Rousseau, Du Contrat social, I, 249.

<sup>32</sup> Rousseau, Julie, IV, 427, 445.

Son domestique lui était étranger; il en fait son bien, son enfant, il se l'approprie. Il n'avait droit que sur les actions; il s'en donne encore sur les volontés. Il n'était maître qu'à prix d'argent; il le devient par l'empire sacré de l'estime et des bienfaits. Que la fortune le dépouille de ses richesses, elle ne saurait lui ôter les coeurs qu'il s'est attachés; elle n'ôtera point des enfants à leur père: toute la différence est qu'il les nourrissait hier, et qu'il sera demain nourri par eux.<sup>33</sup>

It is perhaps only after reading these words that one understands fully what Saint-Preux means by familiarité in speaking about Clarens at harvest. Although the citizens of Clarens have common economic interests, the unity of their society is created and maintained by stronger ties: those of love. It is through the cohesive force of love that Clarens manages to be the best of societies, a family, and the best sort of family, one composed of moral equals.

If, as Rousseau maintains, the proper end of any political association is the prosperity of all its members,<sup>34</sup> Clarens must be seen as possessing a highly effective government: for example, the harvests at Clarens are plentiful, and benefit equally all the persons who bring them about.<sup>35</sup> However, the infinite desirability of the

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., IV, 449.

<sup>34</sup>Rousseau, Du Contrat social, III, 293.

<sup>35</sup>Rousseau, Julie, V, 590.

political structure of Clarens may be ascertained by an examination of its sources, as well as its effects.

In chapter one of book four of Du Contrat social, Rousseau describes what is, for him, the ideal political situation:

Tant que plusieurs hommes réunis se considèrent comme un seul corps, ils n'ont qu'une seule volonté qui se rapporte à la commune conservation et au bien-être général. Alors tous les ressorts de l'Etat sont vigoureux et simples, ses maximes sont claires et lumineuses; il n'a point d'intérêts embrouillés, contradictoires; le bien commun se montre partout avec évidence, et ne demande que du bon sens pour être aperçu. La paix, l'union, l'égalité, sont ennemies des subtilités politiques. Les hommes droits et simples sont difficiles à tromper à cause de leur simplicité: les leurres, les prétextes raffinés ne leur en imposent point, ils ne sont pas même assez fins pour être dupes. Quand on voit chez le plus heureux peuple du monde des troupes de paysans régler les affaires de l'Etat sous un chêne et se conduire toujours sagement, peut-on s'empêcher de mépriser les raffinements des autres nations, qui se rendent illustres et misérables avec tant d'art et de mystère?

Un Etat ainsi gouverné a besoin de très peu de lois; et, à mesure qu'il devient nécessaire d'en promulguer de nouvelles, cette nécessité se voit universellement. Le premier qui les propose ne fait que dire ce que tous ont déjà senti, et il n'est question ni de brigues ni d'éloquence pour faire passer en loi ce que chacun a déjà résolu de faire, sitôt qu'il sera sûr que les autres le feront comme lui.<sup>36</sup>

Consider this in relation to the following extract from Saint-Preux's description of the vendanges at Clarens:

A dîner, on amène les enfants [ceux de Julie et

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<sup>36</sup>Rousseau, Du Contrat social, IV, 307-308.

de Claire] et ils passent le reste de la journée à la vigne. Avec quelle joie ces bons villageois les voient arriver! O bienheureux enfants! disent-ils en les pressant dans leurs bras robustes, que le bon Dieu prolonge vos jours aux dépens des nôtres! Ressemblez à vos père et mère, et soyez comme eux la bénédiction du pays! Souvent en songeant que la plupart de ces hommes ont porté les armes, et savent manier l'épée et le mousquet aussi bien que la serpette et la houe, en voyant Julie au milieu d'eux si charmante et si respectée recevoir, elle et ses enfants, leurs touchantes acclamations, je me rappelle l'illustre et vertueuse Agrippine montrant son fils aux troupes de Germanicus. Julie! femme incomparable! vous exercez dans la simplicité de la vie privée le despotique empire de la sagesse et des bienfaits: vous êtes pour tout le pays un dépôt cher et sacré que chacun voudrait défendre et conserver au prix de son sang; et vous vivez plus sûrement, plus honorablement au milieu d'un peuple entier qui vous aime, que les rois entourés de tous leurs soldats.<sup>37</sup>

The theme common to both of these passages is l'entendement des coeurs as the basis for ideal government. The society described in the preceding extract from Du Contrat social is one in which each citizen is guided from within, by the voice of the heart, so as to realize that his individual fate is inseparable from, and dependent upon, that of all his fellow citizens. There is no dissent in that society, for its members do not voice the conflicting interests of amour-propre, but, instead, unanimously, the infallible recommendations of Rousseau's instinct divin.<sup>38</sup> Such men

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<sup>37</sup>Rousseau, Julie, V, 594.

<sup>38</sup>Rousseau, Emile, IV, 354-355.



are not easily led astray by selfish and sophisticated arguments of the order of those examined in chapter two of this study:<sup>39</sup> they possess commonly a guiding light in which vanity cannot easily seduce. The laws of their society abide, not in the form of statutes, but in the hearts of those whom they govern. As Rousseau observes, in chapter eight of book one of Du Contrat social, "la liberté morale . . .seule rend l'homme vraiment maître de lui; car l'impulsion du seul appétit est esclavage, et l'obéissance à la loi qu'on s'est prescrite est liberté".<sup>40</sup> The sovereignty of the individual, and of society as a whole, depends, therefore, upon man's ability and willingness to follow the exhortations of his heart in all matters.

