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Relationality in Rousseau's Philosophy of Education

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RELATIONALITY IN ROUSSEAU'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
Philosophy Department
at the University of Kentucky

By
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Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Theodore Schatzki, Professor of Geology, Philosophy, and Sociology

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2024

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

RELATIONALITY IN ROUSSEAU'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

Jean-Jacques Rousseau's assertion of *Emile* that "Our true study is that of the human condition" serves as the foundation for this dissertation, which examines the significance of certain kinds of basic experiential relationships in Rousseau's philosophy of education. By analyzing the relationships between the self and objects, the self and others, and the educator and the learner, this work elucidates how these interactions underpin Rousseau's pedagogical views and their implications for fostering personal and social virtue.

The dissertation explores the self-object relationship through affectivity, embodiment, and purposeful activity, demonstrating how direct engagement with objects shapes perceptions and behaviors. It then examines the self-other relationship, focusing on *amour de soi*, *amour-propre*, and natural compassion to highlight the balance between individual motivations and social influences. Finally, it investigates the educator-learner relationship, emphasizing Rousseau's concept of 'negative' education, which advocates for a facilitative role for educators in nurturing natural curiosity and virtue.

KEYWORDS: Rousseau, experiential learning, relational dynamics, negative education, personal development

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June 25th, 2024

RELATIONALITY IN ROUSSEAU'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

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Introduction

Jean-Jacques Rousseau asserts of his *Emile* that "Our true study is that of the human condition."[1] This declaration shapes the foundational approach of this dissertation, which establishes the significance of certain kinds of basic experiential relations in Rousseau's philosophy of education. As he says, "The study suitable for man is that of his relations" and "the lesson always [comes] from the thing itself."[2] These statements highlight the inherently relational nature of human existence and the experiential basis of learning, respectively, asserting that understanding, including understanding ourselves and our place in the world, fundamentally relies on our direct interactions with objects and others. Through a detailed examination of the experiential relationships between the self and objects, the self and others, and that between the educator and the learner, this dissertation elucidates how these relationships ground Rousseau's views on pedagogy. He says, with perhaps too much self-effacement, that his observations in *Emile* are "disordered and almost incoherent."[3] I aim to order and structure his thinking to show how these experiential relationships are essential to grasping the full scope of Rousseau's educational insights and their implications for fostering both personal and social virtue.

Rousseau: Classical Influences and Contemporary Impact

Rousseau's contributions to educational philosophy, embedded in the broader Enlightenment quest for understanding human nature and society, were significantly shaped by both classical and contemporaneous influences.

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[1] Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. 1979. *Emile: or On Education*. Translated by Allan Bloom. United States of America: Basic Books. 42.
[2] Ibid., 124, 214
[3] Ibid., 33

For example, Rousseau considered Plato's *Republic* to be "the most beautiful educational treatise ever written," surprisingly, perhaps, viewing it not as political philosophy ("It is not at all a political work, as think those who judge books only by their titles") but as educational.[4] For both philosophers, education is more than the mere transmission of information; it is a transformative practice that shapes the moral and intellectual character of an actively participating learner. Plato's emphasis on the role of education in developing wisdom and virtue finds a strong parallel in Rousseau's belief that education should cultivate the innate goodness and potential of the learner. Both thinkers view the educator as a crucial guide in this process, leading learners to self-discovery and enlightenment. Rousseau adopts Plato's idea that education should be an active, dynamic process that engages the whole person in the pursuit of truth, fostering a deep connection between intellectual growth and virtue.

Additionally, Rousseau's engagement with Stoic philosophy, particularly the teachings of Seneca, deeply influenced his educational ideals, emphasizing both alignment with nature and cultivation of emotional resilience and virtue. Indeed, the first words of *Emile,* after the title, are Seneca's: *Sanabilibus aegrotamus malis; ipsaque nos in rectum genitos natura, si emendari velimus, iuvat* ('We are ill with curable evils; and nature itself helps us to be born in the right way, if we wish to be corrected'). Stoicism advocates for self-control and equanimity, qualities that Rousseau integrated into his educational framework as essential for developing a learner's character. He saw education as a process that involves nurturing the natural capabilities and virtues of the learner, much like the Stoic focus on personal virtue as a means to live in harmony with

[4] Ibid., 40

the natural order. In *Emile,* Rousseau incorporates these Stoic principles by advocating for an education that promotes self-mastery, resilience, virtue, and self-awareness, preparing learners to face life's challenges with stoic calm and practical wisdom. This approach is particularly evident in how he suggests dealing with the affects and desires of learners: rather than suppressing or overly indulging them, education should guide the learner towards understanding and managing their natural impulses in a way that is in harmony with nature. Thus, Rousseau's educational philosophy not only aims at intellectual growth but also at fostering a robust character that can navigate the complexities of life with virtue and integrity, a clear echo of Stoic teachings on the importance of personal and virtuous development.

Turning to his own time, Rousseau emerged as a critical figure in the Enlightenment, an era marked by a tremendous emphasis on reason as the foundation for knowledge and social progress. Within this intellectual milieu, Rousseau's philosophy stood out due to its unique focus on natural human development and affective depth. While many of his contemporaries promoted the power of reason as the primary tool for understanding and improving the world, Rousseau argued that over-reliance on rationalism could lead to a disconnect from essential human experiences that shape our moral and emotional faculties. His advocacy for living in harmony with nature and his skepticism of the unchecked progress of civilization positioned him both as a participant in and a critic of Enlightenment ideals. This dual stance is reflected in his contributions to educational philosophy, where he stressed the importance of developing a learner comprehensively, respecting both the rational and affective dimensions of human life.

Rousseau's educational theories, particularly as they contrast with those of John Locke, demonstrate a nuanced engagement with Enlightenment thought. Locke emphasized education as a means to mold individuals equipped with the rationality and virtues necessary for economic utility and social participation. His approach was pragmatic, focusing on the formation of a moral and cognitive foundation that aligned with social and economic expectations. While Rousseau recognized the value in Locke's emphasis on reason, moral education, and the education of the body, Rousseau diverged significantly in his approach and his goal. Rousseau advocated for an education that prioritized the natural and free development of a learner's capacities, arguing that education should first and foremost cultivate a learner's innate goodness and virtue, largely independent of the demands of social and economic utility. In Rousseau's view, education should not prepare learners to perform predefined roles within the community but should focus on fostering authentic, self-determined individuality: "Living is the job I want to teach…"[5]

Beyond Locke, Rousseau was also in dialogue with other leading figures of the Enlightenment known as the *philosophes*, which included luminaries such as d'Alembert, Voltaire, and Diderot. These intellectuals, known for their advocacy of civil liberties, promotion of science, and rational critique of traditional institutions, influenced Rousseau's thinking. However, Rousseau distinctly broke away from the *philosophes* by emphasizing the limitations of rationalism and arguing for the integral role of affect and intuition in human development. His philosophical divergence is reflected in the importance that he gave to natural education, which prioritized affective depth over

[5] Ibid., 41

rational calculation. This approach not only challenged the prevailing Enlightenment ethos but also set his educational philosophy apart, emphasizing a more profound connection to the natural aspects of human experience that he felt were being overlooked by his contemporaries.

The continued significance of Rousseau's educational philosophy lies in its reorientation of educational priorities, shifting focus from the acquisition of information to the development of character and personal autonomy. His approach advocates for an education responsive to the affective and developmental needs of the learner, laying the groundwork for later progressive educational theories that emphasize experiential and self-directed learning.

For example, Maria Montessori, while not a philosopher by trade, adopted Rousseau's ideals, emphasizing the learner's natural growth and the importance of creating learning environments that enhance rather than impede this growth. Montessori's methods focus on the physical and psychological stages of a learner's development, mirroring Rousseau's ideas about education being tailored to the natural evolution of a learner's capacities. Montessori doesn't explicitly discuss Rousseau in *The Montessori Method*, but her influential educational approach shares significant parallels with Rousseau's emphasis on natural development and the prepared environment, making it clear that his ideas underpin many of her theories about education.

John Dewey, another educational reformer influenced by Rousseau, extended Rousseau's thinking into a broader social context in his *Democracy and Education*, arguing that education should be about personal development and preparing individuals for active and engaged citizenship. Dewey's emphasis on learning through doing and the

importance of a democratic classroom environment where learners have a say in their learning process reflects Rousseau's advocacy for educational freedom and the cultivation of personal judgment and moral integrity.

Similarly, Paolo Freire, in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and other works, built upon Rousseau's distrust of traditional didactic pedagogic methods, which Freire saw as oppressive and limiting to intellectual freedom. Freire's critical pedagogy posits that education should be emancipatory, enabling learners to question and transform the world around them. This aligns with Rousseau's vision of education as a means to foster not just personal virtue but also social change, preparing learners to both challenge social norms and contribute meaningfully to the community.

Together, these theorists, and many others[6], expand upon Rousseau's foundational ideas, adapting them to different historical and social contexts but always maintaining the core principle that education should be a liberating force that respects and nurtures the innate potential of each learner. This evolution of Rousseau's thought highlights its enduring impact on our understanding of what it means to educate and be educated.

By placing Rousseau within this lineage, it becomes clear that his work drew upon the wisdom of the past, challenged the educational norms of his time, and offered a visionary framework for understanding education as a lifelong process that is intertwined with the cultivation of personal virtue and freedom. Rousseau's influence thus marks a pivotal moment in the history of educational thought, bridging classical ideals and contemporary visions of educational practice.

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[6] See, for further examples, Pestalozzi's *How Gertrude Teachers Her Children*, Froebel's *The Education of Man*, Durkheim's *Education and Sociology*, Spencer's *Education: Intellectual, Moral, and Physical*, Key's *The Century of the Child*, Piaget's *The Moral Judgment of the Child*, Neill's *Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Child Rearing,* and Freinet's *The Modern School Movement*.

Structuring Educational Philosophy:
Rousseau's Progressive Exploration from Sensory Interaction to Social Integration

This dissertation is structured to progressively deepen the exploration of Rousseau's educational philosophy, reflecting his intricate views on human development. It begins by examining the nature of individual interactions with objects to ground understanding in personal experiences, crucial for establishing the basis of Rousseau's educational approach. It then expands to interpersonal dynamics, illustrating how individual learning intersects with social interconnectedness. Finally, it synthesizes these elements within the educator-learner relationship, demonstrating how personal autonomy and social interdependence converge in educational practices. This organization reflects the integrated nature of Rousseau's pedagogy, emphasizing its impact on both individual potential and social contributions.

Chapter One of the dissertation, titled "Rousseau and the Self-Object Relationship," investigates Rousseau's understanding of how human beings engage with objects. This relationship, Rousseau claims, significantly shapes people's perceptions, behaviors, and education. This chapter scrutinizes the dynamics of affectivity, embodiment, and purposeful activity, revealing how these elements interplay in lived experience to form the basis of our interactions with the natural world and what it means to learn from objects.

The first part of the chapter focuses on affectivity. Rousseau postulates that affective encounters with objects are foundational to our experiential understanding of our surroundings. These experiences, rooted above all in *amour de soi*, a 'love of self', which is a natural affective instinct that motivates us to care about and advance our well-being, play a crucial role in understanding and motivating interactions with objects that

are perceived to advance our interests. Affective engagement is seen as a direct and essential aspect of learning and perception, contrasting with Enlightenment emphases on detached rationality.

Turning to embodiment, the chapter then elaborates on how our corporeal interactions with objects are fundamental to our understanding of our surroundings. As Rousseau says, "Our first masters of philosophy are our feet, our hands, our eyes."[7] For him, bodily experiences are integral to how people comprehend and learn from their surroundings. This direct sensory engagement provides a deeper, more connected form of understanding than abstract reasoning affords and grounds learning in concrete, lived experiences.

The discussion of purposeful activity explores how active engagement with objects teaches learners about their capacities. As Rousseau says, "To live is not to breathe; it is to act; it is to make use of our organs, our senses, our faculties, of all the parts of ourselves which give us the sentiment of our existence."[8] Rousseau asserts that through purposeful manipulation and use of objects, learners develop an immediate practical understanding of their surroundings and of themselves. This dimension of experience emphasizes learning through doing, where understanding and capacity are developed through direct, active involvement with encountered objects rather than through passive reception of sense data.

The synthesis of these three dimensions – affectivity, embodiment, and purposeful activity – is the core mechanism through which learners learn and develop. Rousseau's account of this triadic interplay forms a comprehensive approach to experiential

[7] Ibid., 125
[8] Ibid., 42

understanding, in which affective, physical, and active engagements with objects are intertwined and mutually reinforcing, providing a rich, integrated analysis of educational experience, which is to say, experience in general: "Everything is learning for animate and sensitive beings."[9]

In Chapter Two, "Rousseau and the Self-Other Relationship," we probe the philosophical foundations of interconnections among people, exploring Rousseau's concepts of *amour de soi, amour-propre,* and natural compassion.[10] These notions are pivotal in dissecting the layers of individuality and sociality in lived experience, providing a framework for understanding the complex interplay between intrinsic, natural motivations and the influence of social structures on the formation of personal identity and experiential relationships with others.

The first part of the chapter examines Rousseau's concept of *amour de soi* as an instinctual care for oneself, insulated from social influences. This part outlines how *amour de soi* represents the human being in its most natural state (one that is expressly ahistorical, hypothetical, and conditional). It emphasizes a self-sufficiency that is untouched by social recognition or constructed needs, thereby setting the stage for understanding how this self-care is informed by social pressures.

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[9] Ibid., 62

[10] Referring to Rousseau's notion of 'compassion' (*pitié*) as 'pity' (as Bloom does in his translation of *Emile*, for example) can be misleading due to the inherent depth and nature of the emotions. While pity often implies a detached or condescending sentiment of feeling sorry for another's misfortune, natural compassion conveys a profound, genuine empathy that recognizes shared humanity. Moreover, while pity can be passive, Rousseau's natural compassion is active, driving individuals to assist others. He saw compassion as an innate, universal (or nearly so) affect foundational to the self-other relationship that fosters social cohesion and tempers the potentially harmful aspects of *amour propre*. In contrast, pity might be perceived as situational and lacking the essential role in social harmony that Rousseau attributed to natural compassion as it evolves and expresses itself in various sentiments. As societies evolved, Rousseau believed natural compassion could be overshadowed by social constructs, making it even more critical to distinguish it from the more superficial notion of pity.

The focus then shifts to *amour-propre*, a form of self-esteem that evolves from *amour de soi* as persons engage with complex and historically situated social milieus in which their well-being depends upon how they are recognized by others. This part of the chapter stresses how social interaction, recognition, and the need for the esteem of others transform the unadulterated self-care of *amour de soi* into the socially aware and dependent *amour-propre*. This transformation from an "absolute" existence to a "relative" one is critical in understanding how individuals learn to adapt their self-care to the expectations and norms of their societies.[11]

The chapter also addresses Rousseau's idea of natural compassion, an instinctive and pre-reflective empathy for the suffering of others that arises independently of social constructs, a care for others that is a counterpoint to self-care. This part of the chapter explores how natural compassion functions as a fundamental human propensity, facilitating a connection to others that transcends personal experiences and fosters a broader social empathy. It emphasizes the shared human vulnerabilities that bind people together in a mutual understanding of one another's plights.

Following from this, Chapter Two explores the coexistence of *amour de soi* and natural compassion within the sociohistorically situated lived experience of *amour-propre*, articulating and resolving an apparent paradox between natural self-referentiality and the natural social orientation of humans. This part synthesizes how individualistic tendencies and social empathy intermingle in *amour-propre*, depicting a human condition that is adaptable and continuously shaped by the dynamic interplay between these elements.

[11] Ibid., 40

Chapter Three, “Rousseau and the Educator-Learner Relationship,” investigates the dynamics between the educator and learner. The chapter explores Rousseau’s idea of ‘negative’ education – an educational methodology that emphasizes the educator’s role in fostering and protecting the learner’s natural development rather than providing direct didactic instruction. This chapter is structured to elaborate on four key aspects: fostering natural curiosity, the development of virtue, tailored pedagogical approaches, and preparing learners for social engagement.

Part I outlines the critical role of natural curiosity within Rousseau’s framework of negative education. Rousseau views this curiosity as a driving force in learning, linking it to the learner’s natural instincts of self-care and compassion. The educator’s task is to create an environment that nurtures this curiosity without imposing direct instruction, allowing the learner to explore and interact with the world autonomously and authentically. This approach aims to cultivate a learning process that respects the learner’s natural pace and developmental trajectory.

The next Part of the chapter presents the development of virtues as a natural extension of exploration and curiosity. Rousseau rejects the account of virtues as externally imposed traits, proposing instead that they emerge naturally from the learner’s instincts as fostered by the educator. The educator’s subtle and strategic guidance helps cultivate these virtues, emphasizing the growth of character alongside intellectual development. This Part focuses on how virtues such as integrity, courage, and responsibility can evolve from the learner’s interactions within a thoughtfully nurtured environment.

The discussion then transitions to the practical implications of Rousseau's philosophy, emphasizing the importance of individualizing education to accord with the learner's "particular genius."[12] That is, Rousseau advocates for individualized pedagogical strategies that are attuned to the idiosyncratic characteristics, dispositions, and capacities of each learner. We will see here why Rousseau thinks that each pedagogical endeavor should be as unique as the learner it serves. This part of the chapter discusses how a personalized educational path can help maintain the learner's intrinsic motivation and facilitate their natural development, thereby aligning educational practices with the learner's individual needs and potential.

The final part of the chapter examines how the skills and qualities nurtured within the educational setting equip the learner for active and authentic participation in social life. It discusses the transition from individual learning to social engagement, emphasizing how education should prepare learners not only for personal authenticity but also for responsible and meaningful community involvement.

Methodological Approaches to Unveiling Experiential and Relational Dynamics in Rousseau's Educational Philosophy

This dissertation represents a significant departure from the predominant avenues of Rousseau scholarship, which typically explore his ideas through political, biographical, and literary lenses. For example, Maurice Cranston, in *Jean-Jacques: The Early Life and Work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 1712-1754* and *The Noble Savage: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 1754-1762*, adopts a biographical perspective, suggesting that Rousseau's personal experiences deeply influenced his philosophical outlook on

[12] Ibid., 94

education. Political interpretations such as Robert Wokler's *Rousseau: A Very Short Introduction* and Joshua Cohen's *Rousseau: A Free Community of Equals* connect Rousseau's educational ideas with his political theories, discussing Rousseau's views on the role of education in shaping social vision and citizen development. Judith N. Shklar in *Men and Citizens: A Study of Rousseau's Social Theory* and Arthur M. Melzer in *The Natural Goodness of Man: On the System of Rousseau's Thought* analyze the systematization of Rousseau's social theories, emphasizing their contemporary relevance. And, Allan Bloom examines Rousseau's literary techniques in *Love and Friendship* in order to elucidate his philosophical ideas, while Jacques Derrida, in *Of Grammatology*, explores Rousseau's linguistic strategies to uncover deeper philosophical themes, particularly the dynamics of speech and writing.

While these remarkable studies (and countless others) provide valuable insights, they have not extensively explored the experiential and relational character of Rousseau's educational philosophy, a dimension this dissertation aims to illuminate. This study engages directly with Rousseau's texts as I encountered them, most notably *Emile,* to explore the foundational experiential and relational dynamics inherent in his educational theories. This approach shifts focus from Rousseau's contributions to the Enlightenment and political theory to a deeper exploration of how his educational philosophy revolves around the complex interplay of experiential relationships within the learning environment. By emphasizing this experiential relationality, the dissertation uncovers new interpretative possibilities for understanding Rousseau's ideas on education and human interaction that have not been examined in Rousseau scholarship.

By engaging with Rousseau's work in this way, the dissertation aims to uncover how his educational thought highlights the experiential and relational nature of the human condition. The method seeks to avoid the potential distortion of Rousseau's ideas that might occur with more complex interpretive approaches. What's more, this study serves as a foundational examination, preparing for potential future research that could more deeply investigate these experiential-relational dynamics in educational philosophy.[13]

The exploration of Rousseau's educational philosophy is undertaken with an awareness of the themes of lived human experience and relational interaction, though it does not apply a detailed critical or empirical analysis of these themes. Rather, it examines how Rousseau's ideas intersect with everyday personal and social interactions within educational contexts. The reflections offered are preliminary and intended to prime the field for further studies that might explore these experiential and relational aspects more thoroughly.

As mentioned, the method chosen for this dissertation is purposeful in its direct engagement with Rousseau's texts, eschewing extensive engagement with secondary literature that, while valuable, generally overlooks the experiential and relational dimensions of human existence articulated in Rousseau's educational philosophy. This study aims to establish a focused and direct dialogue with Rousseau's writings, emphasizing the exploration of relational aspects of lived human experience in the context of education.

However, as Hans-Georg Gadamer reminds us, "All interpretation…derives its significance from the context of its motivation," stressing that any engagement with a text

[13] Some directions for future research are further detailed in the Conclusion to this dissertation.

is inevitably colored by the interpreter's own historical and personal context.[14] Thus, while this dissertation strives for a direct encounter with Rousseau's texts, it is important to acknowledge that what is presented here is inherently shaped by my own interpretive lens, particularly my interest in experiential relationships and their potential to humanize educational practices. This acknowledgment does not diminish the authenticity of the interpretations offered; rather, it emphasizes the situated nature of all understanding, stressing that the insights derived inescapably involve my encounter with Rousseau's ideas. This approach of direct textual engagement is, then, not an attempt to claim an unmediated access to Rousseau's thoughts but is an explication of his philosophy as I have engaged with it, situated within my own sociohistorical context and scholarly aims.

While this study deliberately minimizes reliance on secondary interpretations to capture fresh insights into Rousseau's texts, it acknowledges that this approach may limit the broader contextual understanding often provided by secondary scholarship. Engaging more extensively with secondary literature could illuminate historical, philosophical, and cultural contexts, attention to which enrich the interpretation of Rousseau's ideas. Nevertheless, this dissertation contends that a direct engagement with primary texts as I encountered them has uncovered underexplored aspects of Rousseau's thought, in particular his experiential and relational dynamics, thereby opening these texts to new interpretative possibilities that secondary literature may overshadow and has, in any case, overlooked. This initial dialogue is intended to illuminate aspects of Rousseau's thought and set a course for future exploration of these experiential and relational themes.

[14] Gadamer, Hans-Georg. 1989. *Truth and Method*. Translated by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. New York, NY: Crossroad. 467

By choosing to engage directly with Rousseau's works rather than as mediated through secondary interpretations, this approach mirrors a foundational aim of encountering philosophical texts from one's own sociohistorical situatedness. This methodology allows for Rousseau's insights to emerge from the lived experience of having encountered them, honoring that original experience and avoiding the potential obfuscation that might arise from secondary analyses. As a result, this dissertation does not critique or counteract other interpretations but focuses squarely on Rousseau's own articulations as I encountered them. This focus on the primary texts aligns with Friedrich Nietzsche's stance, "I do not want to accuse, I do not want even to accuse the accusers. *Looking aside,* let that be my sole negation."[15] It emphasizes the importance of engaging with the subject matter directly, rather than getting entangled in existing critical discourse. Echoing Michel Foucault's preface to Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus,* this approach "wastes no time discrediting the old idols," opting instead to venture directly into Rousseau's texts as they were encountered by me.[16] Rousseau himself, with characteristic directness, warned against pedantry: "If you are only a pedant, it is not worth the effort to read me."[17] This warning is heeded by the dissertation's approach of direct textual engagement, eschewing secondary interpretations that may cloud the experiential and relational insights present in Rousseau's philosophy as I encountered it.

Rousseau critiqued the prevailing scholarly attitudes of his time, lamenting, "The literature and the learning of our age tend much more to destruction than to edification."[18]

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[15] Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1974. *The Gay Science*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann. New York, NY: Vintage Books. 223
[16] Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. 2009. *Anti-Oedipus*. Translated by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane. New York, NY: Penguin. xii
[17] Rousseau, *Emile*, 118
[18] Ibid. 33

This critique resonates with the dissertation's approach, which seeks to construct rather than deconstruct, focusing on elucidating aspects of Rousseau's educational philosophy regarding experience and relationality and sometimes filling in gaps in Rousseau's thought with original syntheses (particularly when it comes to unraveling his paradoxes). As he says, "If you have to be told everything, do not read me."[19]

This dissertation also, for the most part, avoids explicitly contextualizing Rousseau's theories within contemporary settings. This procedure by no means suggests that Rousseau's thinking lacks contemporary relevance. Rather, it recognizes that explicating such relevance in detail is a separate endeavor and itself a potential avenue for future research. The intention here is to preserve the essence of Rousseau's work as I encountered it.

This dissertation ventures beyond traditional interpretations of Rousseau's educational philosophy by foregrounding its experiential and relational dynamics. By directly engaging with Rousseau's texts, most notably *Emile*, this work seeks to uncover and elucidate the inherent relational nexus of human understanding as envisioned by Rousseau. This approach neither affirms nor rejects established discourses in Rousseau scholarship but instead aims to highlight Rousseau's vision of fundamental experiential connections among the learner, objects, and others.

[19] Ibid. 137

Chapter One:
Rousseau and the Self-Object Relationship

Introduction:

In *Emile*, Rousseau proposes that the study most suitable for human beings is that of their relations. These relations define our existence and shape our understanding and perception of self, others, and the world around us. This chapter investigates one aspect of these relations: our multifaceted interactions with objects, which are integral to the formation of our experiences and to our development. By examining the interplay of affectivity, embodiment, and purposeful activity, we uncover how these dynamic engagements with objects not only reveal the nature of our perceptions and behaviors but also contribute to the larger project of *Emile*:

> *Our true study is that of the human condition. He among us who best knows how to bear the goods and the ills of this life is to my taste the best raised: from which it follows that the true education consists less in precept than in practice. We begin to instruct ourselves when we begin to live. Our education begins with us.*[20]

In considering Rousseau's articulation of the nature of these relations, we seek to understand how selves come to perceive and engage with the objects around them.

For Rousseau, selves are not internally isolated, mere observers of reality. Rather, they are intrinsically part of, influenced by, and active participants in their surroundings, without mediation. We note that Rousseau's thinking regarding the self-object relationship contrasts with the idealism or materialism of his contemporaries: for Rousseau, the "all the disputes of idealists and materialists signify nothing."[21] Rousseau

[20] Ibid. 42
[21] Ibid. 270

proposes instead a more integrated and direct experiential relationship between the self and encountered objects.

Three interrelated and elemental aspects form the basis of Rousseau's thinking regarding the nature of the self-object relationship. First, Rousseau posits that affectivity is essential to the way in which selves experience objects. He characterizes affectivity through the delineation of two primary, natural, and "instinctual" [22] affects, of which one, *amour de soi*, is relevant for this chapter. *Amour de soi* is an instinctual force that motivates living beings to preserve and advance their well-being. As we will discuss in detail, affectivity is a foundational element in human experiential encounters with objects. Rousseau does not share the Enlightenment's penchant for promoting rigorous rationalism above all else in the pursuit of understanding. For Rousseau affective encounters are not passionate reactions that cloud certainty in judgments, but crucial to the way in which we experience and understand our surroundings and, by extension, ourselves.

[22] Rousseau explains his use of the term 'instinct' in a lengthy footnote: "Modern philosophy, accepting only what it explains, is careful not to accept that obscure faculty called instinct, which appears without any acquired knowledge to guide animals toward some end. Instinct, according to one of our wisest philosophers, is only a habit without reflection which is, however, acquired by reflecting; and from the way he explains this development, it ought to be concluded that children reflect more than men, a paradox strange enough to deserve the effort of examination. Without going into this discussion here, I ask what name I ought to give to the ardor with which my dog makes war on moles he does not eat, to the patience with which he sometimes watches for them for whole hours, and to the skill with which he grabs them, throws them out on the earth the moment they push up, and then kills them, only to leave them there, without anyone ever having trained him for this hunt and taught him moles were there? I ask further – and this is more important – why, the first time I threatened this same dog, he lay with his back on the ground, his paws bent back in a supplicant attitude, the one most suited to touch me, a posture he would have certainly not kept if, without letting myself be moved, I had beaten him in this position? What! Had my dog, still very little and purposefully just born, already acquired moral ideas? Did he know what clemency and generosity are? On the basis of what acquired understanding did he hope to mollify me by thus abandoning himself to my discretion? Every dog in the world does pretty nearly the same thing in the same situation, and I am saying nothing here that cannot be verified by everyone. Let the philosophers who so disdainfully reject instinct be so good as to explain this fact by the mere action of the sensations and the knowledge they cause us to acquire. Let them explain it in a way satisfying to every man of good sense. Then I shall have nothing more to say, and I shall no longer speak of instinct." (Ibid. 286-287)

Second, for Rousseau, experiential encounters with objects are naturally embodied. It is through our embodiment that we directly experience objects. This involves sensory experiences, interactions, and examinations. This corporeal connection intertwines us with experienced objects, ensuring that our understanding of the self-object relation is, or at least can be, rooted in lived experiences rather than abstract theorizations.

Third, Rousseau describes the role of purposeful activity, of learning by doing, as a means of direct understanding engagement with objects in the world. He posits that through purposive manipulation of and engagements with objects, selves form a direct, unmediated relationship with the objects upon which they act, and, with mindful reflection upon lived experience as it is lived, ensuring the possibility for an authentic understanding of the nature of their relationship to those objects.

These three elements (affectivity, embodiment, and purposeful activity) are interrelated aspects of experiences through which we understand, connect with, and interact with objects. In the following explication of Rousseau's thinking of the self-object relationship, we will investigate each of these three aspects individually as well as their synthesis in lived experience.

Part I. Affectivity

For Rousseau, our relationship to objects is essentially informed by our affective dispositions or capacities. 'Affects', for Rousseau, refer to the immediate and instinctual feelings that one experiences when one experientially encounters objects (and others, as

we will discuss in the next chapter). Affects are pre-reflective, which is to say that they occur without conscious thought or deliberation.