Saint-Preux's depiction of the manner in which the Wolmars' and Claire's children are treated by the people of Clarens, emphasizes the rôle of the heart in the unification of the society he is describing. The peasants' unanimous devotion to their masters' children is not only an expression of love as directed toward individuals; it is also an expression of love for their society; patriotism, in other words. The Wolmars and Claire are referred to by the peasants

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<sup>39</sup>Rousseau, Julie, II, 226.

<sup>40</sup>Rousseau, Du Contrat social, I, 247.

as "la bénédiction du pays";<sup>41</sup> they are identified with the prosperity and happiness of the community whose affairs they direct; they are maîtres selon les coeurs du peuple. It is as the offspring of persons symbolic of la volonté générale of Clarens that the children of the Wolmars and of Claire are lovingly received by that society's people. Observing that Julie enjoys more security through her benevolence than any king, through his armies, Saint-Preux suggests that external controls can never truly bind people together, and that only l'union et l'entendement des coeurs, resulting in the welfare of everyone, can bring stability, peace, and happiness -- in short, all of the advantages of sovereignty -- to society.

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<sup>41</sup>Rousseau, Julie, V, 594.

## CONCLUSION

In chapter one of his Rousseau's Social Contract, An Interpretive Essay, Professor Lester Crocker observes:

Rousseau's abiding belief, his central tenet, is that dependence on other men (as individuals or partial groups) is inherently and irremediably pernicious. It forces men "to be tyrants or slaves, to become envious, dishonest and treacherous". This fact leads us to see the real consistency of his work, beneath the apparent contradictions. Always, he will support independence in this sense. But there is another road, and it is the chosen way of his idealized intellectual and emotional fantasies. There is another kind of dependence, one that men have not known since Sparta -- the impersonal dependence on the collective will. There was no other way, he was convinced, to a just and happy society; and this, it should never be forgotten, was his sole aim.<sup>1</sup>

In book four of the Confessions, Rousseau provides an intimation which, along with many of the experiences of his life, sets a context for appreciation both of Professor Crocker's observations, and of the argument of the present study:

C'est une chose bien singulière que mon imagination ne se monte jamais plus agréablement que quand mon état est le moins agréable et qu'au contraire elle est moins riante lorsque tout rit autour de moi. Ma mauvaise tête ne peut s'assujettir aux choses. Elle ne saurait embellir, elle veut créer. Les objets réels s'y peignent tout au plus tels qu'ils sont; elle ne sait parer que les objets imaginaires.

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<sup>1</sup>Crocker, Rousseau's Social Contract. An Interpretive Essay, 6-7.

Si je veux peindre le printemps, il faut que je sois en hiver; si je veux décrire un beau paysage, il faut que je sois dans des murs; et j'ai dit cent fois que si j'étais mis à la Bastille, j'y ferais le tableau de la liberté.<sup>2</sup>

One might well liken much of Rousseau's life to the oppressive experiences of a man imprisoned in the Bastille; also, one might justifiably characterize the second Discours, Du Contrat social, and Julie as the components of Rousseau's tableau de la liberté. If much of the second Discours, and Saint-Preux's description of Paris, seem to be poorly chosen ingredients of such a picture, they should be examined more closely; indeed, they are the shadows in Rousseau's representation of freedom, the dark shades against which the illuminations of Du Contrat social and of Clarens are best appreciated.

If there is one element common to the experiences of Rousseau's life, it is the absence of l'entendement des coeurs as the basis for the relationship of men in society. A recurrent problem for Rousseau was that most of the people with whom he came into contact, could not appreciate his intellectual and moral worth. As a lackey, engraver, tutor, musical scholar, secretary, Rousseau faced again and again the dilemma of communities in which men are judged by what they appear to be, according to superficialities such as

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<sup>2</sup>Rousseau, Les Confessions, IV, 194.

title or wealth, and not by what they are, not according to their intellectual -- and, more importantly, their moral -- strength. As a father, Rousseau saw the acute moral insufficiency of societies in which men could not properly care for their families: he himself felt compelled by circumstance to entrust to the Enfants Trouvés the welfare of his children. As a dramatist, Rousseau achieved fame all too late. Even after the success of his opera, Le Devin du village, the harm of years of work without just recognition could not be undone. All of his misfortunes Rousseau saw to be the predictable result of social structures founded upon values inessential and detrimental to the well-being of mankind. The false values which Rousseau saw as central to his own unhappiness, were also for him the general cause of division among men in society, the basis for a clash of wills from which no one might emerge without injury. It would seem that in such an experience and understanding of the real world is to be found the imaginative germ of the second Discours, of Du Contrat social, and of Julie. Together, these works form a highly structured, extremely articulate appeal for the realization of a world in which men do not suffer, through mutual dependence, the tremendously oppressive effects of an acquired collective weakness, but attain, instead, strength, equality, and freedom, through submission to the innate, unchanging values of the heart,

through perception of, and total obedience to, la volonté générale.

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