Amour de soi is an affect, an instinctual force, that motivates individuals to seek after the preservation and advancement of their own well-being. Often contrasted with *amour-propre*[23] (a modification of *amour de soi*), which arises from social interactions and leads to comparisons, pride, and potential conflict, *amour de soi*, in itself, remains unaffected by outside influences such as social norms. It is, to put it simply, a natural and instinctual force that motivates the conservation and advancement of one's own welfare, without ulterior motive. However, the implications of *amour de soi* in relation to our experiential encounters with objects (and, as we will see in the following chapter, others) are multifaceted and complex.

Sentiments, as contrasted with affects, are feelings that involve some degree of reflection or contemplation upon the affects on which they are grounded. Sentiments are affects that have been modified, typically through the impositions of social interactions and conformity to cultural norms. For example, under certain social conditions, the affect of *amour de soi* can express itself through the sentiment of greed.[24] Unlike affects, which are instinctual and pre-reflective, sentiments guide individual behavior and decision-making in a deliberate and conscious manner.

The differences between affects and sentiments can be summarized as follows. First, affects occur immediately, whereas sentiments involve some degree of reflection. Second, sentiments are informed by social norms, whereas affects are instinctual and, in themselves, uninfluenced by social expectations. Third, sentiments are more complex

[23] We will describe this sentiment in much more detail in the following chapter.
[24] We will discuss the evolution of *amour propre* from *amour de soi* in detail in the following chapter.

than affects given that they involve some degree of conscious evaluation – they might involve elements such as pity, moral judgement, or a sense of justice, which are not present in affects. Finally, while affects motivate instantaneous, pre-reflective actions, sentiments guide behavior in a manner that is, typically, aligned with social norms, but in any case involves more deliberate behavior.

Having briefly sketched Rousseau's concept of affectivity in general, we now turn to an investigation of the essential place of affectivity in the self-object relationship, particularly the affect of *amour de soi*.

The Human Condition is Naturally Affective

In this section, we investigate Rousseau's exploration of the self-object relationship, highlighting a crucial distinction in his thought. On one hand, there is a common perception that affects are reactions to objects perceived in the so-called 'external world.' This viewpoint suggests that our affective experiences are internal and secondary, triggered by external stimuli. Rousseau, however, challenges this perspective by positing that affects are not reactive but foundational to human experience and understanding. He argues that affects are not secondary processes that follow sensory perception. Instead, Rousseau sees affects as integral, primary components of our awareness and our means of engaging with the world. Rousseau shifts the paradigm from viewing affects as reactions to externalities to recognizing them as intrinsic elements of experience. This repositioning stresses a more intertwined and innate connection between the self and objects, suggesting that our understanding and interaction with the world are imbued with affectivity from the outset.

Central to affective encountering is *amour de soi*, an instinctual and natural force guiding living beings towards welfare and away from harm. Rousseau notes regarding the nature of feeling associated with affectivity, "Children's first sensations are purely affective; they perceive only pleasure and pain…"[25] Here, he asserts the essentiality of affect in human interactions with objects in nascent life (and, as we will see, onwards). As children navigate their environment, *amour de soi* guides them, naturally leading them to pursue pleasure and evade pain.

Consider a child, Morgan, exploring a park. Drawn to a bright yellow sunflower, she reaches out to touch it. But, suddenly, there is a bee! She instinctively (prior to any reflection) and naturally (prior to being socially informed) pulls her hand away, despite never having seen a bee before and without knowing anything about them. This action isn't taught; it's instinctive and natural. The next time Morgan sees a sunflower, she hesitates. This hesitation isn't due to newfound knowledge about bees but is a natural, instinctive, affective experience predicated on her memory of the previous encounter and her pre-reflective concern for her well-being. Morgan's forays with sunflowers and bees in the park help illustrate Rousseau's notion: before formal lessons about bees or anything else, *amour de soi* shapes our experiences and motivates our behaviors.

Rousseau's assertion that "Children's first sensations are purely affective" emphasizes the primacy of affect in human experiences. That affects are foundational, natural, and instinctual in the experience of children from birth implies that this affective orientation forms the foundation of human experience more generally. This foundational presence, established in the earliest stages of development, suggests a continuity of

[25] Ibid. 62

affective engagement throughout life. While children's affectivity often appears to be more intense, this formative stage sets the precedent that adults' interactions with their surroundings are also naturally informed by affectivity. The instinctual imperative to, in general, pursue pleasure and avoid pain persists throughout life. Hence, Rousseau's observations on childhood sensations do not merely comment on transient states of youth but serve as an argument for the essentiality of affectivity in adult interactions with objects as well.

While sitting in the diner, Dale is instinctively drawn to the display of cherry pies. Their scent and appearance signal to him a pleasurable source of nourishment and satisfaction. Driven by his *amour de soi*, he instinctively experiences these pies as nourishing and beneficial for his well-being, though his subsequently acquired knowledge might interweave with this unreflexive experience. His knowledge, which comprises past indulgences that brought joy, health education that warns of the dangers of excessive sugar, and social influences that valorize certain diets, colors his immediate experience. Even though he might not actively think about it, this knowledge shapes the contours of his attraction, tinging the instinctual pull with nuances of caution or desire informed by memory and learning. Nonetheless, prior to reflection, Dale's *amour de soi* leads him to experience the pies as a means to preserve and advance his well-being and thereby draws him towards them, while his knowledge positions this urge within a framework of past experiences and learned values. It creates a tension between instinctual drive and educated restraint that defines his encounter. This example illustrates Rousseau's notion that *amour de soi* motivates us toward instinctively informed and, at

least, apparently beneficial engagements with encountered objects, but it is a drive that can be interlaced with acquired knowledge.

So, for Rousseau, our relationship with objects is not a matter of mere observation from the viewpoint of an internal and disconnected consciousness. Rather, it's imbued from the beginning with affectivity. Natural and instinctual *amour de soi* ensures that our engagements with objects in the world are always charged with affectivity, supporting the claim that affectivity is natural to the human condition.

To further investigate the essential role of affects in human experience, we turn to the following passage from Rousseau's *Emile*:

> *Emile has only natural [including affective] and purely physical knowledge.…He hardly knows how to generalize ideas and hardly how to make abstractions. He sees common qualities in certain bodies without reasoning about these qualities in themselves.…He knows the essential relations of man to things.…He seeks to know things not by their nature but only by the relations which are connected with his interest. He estimates what is foreign to him only in relation to himself. But this estimation is exact and sure.*[26]

This passage illustrates Emile's understanding as grounded in the immediacy of affectively charged experience. *Amour de soi* is essential to this experiential understanding. Emile's understanding, described as "natural," emerges from affective experiential encounters with his surroundings. Rousseau's observation that Emile "hardly knows how to generalize ideas and hardly how to make abstractions" further articulates the immediate and affective nature of Emile's encounters with objects: rather than distilling the essence of meaningful experience through layers of abstraction, Emile understands objects, always initially, through direct affective interactions. When Rousseau notes, "[Emile] sees common qualities in certain bodies without reasoning

[26] Ibid. 207

about these qualities in themselves," he emphasizes Emile's affect-driven ability to discern affinities between objects without necessitating abstract compartmentalization or reflection. He sees, for example, that for his purposes this table and that one are both functionally flat, without the need for a categorical conception of Flatness. The following assertion that Emile understands things "not by their nature but only by the relations which are connected with his interest" further illuminates Emile's affect-driven understanding. Emile will only notice, without thinking about it, that the tables are flat if he needs them to be flat for some endeavor of preserving or advancing his own well-being. Through affectivity, there is a mode of pre-reflective, relational, and experiential understanding of the relationship between oneself and encountered objects.

Rousseau's claim elsewhere in *Emile* that "truth is in things, and not in the mind which judges them," becomes important here.[27] For Rousseau, an authentic understanding of the nature of experiential encounters is to be found through reflecting on the way that we actually experience objects, in part through affective immediacy naturally informed by *amour de soi*, rather than through subsequent layers of conceptual, abstract interpretation of that experience. *Amour de soi* is not a reaction; it is at the foundation of human experience and understanding in general.

Affects Shape our Understanding of Objects

Having established that human experience is naturally affective, we now further investigate Rousseau's thinking to articulate the transformative impact of affectivity on our experiential understanding of objects. In this section, the focus shifts from the

[27] Ibid. 272

foundational role of affects in human awareness to their active, formative influence on our sensory and interpretive engagement with the world. Affects, Rousseau posits, are not concurrent or secondary reactions to sensory input but are formative of perception itself, shaping how objects are pre-reflectively appraised and understood. This section aims to further expound on Rousseau's insights into the way affective states inform and modify our interactions with and interpretations of objects.

Rousseau's thinking regarding affectivity, particularly *amour de soi,* and the self-object relationship suggests an essential interaction between our affectivity and the manner in which we experience and understand our surroundings. He contends that affects and their derived sentiments both influence our behavior and shape, distort, or clarify our understanding experience of objects.

Consider this illustrative narrative from *Emile*:

> *All children are afraid of masks. I begin by showing Emile a mask with a pleasant face. Next someone in his presence puts this mask over his face. I start to laugh; everybody laughs; and the child laughs like the others. Little by little I accustom him to less pleasant masks and finally to hideous faces. If I have arranged my gradation well, far from being frightened by the last mask, he will laugh at it as at the first. After that I no longer fear that he can be frightened by masks.*[28]

In this lesson, Emile's tutor, Jean-Jacques, introduces Emile to a series of masks, strategically beginning with a pleasant one in order to gradually acclimate him to more frightening ones. Emile's initial affective experience of the masks is one of aversion as expressed through the sentiment of fear. But, Jean-Jacques sets up a situation in which the first mask, the friendly one, is met by the laughter of those around him, suggesting to Emile the possibility for a positive and non-threatening experience of the mask. As Emile

[28] Ibid. 63

is gradually exposed to less pleasant and eventually grotesque masks, his instinctually driven experience is modified by the pedagogical experience engineered by Jean-Jacques' approach to alleviating his sentiment of fear, guiding it through continued positive reinforcement. By the time he encounters the most hideous mask, he does not interpret the experience with instinctive repulsion or sentimental fear but with the same sentimental amusement (the pleasure of which indicates that the object is, in some way, understood as beneficial to his well-being) he displayed towards the initial pleasant mask.

The relevance of the narrative of the masks is manifold. First, it illustrates the capacity for sentiments, grounded here in the affect of *amour de soi,* to shape our experiences. Rousseau's thought suggests that children have a universal aversion to masks due to their natural and unlearned response to the unfamiliar; masks obscure the recognizable features that children rely on for safety and social connection, thereby triggering a sentiment of fear that is rooted in *amour de soi*. Emile's understanding, however, is transformed through controlled affective experiences in which sentimental fear, initially an expression of *amour de soi* geared towards self-care, is modified into a sentiment of amusement through repeated, positive exposure. Secondly, the narrative helps illustrate the protective nature of *amour de soi*. Jean-Jacques' deliberate exposure approach, which combines direct interaction with positive reinforcement, engages Emile's self-caring instinct in a new context, reorienting his instinctually grounded fear into an amusing encounter. Thus, Rousseau argues that our experiential understanding is not a passive reflection of the so-called 'external world' but is actively informed through our direct affective engagements with our surroundings.

For help in further understanding the nature of this role of affects in propelling us towards understanding, we turn to another passage from Rousseau's *Emile* (to which we will return later in this dissertation):

> *There is an ardor to know which is founded only on the desire to be esteemed as learned; there is another ardor which is born of a curiosity natural to man concerning all that might have a connection, close or distant, with his interests. The innate desire for well-being and the impossibility of fully satisfying this desire make him constantly seek for new means of contributing to it. This is the first principle of curiosity, a principle natural to the human heart…*[29]

In this passage, Rousseau distinguishes two types of curiosity or "ardor" to know. The first is a superficial desire to be recognized and esteemed by others as learned. This type of curiosity is driven primarily by the validation one receives from being perceived by others as erudite and is closely associated with *amour-propre*, which we will discuss in detail in the next chapter. The second type of ardor emerges from an authentic, natural curiosity that is instinctually connected to a person's interests and well-being. This form of natural curiosity is driven by *amour de soi*, and the always ongoing search for ways to satisfy it. The relevance of this passage lies in its illustration of the way in which our sentiments and desires, grounded here by *amour de soi*, influence our understanding of the objects we experientially encounter and our pursuits involving those objects. When one feels a certain way, it influences their experiential encounters with objects. For instance, if one is driven by a natural curiosity that is rooted in their interests, they might understand a book with an eagerness to learn, experiencing it as a means to further their well-being. On the other hand, if one's motivation to read the book is primarily to

[29] Ibid. 167

achieve validation and recognition from others, one might experience the same book simply as a tool for displaying their scholarly acumen to others.

Affective Engagement is a Pathway to Authentic Understanding

Building upon the notion that our experiences are inherently affective and that affects actively shape our understanding of objects, this section investigates Rousseau's thinking of how affectivity opens the pathway to an authentic understanding of the self-object relationship. While the previous sections centered on how affectivity informs and modifies our interactions and interpretations, this section probes the deeper implications of affective engagement, challenging the sufficiency of purely rational or abstract thought in fully capturing the essence of human experience. Rousseau contests the notion that a purely intellectual, emotionally detached, or theoretical perspective is sufficient because it overlooks the affective connection that is essential for a truly personal engagement with objects. We seek to explore Rousseau's claim that an authentic understanding, enriched by our natural, pre-reflective affective responses and a 'sixth sense' that undermines the dichotomy of theoretical versus concrete understanding, offers insights into the fundamental nature of our encounters with objects. This section investigates the interplay between affectivity and reason, suggesting that an authentic grasp of the self-object relation is achieved not through detached rationality alone but through immersive, affective, and experiential engagement.

Rousseau emphasizes the interplay between affectivity and reason, the heart and the head, so to speak, thereby challenging the dominant Enlightenment fervor for the primacy of objective rationality above all else in the striving for understanding.

Rousseau's critique revolves around the notion that a strictly rational or detached (from mindfully attended lived experience) attempt to understand the self-object relationship inherently overlooks the affective depths and complexities of human experiences. His argument hinges on the assertion that human experiences are not reducible to cognitive or rational processes, but rather to naturally affective ones, because it is through our feelings and emotions that we assign value to and find meaning in the objects around us. This natural grounding in affectivity arises from the primordial, physiological experiences that connect us to our surroundings and inform our instinctual behavior, prior to reasoned analysis. In his view, to engage with objects solely from a rational standpoint disregards a significant and foundational experiential dimension of the human condition. His position is illustrated in the assertion, "It is in man's heart that the life of nature's spectacle exists. To see it, one must feel it."[30] Here, Rousseau emphasizes the notion that an authentic understanding of our relation to the natural world and the collection of objects that compose it requires more than just detached observation and rational contemplation. It requires an immersive experiential understanding of a deeper affective, natural connection.

In a serene arboretum, Jeff, a botanist, and Jane, a poet, observe an ancient tree. Jeff scrutinizes the tree from a purely conceptual standpoint, noting its botanical characteristics, understanding its growth patterns, and identifying its species. His approach, while insightful and useful, remains objective and analytical, with the limitations of such a perspective discussed above. Jane, on the other hand, is enamored by the beauty of the tree and the shade it provides. She feels a connection to the tree, she

[30] Ibid. 169

imagines its history, she is reminded of a different tree from her childhood, she envisions future generations encountering the same tree, she experiences the sentiments of joy and wonder. Later, as Jeff speaks about the biological attributes of the tree, Jane shares how the act of experiencing it evoked powerful sentiments, memories, and anticipations. This juxtaposition exemplifies Rousseau's stance: while Jeff's logical analysis offered useful analytical and conceptual insights, it was Jane's affectively grounded explication of her experience that better captured the nature of her inherently affective and direct relation to the tree, emphasizing Rousseau's claim of the essentiality of affectivity in the self-object relation.

As we've shown, central to Rousseau's thinking of the self-object relation is the notion that our experiences are naturally affective. This notion is partially captured (i.e., with respect to the self-object relation) in the affect of *amour de soi*. This instinctual inclination towards the preservation and advancement of our well-being ensures that our experiential encounters with objects are never empty of affect. Instead, they are deeply interwoven with it. This foundational affective element of experience shapes our experiential engagements generally.

Having established the limitations of reason in understanding the nature of the self-object relationship, we turn now to a seeming paradox in Rousseau's thought, the elucidation of which will help develop a more authentic understanding of the way that rational thought itself is grounded in lived experience as affectively charged. Consider the following two statements from Rousseau. First, he says, "all our ideas come to us from outside."[31] But elsewhere in the text he says,

[31] Ibid. 290

> *It remains for me to speak in the following books of the cultivation of a sort of sixth sense called common sense, less because it is common to all men than because it results from the well-regulated use of the other senses, and because it instructs us about the nature of things by the conjunction of all their appearances. This sixth sense has consequently no special organ. It resides only in the brain, and its sensations,* ***purely internal****, are called* perceptions *or* ideas.[32]

In the first quote, he says that "ideas come to us from the outside," but in the second, he says that ideas (which he identifies with "perceptions") are "purely internal." How can this apparent paradox be reconciled in order to gain a deeper understanding of Rousseau's thinking regarding the nature of the self-object relationship?

First, it is helpful to briefly discuss the role of paradoxes in Rousseau's work, especially since we will continually encounter them as we proceed. Rousseau's use of paradoxes in his writing is a deliberate pedagogical strategy, challenging the reader to actively participate in the pursuit of understanding. He cautions his audience against passive reading with a clear directive: "If you have to be told everything, don't read me."[33] This statement suggests that he intentionally leaves spaces within his writing for the reader to navigate and interpret. Rousseau defends the necessity of paradoxes, stating, "Common readers, pardon me my paradoxes. When one reflects, they are necessary and, whatever you may say, I prefer to be a paradoxical man than a prejudiced one."[34] This preference for paradox over prejudice underscores his desire to provoke reflection and avoid the simplification of complex ideas. Furthermore, Rousseau is well aware of the challenges posed by language and its propensity for inconsistency, as he admits, "I do not believe that…I contradict myself in my ideas; but I cannot gainsay that I often contradict

[32] Ibid. 157. my emphasis on 'purely internal'
[33] Ibid. 137
[34] Ibid. 93

myself in my expressions."[35] By acknowledging this, Rousseau invites uncommon readers (those who find no need for pardons) to discern the essence of his thoughts beyond the paradoxes that might arise from his expression of them. With this in mind, we turn back to the question: how might this seeming paradox be resolved and, along the way, be used to further our understanding of Rousseau's perspective on the self-object relationship?

As discussed above, Rousseau posits that our understanding of the world is immediate and essentially charged with affectivity. Our initial relation to objects does not fit neatly into the conceptual categories of internal or external. It is pre-reflective, and so comes before any conceptual distinction between inner and outer. When Rousseau states "we sense before knowing," he emphasizes that we possess a direct and pre-reflective understanding of our surroundings.[36] For Rousseau, we must always already have some understanding of the meaning of the objects we encounter in experience in order to feel whether they are beneficial or harmful for our well-being. *Amour de soi* informs us of what is beneficial or harmful without prior instruction: "we do not learn to want what is good for us and to flee what is bad for us but rather get this will from nature."[37] Here, Rousseau is not placing affectivity in a so-called 'internal' space, separate from the 'external' world; rather, he understands affectivity as integral to our immediate experience with objects. This immediate understanding encounter, informed by *amour de soi*, functions pre-reflectively, enabling us to effectively and self-interestedly navigate our surroundings without conscious thought or reflection.

[35] Ibid. 108
[36] Ibid. 289
[37] Ibid. 290

The understanding of objects, then, is not an internal processing of external stimuli but a continuation of this direct engagement with objects in the world. The ideas to which affects give rise are "within us" in the sense that they are a naturally occurring, pre-reflective understanding of objects, accruing to the experiencer, that inform our interactions with objects in the world.[38] They allow selves to perceive the "compatibility or incompatibility between us and the things we ought to seek or flee," guiding our understanding of objects and our behavior in light of that understanding in a direct and non-conceptual manner.[39]

Rousseau's concept of "common sense," or the "sixth sense," facilitates the convergence of our varied sensory experiences: "it results from the well-regulated use of the other senses." This sixth sense pre-reflectively synthesizes sensory experience into coherent ideas (immediate awarenesses of entities in the world), which Rousseau describes as "purely internal," yet these ideas are inseparable from the affectively charged sensory experiences that give rise to them. They are unified in their origin and function: our sixth sense "instructs us about the nature of things by the conjunction of all their appearances."

The progression from the simple to the complex in our understanding is rooted in this direct, individual engagement with the world. Rousseau describes this progression as moving from "forming simple ideas by the conjunction of several sensations" to "forming complex ideas by the conjunction of several simple ideas."[40] Here, ideas are not detached abstractions but are deeply connected to encountered objects through direct sensory

[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid. 158

experience, essentially charged with affectivity and the evaluative nature of our sentiments.

So, Rousseau's thinking suggests that the very distinction between the internal and external is itself a product of abstract thought, and is not present in experience as it is actually and pre-reflectively lived. In lived experience, according to Rousseau, there is no such divide, except in thought; there is only the direct encounter with objects, including "intellectual objects," informed by our affective responses and the synthesizing faculty of common sense, which together form a continuous, unified field of pre-reflective understanding of our surroundings.[41] By remaining mindful of these basic elements of experience, one can gain a deeper understanding of one's relation to one's surroundings.

The Necessity of Guiding Affects for Authentic Understanding

After establishing the importance of affective engagement in the self-object relationship, this section pivots to address the potential pitfalls of ungoverned affects. Rousseau warns of the distortions that unmoderated affects can impose on our perceptual experiences. He suggests that while affects like *amour de soi* are innate and generally beneficial for guiding behavior towards self-care, they can lead to irrational responses and biases if not balanced with reason and experiential wisdom.[42] This section explores Rousseau's advocacy for natural development and maturation of affects, which allows for

[41] Ibid. 314

[42] In the context of Rousseau's thinking, 'experiential wisdom' denotes the comprehension derived from direct, lived experiences as opposed to abstract intellectual cognition. Within the framework of Rousseau's articulations on the self-object relationship, he posits that the self gains more profound and nuanced understandings through experiential engagements with entities (including objects and others) than through mere rational deliberation. Such experiential wisdom furnishes a comprehensive and sophisticated understanding from one's affective positionality amidst the complexities of experience.

an authentic understanding and growth of character, free from the distortions of social expectations.

Rousseau's insights on affects, especially *amour de soi*, suggest that these states, when not moderated by reason or experiential wisdom, have the potential to distort one's understanding of one's surroundings. For Rousseau, sentiments rooted in *amour de soi* motivate action, but, and despite their immediacy, without a counterbalance of rationality or a degree of understanding derived from lived experience, they can lead us to a warped understanding of our surroundings. Rousseau's statement that those whose *amour de soi* is unbalanced "fill their minds with countless ridiculous prejudices, and in everything that hampers their slightest advantage, they immediately see the overturning of the whole universe" provides an illustration of this notion.[43] Allowing our instinctual affect of *amour de soi* to rule our behavior without regulation makes us susceptible to forming and holding onto baseless biases, for example, that objects in the world ought to bend to our will. Such a bias tends to exaggerate minor inconveniences, viewing them as catastrophic events, due to the unchecked influence of overly self-centered sentiments grounded in *amour de soi*. Such individuals take even the smallest setbacks as if they pose existential threats, emphasizing their disproportionate reactions rooted in unchecked *amour de soi*.

Consider the following illustrative example. Two neighboring farmers, Alex and Arthur, discover minor pest damage on their crops. Alex, consumed by the unchecked affect of *amour de soi*, interprets this as a catastrophic threat, fearing total ruin. Driven by his untempered affect, he exaggerates the issue, impulsively investing in extreme pest control measures and perhaps even spreading rumors of an impending village-wide

[43] Ibid. 252

infestation. Arthur, however, having faced similar setbacks before, utilizes his experiential wisdom and reason to contextualize the damage. Recognizing it as a relatively minor setback natural to farming, he takes measured steps to manage it and offers a calm, reasoned perspective to his peers, illustrating the value of tempering affect with reason and experience.

Rousseau, then, emphasizes the dangers of letting affects, like *amour de soi*, reign without the tempering influence of reason or experiential wisdom. Without these moderating influences, there's a heightened risk of misinterpreting one's surroundings, overreacting to minor challenges, and forming unfounded biases. But, if unchecked affects have the potential to skew understanding, how might guidance shape or redirect these affective experiences to foster a more authentic understanding?

As shown above, Rousseau posits that affectivity is natural to the human condition. This instinctual affectivity, especially in terms of *amour de soi* which continuously grounds us in a pre-reflective sense of self-care, can be easily misdirected by social complexities. In the case of Alex and Arthur, Alex's disproportionate reaction to the pest damage – fueled by an unchecked *amour de soi* – reflects how social pressures such as the potential for loss of status and the fear of economic loss can amplify natural affects into distorting sentiments. These sentiments, steered by the social milieu filled with its conventions, pressures, and competing interests, drive an individual like Alex away from an authentic understanding of the event. Arthur, on the other hand, employs his experiential wisdom and reason, which illustrates the protective nature of tempered *amour de soi* against social distortions. Consequently, Rousseau suggests that while

affectivity is foundational, it is vulnerable to the artifices of society, which can skew our genuine connection with our surroundings.

The proper approach for guiding affects is elucidated in Rousseau's suggestion for educators:

> *Do you wish to put order and regularity in the nascent passions [i.e., affects and their derived, bourgeoning sentiments]? Extend the period during which they develop in order that they have the time to be arranged as they are born. Then it is not man who orders them; it is nature itself. Your care is only to let it arrange its work.*[44]

Instead of allowing social constructs to prematurely and artificially shape our affects and sentiments, it's important for educators to take steps so as to shield them in such a way that permits them to develop under the tutelage of nature.[45] Rousseau suggests a natural cultivation of these affects, one where the order of nature becomes the guiding force. It is in this unhurried, natural progression that affective experiences can find their authentic expression, resisting the distortions and corruptions imposed by society.

In light of this, Rousseau offers an insight into the appropriate pace of developmental processes. He states, "Dare I expose the greatest, the most important, the most useful rule of all education? It is not to gain time but to lose it."[46] For Rousseau, authentic understanding and the cultivation of character cannot be rushed. This stands in contrast to social pressures that often push learners to achieve developmental milestones at a prescribed pace. In rushing the process, we risk missing out on the experiential wisdom that only time and experience can impart. By losing time, Rousseau suggests that we should engage in pedagogical projects that immerse us in our affectively charged

[44] Ibid. 219
[45] We will discuss the process of this shielding in much more detail in the final chapter of this dissertation.
[46] Ibid. 93

experiential encounters, letting our affects develop naturally, and learn at a pace that aligns with our "particular genius," rather than being dictated by social expectations.[47] In addition, the notion of losing time implies that the development of affects is not about the mere passage of time or immersing ourselves in just any experience (after all, in waking life, we are always having experiences) but about the richness and quality of the experiences within it. It is about valuing depth over haste, authenticity over pretense. In the context of affects, this means allowing learners the opportunity to feel, process, and understand their affectivity, rather than rashly categorizing or suppressing it to fit social expectations.

Rousseau's thinking on affects and their developmental trajectory emphasizes the importance of patience, introspection, and a reflective engagement with the nature of our experiences. By doing so, we not only develop a deeper understanding of ourselves and our surroundings but also ensure that our actions and experiences are appropriate relative to the object of our experience.

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In this Part of the chapter, beginning with the notion that human experiences are naturally affective, we've endeavored to show how Rousseau argues that experiencers are fundamentally affective entities. This affectivity informs our engagement with objects, revealing, distorting, or illuminating our understanding of them. Rousseau also cautions against a purely rational engagement, emphasizing that an authentic understanding of the nature of affectivity in our experiences disrupts the strict dichotomy between the inner and the outer through the careful observation of lived experience as it is actually

[47] Ibid. 94. Rousseau's notion of 'particular genius' is explored in detail in Chapter Three.

experienced, thereby enhancing the depth of our experiential understanding. Yet, unchecked affectivity can lead to misjudgments, emphasizing the necessity for its harmonization with reason, experiential wisdom, and the unhurried guidance of nature.

Given that affective states inform our experiences and understanding of objects in the world, what role does the body, as the locus for always already meaningful sensory experiences, take in shaping our experience of and engagement with our surroundings?

Part II. Embodiment

In Rousseau's thinking, embodiment plays an equally essential role as affectivity (and, as we will see below, purposeful activity) in shaping the nature of the self-object relationship. For Rousseau, the body isn't a passive vessel for an internal self but is, itself, actively engaged in the process of acquiring understanding of, experiencing, and interacting with objects in the world. Here we articulate Rousseau's thinking regarding the role of embodiment in the self-object relationship.

The Body as a Primary Mode of Understanding

In Rousseau's investigation of the self-object relationship, he emphasizes the foundational role of bodily-sensory experiences in the experiential acquisition of understanding. "To exist, for us, is to sense; our sensibility is incontestably anterior to our intelligence…"[48] For him, understanding, informed by affectivity, originates from these bodily-sensory encounters. This section elucidates Rousseau's assertion that the body

[48] Ibid. 289

serves as the locus of these experiences, situating our comprehension and activity within immediate corporeal interactions with objects.

Opposed to the dominant philosophical systems of his time that aligned the origin of authentic understanding with abstract reasoning or innate ideas, Rousseau emphasizes the pivotal role of bodily-sensory experiences. He contends that understanding isn't first of all the result of an amalgamation or filtering of so-called 'sense data' in the mind. Instead, it arises out of bodily engagements with the always already meaningful objects in our environment – whether it's the tactile experience of a stick, the movement of water currents, or the earth's roughness beneath our feet. For Rousseau, truth and understanding are grounded in lived interactions with objects, not cloistered within the abstractions of the mind: "truth is in things and not in the mind which judges them."

This insight informs his educational approach that promotes an experiential mode of learning. Rousseau contends that before learners investigate theoretical concepts, they must first immerse themselves in nature's truths. As we've seen, he proposes an encompassing "sixth sense" or "common sense." Not to be mistaken as an additional sensory organ or as a collection of beliefs shared by most people, this "common sense" acts as an integrative bodily faculty that discovers the meanings inherent to experience. As we've seen, it's described as "the well-regulated use of the other senses [that] instructs us about the nature of things by the conjunction of all their appearances." Understanding this through a bodily-sensory framework opens the possibility of understanding the nature of our experiential encounters with objects by merging individual aspects of experience, such as touch, sight, and sound, into a cohesive,

multifaceted experience of already meaningful phenomena. As Rousseau says, "the lesson always [comes] from the thing itself."[49]

In delineating common sense as the immediate integration of our other senses, one that uncovers the meaning of our experiences and guides us in understanding the nature of things "by the conjunction of all their appearances," Rousseau emphasizes the pivotal role of an integrated bodily-sensory experience in accessing the meaning of experientially encountered objects. Each bodily sense proffers a distinctive but essential aspect of our encounter with an object. When he says that sensation instructs us about objects through "the conjunction of all their appearances" in common sense, he is positing that common sense is not a faculty that processes compartmentalized sensory inputs in a piecemeal or post-experiential fashion. Instead, Rousseau is suggesting that common sense synthesizes sensory experiences immediately, creating a unified, cohesive perception. This instantaneous integration of sensations means that common sense bypasses the need for sequential processing or deliberate analysis. Thus, rather than understanding objects through discrete, compartmentalized sensory inputs that later need to be processed in some way into an understanding of what is encountered, common sense facilitates an immediate experience that is unified and already meaningful. It's a direct synthesis that takes place as we engage with the world, allowing for an immediate comprehension of objects as they present themselves in experience. Through this amalgamated bodily-sensory framework, one goes beyond mere and meaningless observational data to arrive at a more intricate, encompassing comprehension of phenomena.

[49] Ibid. 124

To further illustrate this, consider the way in which Rousseau presents a distinct understanding of the term 'fact'. Contrary to the usual notions of understanding a fact as a propositional truth or an objective state of affairs, for Rousseau, a fact represents the 'what' of experience. It is the content or the substance of direct and lived bodily-sensory experiential encounters with an object, rather than the subjective process or act of experiencing. Hence, for Rousseau, a fact is the embodied content within a direct encounter with an already meaningful object in the world, unmediated by deliberate interpretation or second-hand information. It stands as the incontrovertible 'what' that is encountered and sensed. This is in line with his advice to educators: "always begin with the phenomena most common and most accessible to the senses, and accustom your pupil to take these phenomena not for reasons but for facts."[50] By instructing us to avoid taking phenomena for reasons, Rousseau asks us to avoid taking the various explanations or justifications, which are speculative or theoretical in nature, that we might construct or infer about these phenomena as foundational to experience. It is the phenomena themselves which are foundational. In giving this instruction, Rousseau stresses the importance of initiating the inquiry into the self-object relationship with that which can be directly observed and experienced through the body – the factual content of our sensory and affective engagement with the world.

Rousseau's recommendation insists on two central notions. First, the pursuit of understanding should commence with phenomena easily perceived – those apparent and directly accessible to our senses, including what he terms the "sixth sense." This initiation into immediate, embodied, experiential interactions with objects is critical as it

[50] Ibid. 177

engenders an enriched comprehension of the self-object relationship. Rousseau postulates that such comprehension is crucial for cultivating self-awareness, which, in turn, plays a vital role in fostering autonomy and independent thought. By consciously engaging with and reflecting upon their own interactions with objects, learners develop a sense of agency and responsibility over their cognitive processes and actions. This foundation is instrumental for independent decision-making and judgment, unswayed by undue external influence. Secondly, learners should be encouraged to engage with these phenomena not as detached concepts or abstract theories but as lived realities. This pedagogical stance, rooted in firsthand bodily-sensory engagement, ensures that learners develop an essential understanding of their surroundings, fortifying their grasp of the self-object relationship. Rousseau argues that it is through such active learning that learners truly comprehend not only their surroundings but also their distinctive place among them – a realization indispensable for the flourishing of independent thought and the capability to navigate the world as autonomous entities.

Direct, embodied experiential encounters with objects are more than simple sensory inputs; they are rich, integrative experiences that fuse sensation with affectivity, giving rise to a complex understanding. This understanding goes beyond the mere recognition of an object's properties – it involves a dynamic interaction where the learner becomes aware of their relationship with the object, informed by their affective responses and motivated by their inherent instinctual drives, such as *amour de soi*. This amalgamation of experience and affect is foundational to developing an understanding of how one relates to and is affected by objects, and in turn, how objects influence and shape the learner's sense of self. The understanding of the self-object relationship is

important for learners because it supports their capacity to form a coherent sense of identity, purpose, and agency. By directly engaging with objects and their environment, learners can situate themselves within a broader context, recognizing their agency and impact on the world, which is indispensable for their development as independent and autonomous individuals.

Rousseau says, "Our first masters of philosophy are our feet, our hands, our eyes…"[51] Here, he is further emphasizing the primacy of embodied sensory experience in the formation of our experiential understanding. When he designates our feet, hands, and eyes as our "first masters of philosophy," he emphasizes their foundational role in the development of our experiential understanding. These body parts are not merely anatomical structures, as the biologist or physician might view them, but are vital instruments that inform the nature of our relationship with objects. Through them, we gain proximate access to objects in the world, allowing for an unmediated, direct understanding.

Rousseau notes, "To substitute books for all that [i.e., embodied understanding] is not to teach us to reason. It is to teach us to use the reason of others. It is to teach us to believe much and never to know anything."[52] Here, he critiques an over-reliance on secondary sources of understanding, such as books (and perhaps, if he were here, this dissertation). While books, representative as the knowledge of others, can certainly convey useful information and insightful thoughts, they can never replace the more basic understanding that arises from direct bodily-sensory experiential engagement. When one overly relies on the knowledge of others, one is essentially borrowing the reasoning or

[51] Ibid. 125
[52] Ibid.

understanding of others without engaging with the lived source of that understanding or reasoning. This leads to a superficial form of understanding – one where beliefs may proliferate, but an authentic understanding of lived experience is absent or anemic.

Thus, for Rousseau, there's a distinction between authentic understanding, rooted in direct bodily-sensory experiences, and derivative understanding, acquired through the mediation of texts or the teachings of others. The body, in its interactions with objects, grounds our understanding in lived interactions, providing an experiential complexity that mere textual engagement, didactic explanations, or purely rational deliberation can't. So, embodied experience plays a key role in Rousseau's thinking of the self-object relation, emphasizing the significance of bodily-sensory informed experiences in defining the nature of the relationship between ourselves and our surroundings.

Embodiment and Authenticity

Having delineated the body as the fundamental locus of understanding, this section investigates deeper into Rousseau's reflections on embodiment and authenticity, moving beyond the sensory acquisition of knowledge to the development of our potential within our surroundings. Whereas the previous section emphasized the body as the primary mode of apprehending the world through sensory experience, here the focus shifts to how these bodily experiences inform the authenticity of our existence.

Rousseau contrasts theoretical speculation with lived bodily engagement, stressing that while the former often leads to a detachment from our surroundings, the latter engenders an authentic connection with the world. This authentic connection, Rousseau suggests, is not only foundational for a true understanding of the self-object

relationship but is also essential for achieving a sense of authenticity and belonging in the world. Through our embodied experiences, we become fully integrated with our surroundings, leading to an authentic mode of existence that theoretical knowledge alone cannot provide. Rousseau's discourse here guides us toward a deeper engagement with our immediate world, advocating for a comprehensive approach that encompasses both the affective and the physical aspects of our being to forge an authentic self-object relationship.

Rousseau argues for the primacy of direct experiences and bodily-sensory engagement. He writes (as we will see again later in this dissertation),

> *Since man's first natural movements are…to measure himself against everything surrounding him and to experience in each object he perceives all the qualities which can be sensed and relate to him, his first study is a sort of experimental physics relative to his own preservation, from which he is diverted by speculative studies before he has recognized his place here on earth.*[53]

Here, Rousseau juxtaposes "a sort of experimental physics" with "speculative studies" to emphasize the distinction between immediate, bodily-sensory experiences and abstract, detached reasoning. This detachment isn't limited to academic or scholarly pursuits. Even in our daily lives, we might experience objects or situations through the lens of utility, monetary value, or other abstract metrics, rather than appreciating them, for example, for their sensory qualities or natural beauty. One might see a tree solely as a potential source of wood or revenue, rather than a living entity with intrinsic value.

This shift from a bodily-sensory understanding to a theoretical one can lead to alienation from one's experiential understanding of one's place in one's surroundings. Multi-sensory experiences that offer an understanding of and experiential connection to

[53] Ibid.

objects the world are supplanted by rationalized concepts. Over time, this can result in feeling distanced from the experiential immediacy of the objects, as they are increasingly perceived through the cold lens of theory, rather than through direct embodied experience.

Rousseau argues that civilization's focus on intellectualism detracts from our natural, direct experiential engagement with the world. He believes that an overreliance on theoretical reasoning disconnects us from the visceral, bodily-sensory experiences that fundamentally anchor us to our surroundings. As he says, "the man who meditates is a depraved animal."[54] And, in a thinly veiled attack of Descartes and his rational method:

> *…it is reason which turns man's mind back upon itself, and divides him from everything [and everyone] that could disturb or afflict him. It is philosophy that isolates him…Nothing but such general evils as threaten the whole community can disturb the tranquil sleep of the philosopher, or tear him from his bed.*[55]

Rousseau posits that immediate affective and bodily-sensory connections provide us with a more authentic grasp of reality than theory can. This is because our direct experiences and sensations convey the complexity and richness of the world in a way that intellectualized concepts cannot fully capture, as we saw above with Jane and Jeff in their excursion to the arboretum. While theoretical thought broadens our understanding in valuable ways, it lacks the immediacy and embodied knowledge that come from experiencing the world through our senses and affects. It also leads to notions of the human condition that isolate us from our immediate connection to the world, such as in Descartes' division between the inner self and the external world. This leads to pseudo-

[54] Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. 1997. *The Discourses and other early political writings*. Edited and translated by Victor Gourevitch. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. 228.
[55] Rousseau, *The Second Discourse*, 34

problems such as the question of how the mind relates to the body or the external world. As Rousseau says, "the action of the soul on the body is the abyss of philosophy."[56] Thus, Rousseau suggests that to authentically understand the nature of reality, we must not lose sight of our instinctual, embodied ways of understanding, which connect us deeply, immediately, and authentically to our surroundings.

Rousseau persistently grappled with the increasingly estranged relationship between humans and the natural world, as we will discuss in more detail in Part III below. He postulated that to fundamentally understand and connect with our surroundings, an understanding grounded in direct bodily engagement is essential. This notion is illustrated in a passage from *Emile*, where he describes Jean-Jacques' and Emile's experience of being present in nature and witnessing a sunrise:

> *One fine evening we go for a walk in a suitable place where a broad, open horizon permits the setting sun to be fully seen, and we observe the objects which make recognizable the location of its setting. The next day, to get some fresh air, we return to the same place before the sun rises. We see it announcing itself from afar by the fiery arrows it launches ahead of it. The blaze grows; the east appears to be wholly in flames. By their glow one expects the star for a long time before it reveals itself. At every instant one believes that he sees it appear. Finally one sees it. A shining point shoots out like lightning and immediately fills all of space. The veil of darkness is drawn back and falls. Man recognizes his habitat and finds it embellished.*[57]

In this narrative, we see Rousseau emphasize the value of direct bodily engagement with the natural world and its objects. What's important here isn't a passive or astronomical observation of the rising sun, but the deeply felt anticipation, the embodied experience of waiting and watching the horizon, and the profound realization that comes with the dawn. The physical act of walking to a specific location, the taking in of "fresh air," the bodily

[56] From Rousseau's *Geneva Manuscript*, as translated by Melzer in his *The Natural Goodness of Man: On the System of Rousseau's Thought,* 200
[57] Rousseau, *Emile*, 168

sensations of the changing temperatures, the active observation of the sun's "fiery arrows," and the palpable tension of awaiting its full emergence are emblematic of a direct embodied and affective engagement with one's surroundings. This is not a mere observation of nature for Rousseau, but an immersive experience. The transformative power of such an engagement is highlighted when he writes, "The veil of darkness is drawn back and falls. Man recognizes his habitat and finds it embellished." The "habitat" here is not only the natural world itself, but also signifies a realization of one's place in one's surroundings; one's "habitat" is the place where one lives.

For Rousseau, this mode of direct, bodily experiential engagement fosters a sense of connectedness with one's surroundings. Whereas theoretical reasoning and detached observation might alienate us from our surroundings, bodily immersing ourselves in them leads to a richer, more intimate understanding. The sunrise is not just a daily astronomical event; through direct bodily engagement, it becomes a deeply personal and transformative experience, reminding us of our intrinsic bond with our "habitat."

Limitations and Potentials of Embodied Understanding

Engaging with the intricacies of embodiment and its implications for human experience with respect to the self-object relationship, Rousseau foregrounds the immediate sensory experiences given by the body in its experiential encounters with objects. He posits that while the body furnishes us with direct sensory encounters, the interpretation of these experiences varies. This variation comes about due to the interplay of bodily sensations with one's affective states, accumulated memories, and future anticipations, all of which collectively contribute to the depth and breadth of experience

as we saw in the sunrise example above. This section will further explore Rousseau's notion that embodiment, despite offering an unmediated understanding of the objects in the world, has natural limitations. However, as we will see, these constraints can be mitigated or complicated through processes of reflection and interaction, marking a shift from the earlier discussion on the immediate authenticity that embodied experiences provide to an examination of the complexities and subjective layers they entail.

As noted, important to Rousseau's thinking about the self-object relationship is the notion that while the human body provides immediate sensory experience of already meaningful phenomena, the understanding and interpretation of these experiences are variable. Rousseau says in a key passage,

> *We are born with the use of our senses, and from our birth we are affected in various ways by the objects surrounding us. As soon as we have, so to speak, consciousness of our sensations, we are disposed to seek or avoid the objects which produce them, at first according to whether they are pleasant or unpleasant to us...*[58]

Here, Rousseau highlights the innate nature of bodily-sensory experiences. Rousseau describes a universal truth about the human condition: every self, from birth, feels and engages with their surroundings. The warmth of a blanket or a cold splash of water do not require conceptual interpretation; the body already understands the encounter and knows what to do.

However, as the passage progresses, Rousseau introduces a layer of complexity in our relationship with these bodily sensations: "...then according to the conformity or lack of it that we find between us and these objects, and finally according to the judgments we make about them on the basis of the idea of happiness or of perfection given us by

[58] Ibid. 39

reason."[59] Here, Rousseau posits that as we develop reflective consciousness and rationality, our direct experiences begin to be informed by our judgments, our beliefs, and social norms, and thus subject to error. The potential for error arises because our judgments and beliefs, which are constructed within a framework of personal and social expectations, may not accurately reflect the inherently relational qualities or realities of the experienced objects themselves. As we interpret our experiences through the lens of these constructed ideas of happiness and perfection, what was once a direct affective, embodied experience of a pleasant or unpleasant sensation evolves into a more intricate, and possibly flawed, process of interpretation. These interpretations are based on personal and social constructs of happiness, perfection, and other theoretical concepts, "chimeras" that "adorn real objects," that may distort the true nature of our sensory engagements with the world.[60]

Going further, Rousseau indicates the malleability of these interpretations when he says, "These dispositions [i.e., our natural capacities] are extended and strengthened as we become more capable of using our senses and more enlightened; but constrained by our habits, they are more or less corrupted by our opinions."[61] Here, he suggests that as selves grow and become more attuned to their affects, bodily senses, and their surroundings, i.e., as they become more "enlightened," social opinions and habits begin to play a significant role in corrupting or otherwise shaping these interpretations. In Rousseau's perspective, these opinions and habits deviate from our original dispositions, or what he calls in us "*nature.*"[62] The term 'nature' is used by Rousseau in this context to

[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid. 158
[61] Ibid. 39
[62] Ibid. original emphasis

denote the instinctive, unadulterated state of our dispositions – the purest form of our affective and embodied experiences before being informed by social influence. This 'nature' represents the original fabric of our being from which our unrefined experiences and interactions spring, a baseline for authenticity that is often clouded by acquired layers of social conventions

So, while the body provides immediate sensory experience, Rousseau claims that the interpretation of these experiences is influenced and complicated by individual judgments and interpretations, typically informed by social norms and values. But, given that our bodily experiences provide immediate sensory understanding, how does the integration by common sense of our affective states, past experiences, and future expectations influence the depth and nuance of our experiences?

Central to Rousseau's perspective on the interactive and direct relationship between self and object is the notion that our experiences are molded by both our direct bodily sensations and our affective states. Rousseau says, "Every feeling of pain is inseparable from the desire to be delivered from it; every idea of pleasure is inseparable from the desire to enjoy it."[63] Here, Rousseau emphasizes the bond between affectivity, the feeling, and aspiration, the desire. Sensations, be they of distress or delight, trigger related desires which guide our behaviors and reflections. For instance, a sensation of thirst doesn't just inform us of our body's need for water but also sparks an immediate wish to drink. In the same vein, sensing the warmth of the sun on a cold day draws us to seek out its warmth. This means that our bodily sensations aren't mere reflections or representations of the objects in the world around us but that these objects are directly

[63] Ibid. 180

encountered while we are at the same time imbued with instinctually grounded motivations that direct and inform our understanding and our actions.

In addition, Rousseau posits that our experience of objects is intertwined with our past experiences and our future projections. Memories from similar past experiences emerge, adding context and richness to the experience of a present situation. For instance, the taste of mashed potatoes might not only offer its immediate flavor but might also evoke memories of family gatherings, bringing with it sentiments of warmth and connection. At the same time, our future expectations and desires shape our current experiences. A gathering cloud signifies more than a visual occurrence; it comes with the expectation of a downpour, evoking sentiments and preparations linked to that anticipated event.

So, Rousseau suggests that perceiving isn't a passive intake of sensory data awaiting interpretation. It's a multifaceted process where bodily sensations merge with affects and sentiments, past memories, and future anticipations. These combined elements enrich our experiences and understanding, influencing our interactions with the world beyond merely what we see or touch, extending to what we remember, expect, and experience affectively. By grasping this interplay of the elements of experiential encounters with objects in the world, we gain an authentic understanding of our surroundings and our place among them.

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In this Part of the chapter, we have seen that, for Rousseau, embodiment is essential to the way in which selves experientially engage with and understand objects. All understanding originates from embodied sensory experiences. This grounds our

understanding in lived interactions between the body and objects, designating the body as the primary locus for understanding, interpreting, and interacting with objects in the world. Relying solely on theoretical concepts or detached reasoning can estrange us from experientially encountered objects. In contrast, direct bodily engagement cultivates a sense of connection and closeness with our surroundings, leading to a more authentic understanding of the self-object relationship. While the body provides an immediate sensory experience, the interpretation of these sensations isn't universal. The fusion of bodily sensations with our emotions, past memories, future expectations, judgments, and interpretations complicates our experiences. This means that while embodiment provides unmediated access to the world, it does not do so without limits. However, these limitations can be mitigated through introspection and "mindful" interaction.[64] Regarding the use of the term 'mindful', he says, "one has to learn to see in human actions the primary features of man's heart before wanting to sound its depths. One has to know how to read facts well before reading maxims."[65]

Now, given that affectivity and embodiment are essential features of our experiential encounters with objects in the world, what role does purposeful activity play in our understanding of our surroundings and of ourselves? The following part of this chapter explores this question.

Part III. Purposeful Activity

Rousseau's thinking emphasizes the significance of action or purposeful activity as equally essential to an authentic understanding of the self-object relationship as

[64] Ibid. 239
[65] Ibid.

affectivity and embodiment. 'Purposeful activity' signifies a direct and active engagement with objects for some end. This notion encompasses not only exploration and crafting but also binds bodily, affective experiences with character development. As Rousseau says, "Everything is learning for animate and sensitive beings."[66] For Rousseau, learning by doing isn't a derivative or accidental feature of being human. Learning, doing, and being are interwoven, shaping and reflecting each other. Here, we unpack Rousseau's thinking regarding the role of purposeful activity in human experience and the self-object relationship.

Activity as a Source of Authentic Understanding

Grasping the dynamics of the acquisition of understanding through activity is important for comprehending Rousseau's thoughts about the self-object relationship. For Rousseau, understanding isn't an outcome of the passive reception and subsequent processing of sense data; it is, fundamentally, an active endeavor. This understanding, a byproduct of action, arises because it is through direct interaction with and manipulation of objects that we come to learn their properties and possibilities as well as our own potential. Such interactions facilitate a form of understanding that is experiential and practical, not merely theoretical. It is deeply intertwined with the self's engagement with and activity upon objects. This perspective aligns with the notion that purposeful activities, demanding direct and immersive interactions with objects in the world, serve as grounding points for the self-object relationship. As we investigate the self-object relationship deeper in this section, we explore Rousseau's position that it is through

[66] Ibid. 62

active engagements that selves cultivate a direct and unmediated understanding of their surroundings and, at the same time, themselves.

Rousseau believes that understanding is not something we absorb without effort, but something we actively discover through our interactions with objects in the world. He highlights the importance of experiential learning in this process: "Do not, then, reason with him whom you want to cure of loathing of the dark. Take him out in it often, and rest assured that all the arguments of philosophy are not equal in value to this practice."[67] In this context, Rousseau suggests that to help someone overcome a fear of darkness, it is not enough to offer logical explanations or philosophical arguments. Instead, one needs to engage with the darkness repeatedly, to experience it and learn from it firsthand. Rousseau suggests devising games to be played at night. Through these direct experiences and active interactions with the object of fear (in this case, the darkness) the self develops a personal understanding of it. This process is essential to the self-object relationship because it transforms theoretical concepts into lived realities. By confronting the object of fear directly, the self achieves a lived, not just theoretical, understanding of the nature of darkness and its impact on their feelings and understanding. This kind of understanding shapes the relationship between the self and the object, allowing the self to navigate their fear more effectively. It demonstrates that firsthand engagement leads to a deeper, more nuanced understanding of how objects affect us and how we perceive and respond to them, which is at the heart of the self-object relationship.

The above quotation does not only illuminate Rousseau's pedagogical approach; it highlights a broader principle within his philosophy. He conceives of the human

[67] Ibid. 135

intellect not as a passive *tabula rasa*, merely awaiting the impression of sensory inputs to process, but as an actively engaged entity within the dynamic interaction between the self and objects. This active engagement is crucial within his pedagogical thinking as it is the very means through which authentic understanding (unattainable by mere rote learning and the distance from experience that this involves) is fostered. Authentic comprehension emerges as selves not only encounter but also grapple with challenges and engage with objects, thereby endowing experience with personal relevance. The struggle, the trial and error, and the direct confrontation with challenges provide a practical context for learning, which in turn fosters a deepened understanding of the self-object relationship. As learners actively navigate through these experiences, they gain insights into how they influence and are influenced by their surroundings, which is essential for authentic learning. It's this enriched, action-based encounter that infuses understanding with personal meaning, embedding the learning process firmly within the broader context of one's existence and relationship with the world.

Rousseau's stance on the cultivation of understanding through purposeful activity places a critical emphasis on the importance of direct engagement with objects in the world. He asserts:

> *The child [i.e., Emile], living in the country, will have gotten some notion of labor in the fields….It belongs to every age, especially his, to want to create, imitate, produce, give signs of power and activity. It will not take two experiences of seeing a garden plowed, sowed, sprouting, and growing vegetables for him to want to garden in his turn.*[68]

Emile's wish to garden, derived from his observation of others working the land and the desire to give signs of his "power and activity," serves as an example of experiential

[68] Ibid. 98

learning. Rousseau posits that an active engagement with objects in the world is a more potent catalyst for authentic understanding than theoretical knowledge. Emile will know the field better by working it than he would by thinking about it.

Rousseau's critique of theoretical knowledge underscores its potential shortcomings: while it offers broad and often useful generalizations, it lacks the depth and nuance that come with lived experiential understanding. In the context of Emile's gardening, the act of observing and then partaking in this agricultural activity offers him an understanding that is grounded in lived experience. Understanding, Rousseau contends, is naturally tied to the human condition that yearns for interaction, creation, and the development of one's capacities. Emile's desire to give "signs of [his] power and activity" signify his urge, grounded in *amour de soi*, to influence, interact with, and, thereby, understand his surroundings. For Rousseau, this drive goes beyond mere knowledge acquisition. The act of gardening serves as a symbolic representation of a wider insight: understanding objects, and thereby the self-object relationship, is rooted in our direct, tangible engagements with those objects.

The Enhancement of Capacities through Activity

Building on the idea that authentic understanding stems from active engagement with the world, this section explores Rousseau's notion that such engagement not only deepens our understanding but also enhances our capabilities. While the prior section posits that understanding is an active endeavor achieved through our interactions with objects, here we investigate further into the transformative potential of these interactions. Rousseau articulates that engaging in activities that challenge and utilize our capacities

fosters not just an immediate understanding of the self-object relationship but also promotes the growth and development of these capacities. This section aims to investigate how, through sustained and deliberate effort in our engagements, we not only gain insights into the nature of objects and our relation to them but also enhance our abilities, enabling a more profound and enriched interaction with the world around us. This examination stresses the dynamic nature of the self-object relationship, highlighting the developmental path that activity induces, leading to an authentic and evolved understanding of both the self and the objects it encounters.

Rousseau believes in the centrality of experience and active engagement in the process of human development. Selves enhance their potential, not primarily through passive existence or theoretical contemplation, but by challenging and harnessing their capacities through active interactions with objects. He says,

> *To live is not to breathe; it is to act; it is to make use of our organs, our senses, our faculties, of all the parts of ourselves which give us the sentiment of our existence. The man who has lived the most is not he who has counted the most years but he who has most felt life.*[69]

Here, Rousseau distinguishes between mere biological existence and a life that's authentically lived. It isn't enough to merely exist or pass through time. For Rousseau, actions, experiences, and challenges are what make life meaningful. This emphasis on action and engagement is grounded in Rousseau's understanding of the human condition. He posits that selves are not merely rational beings but also crave stimulation and challenge. By engaging in tasks that challenge their capacities, selves not only deepen their understanding of the world, but also forge a deeper understanding of their existence. This process is crucial for the development of the self: it allows the self to explore,

[69] Ibid. 42

understand, and eventually enhance its capacities. Active engagements and struggles with objects increase one's power and, thereby, the capacity to preserve and advance one's well-being.

By emphasizing the significance of "feeling" life, Rousseau posits that experiences, especially those that challenge and engage our capacities, bring about a depth of affectivity and understanding that theoretical knowledge or passive existence cannot. Affectivity, bodily sensations, and the challenges of actively lived experiences offer richer, more profound insights into the human condition and the self-object relationship than do mere intellectual pursuits.

For Rousseau, then, the way to self-understanding and a life well-lived lies in the active engagement with objects in the world. Through actions, challenges, and the exercise of one's capacities, selves can go beyond bare survival to achieve an enhancement of their capacities, as well as a deeper understanding of both their surroundings and themselves.

For Rousseau, engaging in challenging tasks that harness human faculties does not merely result in the execution of those tasks, but also serves the purpose of shaping the character of the self, as well as providing for the possibility for an authentic understanding of the self-object relationship. This perspective marks a significant departure from traditional Enlightenment views that separated manual labor from intellectual pursuits. For Rousseau, these domains are not mutually exclusive but deeply interwoven, each complementing and enhancing the other. To quote Rousseau at length:

> *If I have made myself understood up to now, one should conceive how I imperceptibly give my pupil, with the habit of exercising his body and of manual labor, the taste for reflection and meditation. This counterbalances in him the idleness which would result from his indifference to men's*

> *judgments and from the calm of his passions. He must work like a peasant and think like a philosopher so as not to be as lazy as a savage. The great secret of education is to make the exercises of the body and those of the mind always serve as relaxations from one another.*[70]

This passage emphasizes the mutually determining relationship between bodily and intellectual activities. In giving his learner the habit of bodily exercise and manual labor, Jean-Jacques is ensuring that Emile develops a taste for "reflection and meditation." This prevents idleness, which Rousseau sees as a potential outcome of indifference to social judgments and subdued passions. When he says that Emile should "work like a peasant and think like a philosopher," he emphasizes the balance and integration he seeks between labor and thought. While the peasant symbolizes diligence, hard work, and a direct and lived connection to objects in the world, the philosopher represents theoretical thought, conceptual contemplation, and intellectual engagement.

In addition, Rousseau introduces the notion that alternating between bodily and mental exercises can act as a form of relaxation for each domain. By toggling between them, one avoids the stagnation associated with focusing too intently on one at the expense of the other. We note that this insight reveals an aspect of Rousseau's view of the human condition, where the mind and body are interconnected, and each can rejuvenate the other. In any case, Rousseau's philosophy of education posits that by actively engaging in tasks that challenge both the mind and the body, selves not only construct products but also cultivate character and capacities. This approach to education and self-understanding, where physical and intellectual pursuits are intertwined, fosters a balanced and general development of the self.

[70] Ibid. 202

Harmony with Nature and Ecological Awareness

Building upon the foundation that active engagement is crucial for genuine understanding, this section shifts the focus towards Rousseau's belief in the intrinsic connection between humans and the natural world. While the previous section explores how active interactions with objects foster an immediate and experiential comprehension of the world, here, the emphasis extends to how such engagements support a broader ecological consciousness and a harmonious existence with nature. Rousseau posits that through purposeful activities like farming or exploring natural environments, selves not only enhance their understanding of the self-object relationship but also cultivate a profound awareness of their interconnectedness with the ecosystem. This section investigates Rousseau's thinking that authentic understanding and well-being emerge from recognizing and nurturing our natural bonds with the environment, highlighting the transformative power of direct encounters with nature in fostering an ecological sensibility and a sustainable relationship with the world.

For Rousseau, human beings are tied to nature and attempts to deviate from this natural connection lead to various forms of degeneration. His views on the interconnectedness of humanity and the natural world can be traced back to his broader convictions about the state of nature, human civilization, and moral degeneration.[71] A foundational element of Rousseau's thinking is the notion that human beings, in their most primal and original state (one that is expressly ahistorical, hypothetical, and conditional), are deeply integrated into the natural world. This can be elucidated through an exploration of the opening sentence of *Emile*, where he states, "Everything is good as

[71] We will discuss these notions in more detail in the following chapter.

it leaves the hands of the Author of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man."[72] This line attributes a purity and goodness to the natural world and the entities that populate it as it is a manifestation of the "Being of beings and the Dispenser of things."[73] In contrast, Rousseau laments that when left to their own devices, humans have a tendency to corrupt and degrade that which was originally pure and good. The relevance of Rousseau's assertion lies in its encapsulation of his belief that human interference, driven by social progress and the rise of civilizations, invariably distorts the pristine conditions of the natural world. For him, the birth of society, with all of its institutions, conventions, and artificial constructs, leads to the alienation of selves from their natural surroundings. As society grows more complex, so does the rift between self and the natural world. The more we seek to control, dominate, and modify the natural world, the further we stray from our innate, harmonious existence within it and with its objects.

Rousseau's assertion that "everything degenerates in the hands of man" implies a critique of human endeavors that prioritize artificial constructs over natural equilibrium. This equilibrium is essential because it represents the harmonious state between selves and their surroundings, which is necessary for the health of both. Industrialization, urbanization, and the relentless pursuit of so-called 'progress,' while typically seen as markers of human achievement, actually signify humanity's estrangement from the natural world and its objects.

> *He [i.e., 'civilized' man] forces one soil to nourish the products of another, one tree to bear the fruit of another. He mixes and confuses the climates, the elements, the seasons. He mutilates his dog, his horse, his slave. He turns everything upside down; he disfigures everything; he loves deformity, monsters. He wants nothing as nature made it, not even man; for him, man*

[72] Ibid. 37
[73] Ibid. 269

> *must be trained like a school horse; man must be fashioned in keeping with his fancy like a tree in his garden.*[74]

For Rousseau, such developments disrupt this critical balance, resulting in the degradation of the natural world and of the self. This imbalance not only compromises the integrity of ecosystems but also, by extension, jeopardizes human well-being. Equilibrium is crucial as it ensures the sustainability of the natural resources we depend on and maintains the environmental conditions necessary for our well-being. Without this balance, Rousseau believes, both the earth's ecosystems and humanity's place within them become imperiled.

So, for Rousseau, degradation of the natural world is not just a physical or ecological problem; it signifies a moral and spiritual crisis. The health of the environment reflects the health of humanity. If the natural world suffers, it is, in Rousseau's view, because of humanity's failings. The well-being of human beings is inextricably linked to the health of the environment. Departure from our natural state, spurred by social progress and human intervention, has not only led to natural degradation but also signals a deeper spiritual decline. By emphasizing the innate goodness of the natural world and the corrupting influence of human actions, Rousseau stresses the bond between humanity and the natural world and its objects, urging a return to a more harmonious existence between the two, insofar as this is possible given our inextricable social situatedness.

As we've seen, Rousseau's thinking is rooted in the conviction that human beings are intrinsically connected to the natural world and its objects. This connection, according to Rousseau, is realized and comprehended through an understanding of the way in which purposeful activities necessitate direct interaction with objects in the natural world. Such

[74] Ibid. 37

activities, whether they relate to agriculture, craftsmanship, or simple curious observation, provide selves with a lived means of engaging with the natural objects around them, allowing for a deeper appreciation and understanding of nature's complexities. The following passage from *Emile* helps elucidate this perspective:

> *[Emile] roams through the surrounding countryside. He pursues his natural history; he observes and examines the earth, its products, and its cultivation; he compares the way of farming he sees to the ones he knows; he seeks the reasons for the differences.*[75]

Here, a matured Emile's activities are not merely recreational wanderings; they are conscious and deliberate pursuits of understanding. Through his active interactions – observing the soil, examining plants, and discerning different farming methods – Emile gains a direct understanding of the natural world's intricacies. This passage emphasizes a fundamental tenet of Rousseau's thinking: purposeful activities naturally involve direct engagement with objects. Such activities are not theoretical or objectively detached; they require selves to be in tune with their surroundings, to touch, feel, and manipulate objects, and to discern their properties and potentials. For Rousseau, understanding is not solely derived from theoretical contemplation but is grounded primarily in active, embodied, affectively charged engagements with objects in the natural world. When one plants a seed, crafts a tool, or observes the flight of a bird, one is not just performing a task; one is immersing oneself in the rhythms and patterns of the natural world and its objects.

In addition, Rousseau's emphasis on the value of purposeful activities highlights the notion that human beings, despite their apparently transcendent intellectual capacities, remain part of the natural world that surrounds them, regardless of the degree of the so-

[75] Ibid. 435

called ‘progress’ of society. Engaging directly with their surroundings through purposeful activity can serve as a reminder of this intrinsic bond. Such engagements also emphasize the symbiotic relationship between humans and nature: just as we derive sustenance and understanding from the natural world, our actions, in turn, shape and influence it.

Rousseau’s stance on nature and humanity is rooted in the belief that authentic engagement with the natural world and its objects cultivates not only an understanding of one’s surroundings but also, at the same time, shapes a self’s sense of existence. By actively participating in purposeful endeavors, interacting with nature’s objects, selves don’t merely acquire knowledge about objects, but nurture the bond with their surroundings that fosters a heightened awareness of the health of the natural world. Rousseau writes,

> *Cities are the abyss of the human species. At the end of a few generations the races perish or degenerate. They must be renewed and it is always the country which provides for this renewal. Send your children, then, to renew themselves, as it were, and to regain in the midst of the fields the vigor that is lost in the unhealthy air of overpopulated places.*[76]

This passage captures Rousseau’s contention regarding the dangers of living in complex social milieus, particularly its tendency to distance selves from their natural state. The imagery of cities as “the abyss” speaks to the potential of social milieus to ensnare selves in artificial, conceptual constructs, thereby detaching them from the rhythms and complexities of the natural world. Rousseau’s imploration for a return to the natural world (again, insofar as such a thing is possible within an inescapable social context) isn’t merely a call for physical rejuvenation but emphasizes the importance of grounding oneself in surroundings that foster natural, unmediated interactions. The “unhealthy air of

[76] Ibid. 59

overpopulated places" isn't just a comment on physical well-being but points to the stifling, and perhaps even corrupting, nature of social life devoid of authentic engagements with the natural world and its objects. By sending children to "renew themselves" in the fields, Rousseau suggests that they can thereby reconnect with the foundational relational elements of human life, fostering an intrinsic understanding of their place within the natural world. And, if they can, so can we.

In addition, Rousseau believed that active experiences with objects in the natural world – whether it's tilling the land, observing wildlife, or merely wandering through forests – allow us to observe the interdependencies of those objects. This active participation makes apparent the delicate balance of ecosystems, emphasizing, for example, the relationships that connect all life forms. A shift in perspective occurs from viewing nature as a mere backdrop to human existence to seeing it as a living, divine entity in which humans are but a part.

So, Rousseau's emphasis on purposeful engagement with objects in the natural world goes beyond the mere acquisition of understanding of this or that aspect of an encountered object. It's about fostering an understanding of the natural world in which selves recognize their intertwined fate with that world and the objects that constitute it and, consequently, the natural imperative to foster one's well-being that comes with being part of the natural order. The call to escape the confines of urban life and immerse oneself in nature is a call to rediscover and reaffirm this bond.

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In this Part of the chapter, we see how Rousseau thinks that understanding is actively gained through engagement with objects, with purposeful activities grounding

understanding in concrete experiences and offering the possibility for an authentic self-object relation. Such activities are crucial for the discovery and enhancement of human potential, fostering the development of character and capabilities through labor on and struggles with objects. Rousseau also highlights the deep connection between humans and nature, showing that purposeful activities upon objects in the natural world cultivate ecological awareness and a sense of belonging within the natural order. Ultimately, Rousseau posits that purposeful activities are not only essential for survival or production but are key to achieving a harmonious relationship with the natural world and a genuine understanding of one's place in one's surroundings.

Part IV. The Interplay of Affectivity, Embodiment, and Purposeful Activity

Rousseau's view of the human condition in regard to the self-object relation is developed through the integration of affectivity, embodiment, and purposeful activity. Each element of experience, while vital on its own, attains its fullest depth and implication when understood in its interconnection with the others. In this final Part of the chapter, we explore the fusion of these aspects of experience within Rousseau's thinking, investigating how they, when understood together, shape and define the relationship between the self and experientially encountered objects.

Integrated Foundation of Experience

In Rousseau's analysis of the self-object relationship, human experiences are characterized not by a uniformity of any one element, but by a composite of affectivity, bodily-sensory perceptions, and active interactions with objects in the world. A genuine

and comprehensive understanding of the self-object relationship grasps the intersection of these elements of experience. This section examines Rousseau's contention that an integrated understanding of the self-object relation emerges when affectivity, the corporeal self, and purposeful actions coalesce.

Rousseau's investigation into the nature of concrete human experiential interactions with objects in the world posits that these encounters have an intricate constitution. His assertion, "Of all the faculties of man, reason, which is, so to speak, only a composite of all the others, is the one that develops with the most difficulty and latest," serves as a beginning point from which an elucidation of the interconnected nature of the elements of experience can be developed.[77] Rousseau elucidates the nature of what he takes to be reflective and rational thought,

> *By comparison, I move [sensed objects], I transport them, and, so to speak, I superimpose them on one another in order to pronounce on their difference or their likeness and generally on all their relations.*[78]

This capacity to compare, dormant until awakened by social interactions (as we will see in more detail in Chapter Two), becomes the basis for intellectual development, aligning with the emergence of human reason, which he defines as the practice of "forming complex ideas by the conjunction of several simple ideas."[79] For Rousseau, an idea is not a representation but an immediate affectively charged awareness of an entity in the world. The mind's operation is to compare these simple ideas, i.e., ideas of particular entities, examining and judging their relationships to each other in the formation of complex ideas. Through this comparison, the mind forms complex ideas that are composites of

[77] Ibid. 89
[78] Ibid. 270
[79] Ibid. 158

simple experiential truths, without the intermediary of representational distortion. This process of comparison and combination is at the heart of what Rousseau sees as human reason, which is subject to error insofar as the thoughtful, judgmental comparison of ideas can misconstrue the real relations between entities.

In the nascent stages of life, human capacities are often present in a latent state, with the faculty of reason being particularly incipient. Reason is predicated on the gradual coalescence and refinement of subordinate faculties, particularly the basic elements of bodily-sensory experience, affectivity, and active engagement. As these natural capacities facilitate a direct and meaningful engagement with objects in the world, they lead to the accumulation of experiential understanding, which forms the ground for cognitive synthesis and rational thought.

The affective dimension, articulated through the concept of *amour de soi*, propels the self towards interactions that preserve and enhance their well-being. This instinctual drive fosters an elementary level of discernment and comparison that serves as a precursor to the development of the rational faculty. Active engagement with the objects in the world requires us to sense them through our bodies and to feel them through our affectivity. In this way, activity, affectivity, and bodily sensation engender an understanding of what will later be expressed in theoretical notions like causality and utility. It is within this interactive intertwining that these faculties coalesce, informing and enhancing the maturation of reason.

In this light, reason is not an isolated cognitive achievement but an emergent property that results from the confluence of sensory, affective, and purposeful activities

in our experience with objects in the world, including and especially others.[80] This cumulative process underscores why the faculty of reason, requiring a source of experiential understanding and comparison to attain its full capacity for abstraction and judgment, develops subsequent to the maturation of other faculties. Rousseau's characterization of reason as the most laboriously developed faculty illuminates the layered complexity of human understanding and its contingent reliance on a developmental relationship with the more rudimentary capacities of affectivity, bodily-sensation, and purposeful activity.

Now, bodily sensory encounters serve as the basis of our relationship with objects the world. Through our senses (including our "sixth sense"), we come to understandingly encounter our surroundings. These bodily experiences, however, only represent an initial layer of human experiences. A deeper, more nuanced aspect is provided by the affectivity natural to experiences, discovering the meaning of that which is encountered. As people navigate through life, their experiences are informed by this instinctual drive, giving depth and quality to their bodily-sensory encounters and motivating their behavior. A sunrise, for instance, is not just a visual spectacle but can evoke a deep sense of contentment, a reflection of the instinctual force of *amour de soi* that seeks harmony and well-being. It motivates one to sit still and participate in the spectacle. In addition, Rousseau emphasizes the role of active engagements in this interconnected triumvirate. Rather than being passive recipients of sensory data or subject to supposedly 'irrational' emotional responses, human beings actively and purposefully interact with objects. This

[80] In the following chapter, we will see the great extent to which social interactions inform the capacity for rational thought. We will attempt to develop an understanding of what Rousseau means when he says that *amour propre* "is reason." Ibid. 92.

dimension of experience is marked by actions, decisions (always informed by instinctual affect), and even conflicts, all of which shape one's understanding and experience. By actively engaging with their surroundings, selves make a space for themselves, giving rise to a resonance with their surroundings.

Drawing from Rousseau's insights into human experience, consider someone visiting an art gallery. Standing bodily before a painting, they are immediately drawn to the image in a direct and unmediated encounter with the artwork. They perceive not mere light waves or a collection of sense-data, but a piece of art in its full aesthetic expression. This initial perception is an active engagement, not just a passive observation; it's a vibrant connection to the object before them, an encounter that is participatory by nature. The artwork resonates with the viewer's innate *amour de soi*, which could elicit a range of sentimental encounters depending on the image's content, adding depth to the visual experience. As the viewer leans in, perhaps to study the brushstrokes or to ponder the artist's intent, they further engage with the painting, embodying Rousseau's principle that we are far from passive receivers of experiences. By actively looking at and contemplating the artwork, the viewer is not just attending to the painting but participating in an interactive process that deepens their experiential understanding. In this dynamic, the richness of human experience emerges from this amalgam of direct encounters with objects, the sentiments rooted in *amour de soi*, and the active, participatory process of understanding and interpretation that characterizes our engagements with the world around us.

As discussed above, at the heart of Rousseau's conception of affectivity lies *amour de soi*. When we encounter objects in the world, this affective dimension shapes

our behavior, imbuing our experiences with affective and sentimental elements. A beautiful landscape, for instance, might evoke a deep sense of serenity and contentment, an affective element of the experience that springs from our natural drive for harmony and equilibrium, which are beneficial for the preservation and enhancement of our well-being. Embodiment, on the other hand, brings forth the sensory and corporeal aspects of our experiential interactions. Our bodies serve as the locus between the self and objects, informing our experiences through the senses. Lived, embodied interactions provide a direct, unfiltered connection to objects, grounding them. At the same time, however, activity is the volitional aspect of our encounters, notably, a volition that is guided by the instinctual force of affect. Rather than being passive observers, selves actively engage with their surroundings, exploring, manipulating, and shaping their environment according to their will as informed by *amour de soi*. This active involvement imbues our experiences with agency, allowing us to develop meaningful connections with the objects we experientially encounter.

A passage from *Emile* helps illustrate Rousseau's emphasis on direct, unmediated experiences:

> *You want to teach geography to this child, and you go and get globes, cosmic spheres, and maps for him. So many devices! Why all these representations? Why do you not begin by showing him the object itself, so that he will at least know what you are talking to him about?* [81]

Here, Rousseau draws an important distinction between representations and the objects themselves. Representations of any sort, regardless of how detailed or precise they are, can never fully capture the complexities of direct experiential encounters. The learner's understanding would be far more profound if grounded in direct experiences (essentially

[81] Ibid. 168

involving the interconnection of affect, embodiment, and activity) of the object itself rather than through representations.

This emphasis on direct experience merges with Rousseau's broader argument about the intersection of affectivity, embodiment, and activity. Just as the learner benefits most from interacting with the object itself rather than mere representations, our understanding of our experiential encounters with objects is most profound when the affective, sensory, and active elements of the self-object relationship converge. It is in this intersection of the elements of experience that we might grasp concrete experience in its fullest sense, unencumbered by abstraction, theory, or so-called 'objective' distance.

Mutual Reinforcement of Elements

In Rousseau's examination of the self-object relationship, an interplay unfolds among affectivity, embodiment, and purposeful activity, each element resonating with and amplifying the others. This section shifts the focus from the composite picture of experience presented in the previous section to an exploration of how affects, emerging from our bodily states, not only initiate but also steer our actions, combining feelings, physical experiences, and deliberate engagement with the world into human behavior. Our corporeal interactions, the ground for affective responses, in turn, feed into our actions, which are imbued with intention and informed by the natural inclination of *amour de soi*. Moreover, the discussion in this section extends to illustrate how our intentional deeds both spring from and entwine with our psychosomatic encounters with objects in the world. Here, Rousseau's thought is explicated to reveal that these three features of experience are deeply connected, each aspect reinforcing the others, and

collectively contributing to the potential that mindful observation of one's experience can unlock.

Rousseau places significant importance on the role of the body in shaping affectivity and motivations. He contends that affect (here, *amour de soi*) is instrumental in driving actions, and this affect is deeply rooted in our bodily experiences. *Amour de soi*, in Rousseau's view (as has already been shown), represents a natural form of self-care that is fundamentally concerned with one's self-preservation and well-being. This affect is not primarily cognitive. It is intimately connected to the sensations and imperatives of the body. Feelings arising from our bodily states, be they hunger, pain, or pleasure, incite *amour de soi*. This intrinsic connection compels individuals to act in ways that ensure their survival and comfort.

Imagine a sailor stranded on a remote island after a shipwreck. Initially overwhelmed by panic and distress, the sailor soon finds her bodily experiences evoking a powerful force: *amour de soi*. As hunger sets in, the pangs are not merely physical discomforts but become intertwined with an instinctive drive to sustain herself. She starts seeking out edible fruits and making tools for fishing. Similarly, the bodily sensation of the harsh sunburn on her skin compels her to construct shelter. These are not mere reactions to physical discomfort, but actions motivated by *amour de soi*. Rousseau's ideas about the body's role in experiential encounters with objects in the world would suggest that it isn't just the sensations of hunger or pain that push the sailor. Instead, it's the natural affect of *amour de soi*, emerging from these bodily experiences, that motivates actions for survival and comfort. The stranded sailor's efforts, guided by this affect, to secure food and shelter illustrate the close relationship between our bodily state and the

motivations arising from it. The stranded sailor's presence on her isolated island highlights the interconnectedness of bodily sensations, affects, and purposeful actions, illustrating Rousseau's beliefs about the human condition and the nature of experiential encounters with objects.

For Rousseau, bodily engagements play a pivotal role in eliciting affects and sentiments that drive us toward meaningful actions. His perspective on the human condition emphasizes the primacy of the senses and the experiences drawn from our interactions with objects. These engagements are not passive receptions but active encounters that shape our affective and sentimental perspectives. Sensory interactions are foundational for Rousseau; they awaken our passions and motivate us towards purposeful endeavors.

Rousseau writes, "Take [the] love of the beautiful from our hearts, and you take all the charm from life."[82] Here, he emphasizes the human inclination toward beauty, an appreciation rooted in our sensory experiences. The "love of the beautiful" is a profound sentiment stemming from our bodily engagements with objects, whether gazing upon a breathtaking landscape, feeling the texture of an exquisite fabric, or hearing a haunting melody. However, Rousseau doesn't just extoll the positive sentiments elicited by such experiences; he also warns of the consequences of neglect. He laments the fate of an individual whose passions have been stifled, describing him as someone with an "icy heart" that no longer resonates with joy.[83] This person has become detached from the world, deadened to its beauty and wonders, and has, as a result, little to no motivation to act. By emphasizing the unfortunate state of such a person, Rousseau highlights the

[82] Ibid. 287
[83] Ibid.

possibility for vitality in our bodily, affective, and sensory engagements with the world. These interactions are not just a luxury but are necessary conditions for a fulfilling life.

Rousseau posits a distinct perspective on the relationship between the self and its surroundings. Central to his thinking is the belief that selves, when engrossed in tasks demanding bodily interaction with their surroundings, engage in more than just superficial or routine actions. These tasks become conduits through which sentiments come to the fore, especially sentiments grounded in *amour de soi*.

The notion of bodily interaction extends beyond simple tactile engagement, however. Rousseau posits that embodied interaction with one's surroundings is indicative of a deep affective process. The challenges, successes, and failures met with in lived experience reinforce and amplify an individual's *amour de soi*. Each physical event, be it a minor injury, an accomplishment, or just fatigue, underscores our bond to our own condition and our fundamental survival instincts.

Rousseau asserts, "Far from being attentive to protecting Emile from injury, I would be most distressed if he were never hurt and grew up without knowing pain."[84] This statement isn't a mere critique of overprotectiveness but an emphasis on the intrinsic value of direct experiences. Rousseau is clear in his stance: for one to truly grasp and wield the essence of *amour de soi*, there is need to directly confront the world, embodied and active, experiencing both its nurturing touch and its challenges.

[84] Ibid. 78

Harmonious Balance and Potential Imbalances

In the previous section, Rousseau's philosophy is explicated to reveal a reciprocal interplay among affectivity, embodiment, and purposeful activity, each component magnifying the influence of the others. The previous section stressed the synergy between these elements as they integrate in the essence of human behavior, showing that not only are these elements integrative, but they are also interdependent, each strengthening and informing the expression of the others in a dynamic and reinforcing way. In contrast, the present section pivots from the mutual reinforcement to the necessity of balance among the triad of affectivity, embodiment, and purposeful activity. Here, Rousseau warns of the pitfalls of disproportionality, asserting that overemphasis on any single element can skew perception and understanding. This section doesn't merely describe how these elements of experience interact, but also cautions that without a balanced interplay among them, the risk of misunderstanding and estrangement from objects in the world arises. The focus shifts to the potential consequences of imbalance, where a dominance of one aspect may distort the self-object relationship, leading to misconceptions or a loss of authentic connection with one's surroundings. The education of Emile, through balanced experiences like carpentry or gardening, serves as a paradigm of Rousseau's ideal for fostering a deep and meaningful understanding of objects and one's relation to them. This balanced approach is posited as crucial for a comprehensive and authentic human experience.

Rousseau investigates the importance of balance between affectivity, embodiment, and purposeful activity, emphasizing that these tripartite components of experience shape the nature of the self-object relationship and our understanding of our

place within our surroundings. However, Rousseau raises a concern: the danger in the disproportionate presence of any single component, which can lead to a skewed understanding.

To elucidate, consider an illustrative narrative from Emile (to which we will return in Chapter Three). Emile plants beans in a plot of land, investing not just labor but also sentiment into this act – "with transports of joy we see them sprout."[85] This act of planting symbolizes purposeful action, embodied interaction with the objects, and the affective sentiment associated with the anticipation of growth.

We use this incident to illustrate potential distortions in understanding objects when one element overshadows the others, even though, in the narrative, Emile does not appear to suffer from a noticeable imbalance. If Emile's affectivity had been disproportionately present, however, it could have led him to approach the garden with an overly emphasized expression of *amour de soi*, potentially disregarding the inherent value or purpose of the objects in it, beyond how they contribute to his immediate pleasure or discomfort. On the other hand, an overemphasis on embodiment might have made Emile so preoccupied with the sensory experience of his interaction with the garden that he overlooked the broader ecological or communal roles of the objects he encountered. Similarly, if practical activity had been his sole focus, Emile might have engaged with the garden solely in terms of his projects or desires, neglecting the intrinsic qualities and needs of the garden's components, which could lead to a misunderstanding of their significance and potential harm to the garden's ecosystem. This hypothetical scenario emphasizes the importance of maintaining a balance between affectivity,

[85] Ibid. 98

embodiment, and activity to avoid misinterpreting the complex web of relationships that constitute our surroundings.

In *Emile,* the education of the titular character is marked by experiences that balance affectivity, embodiment, and purposeful activity, one of which is his introduction to carpentry. This manual trade is more than just a skill for Emile; it's an interplay of affectivity, sensation, and action. Through carpentry, Emile taps into his natural self-care and desire for the preservation and advancement of his well-being, i.e., *amour de soi*. The joy of crafting, the frustration of a misplaced nail, or the satisfaction of completing a piece are all sentimental manifestations of this affectivity. However, carpentry doesn't just engage Emile affectively. The act of working with wood grounds these sentiments in the corporeal. Feeling the grain of the wood, adjusting his grip based on its texture, or hearing the sound it makes when sawed, all provide Emile with bodily-sensory experiences that resonate with his affectivity. This emphasis on embodiment, on the physical interaction with the objects necessary for his endeavor, ensures that his affectivity in relation to his work isn't abstract but is tied to real, lived experiences. Yet, neither affectivity nor bodily sensation nor the two together stand unaccompanied. In the practical activity of carpentry, the choices Emile makes in his work and the way he interacts with his materials are lived manifestations of aspects of purposeful activity. This engagement gives direction to his affectivity and sensations. It makes sense of his behavior. Without the act of purposefully creating, the sentiments Emile feels and the bodily sensations he experiences would lack meaning and purpose.

So, Jean-Jacques' decision to teach Emile carpentry underscores Rousseau's belief in the importance of a balanced human experience. This act of crafting is not just a

task but a unity of affectivity, sensation, and purposeful action. Each aspect informs and complements the others, leading to a richer, more profound understanding of objects and the self's relation to them. The carpentry lesson in *Emile* serves as an illustrative example of Rousseau's broader pedagogical philosophy, emphasizing the harmonious integration of affectivity, embodiment, and purposeful activity for a comprehensive human experience.

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This final Part of the chapter has investigated Rousseau's thinking regarding the interconnected relationship between affectivity, bodily-sensory encounters, and active engagements in shaping human experiences. It posits that while each element of experience offers a distinct perspective on the nature of experience, it is in their confluence that an authentic self-object relation can be attained. Affects are central to driving actions and are intimately tied to bodily experiences, and it's through the body that we engage purposefully with our surroundings. At the same time, our actions evoke affects and are naturally tied to our bodily experiences. Yet, too strong a presence of one element of experience over the others risks distorting our understanding experience, potentially leading to misconceptions or feelings of estrangement. Thus, for an authentic and enriched experience of objects, a balanced interaction between our affectivity, our corporeal understanding, and our purposeful actions is imperative.

Conclusion

In considering Rousseau's thinking regarding the self-object relation in this chapter, we observe an intersectionality of affectivity, embodiment, and purposeful

activity. Rousseau posits that human experiences are intrinsically charged with affectivity, which go beyond mere responses to external stimuli and are fundamental to human cognition. This affective engagement informs our perceptions, creating a, so to speak, lens through which we understand objects in the world. Given the influence of affectivity on perception, Rousseau emphasizes the need for a balanced interplay of reason and experiential wisdom to guard against potential misconceptions.

Embodiment in human cognition and experience is equally essential. For Rousseau, sensory experiences, conducted through the body, are foundational to our understanding of objects in the world. The immediacy of bodily sensations provides a connection to the world and an understanding of the meaning of the objects in it, although this embodiment is not without limits, necessitating reflection and interaction to broaden perception.

Rousseau's thinking extends to the role of purposeful activity in human cognition and experience. He contends that genuine understanding of objects arises from active and purposeful engagement with objects in the world. Human potential is discovered and enhanced through purposeful tasks, fostering not only the creation of products but also the cultivation of character. Notably, as selves engage with the natural world through purposeful activities, they gain a deeper appreciation of their position within their surroundings.

In synthesizing the components of affectivity, embodiment, and purposeful activity, Rousseau suggests a comprehensive approach to understanding the self-object relationship as grounded in lived experience. Each of these elements offers a distinct perspective; however, it is in an understanding of their confluence that a comprehensive

grasp of this relationship becomes possible. This triad works in tandem, with affects motivating actions, the body acting as a locus for experiences, and purposeful activities eliciting affectivity. However, Rousseau cautions against an over-reliance on any single element, advocating for a balanced interplay to prevent potential distortions in understanding. In sum, Rousseau's thinking regarding the self-object relationship constructs a complicated framework that emphasizes the interrelatedness of affectivity, embodiment, and purposeful activity in experiential encounters with our surroundings.

Having investigated Rousseau's account of the self-object relationship, how might we build from this in order to understand the relationship between the self and others? How does the affectivity of *amour de soi* and its derivation, *amour propre*, shape interactions and define relations to others? What role does the second basic affect, natural compassion, play? In the next chapter, we explore these questions as we transition from Rousseau's thinking on the self-object to relationship to his thinking on the nature of the relationship between the self and others.

Chapter Two:
Rousseau and the Self-Other Relationship

Introduction

In our first chapter, we investigated how Rousseau conceives the relationship between the self and the objects surrounding us, concluding that our relationships with objects involves direct access to them and that this access is integral to our way of being and our sense of self. The chapter highlighted a key concept: our nature is deeply relational, not just with things but, as we will soon see, with others. The present chapter is an investigation of his thinking of the self-other relationship, central to which are his notions of *amour de soi*, *amour-propre*, and natural compassion. These concepts are examined here in themselves and in their interrelations, illuminating Rousseau's insights into the interplay of individuality and sociality in human existence.

First, we engage with Rousseau's concept of *amour de soi*, characterized as an instinctual and pre-reflective form of care for one's well-being, uninformed by social constructs and recognition by others. Rousseau posits *amour de soi* as representative of the self in its most basic and unconditioned state, authentic insofar as it is free from the complexities of organized social systems. We then investigate *amour-propre*, which Rousseau presents as a socially evolved form of *amour de soi*. This concept captures the transformation of the nature of one's existence under social influences in which one's well-being is dependent upon how one is perceived and recognized. *Amour-propre* marks a shift from a hypothetical and absolutely self-referential *amour de soi* to a historically situated and socially informed way of being, showing how human existence is conditioned by real social interactions and cultural norms. Next, we examine Rousseau's

concept of natural compassion, an instinctive and pre-reflective resonance with the suffering of others. This aspect of Rousseau's thinking emphasizes the social nature of individuals, positing a natural and pre-reflective capacity for empathy and connection. We conclude with an exploration of a paradox in Rousseau's thought – the coexistence of the absolutely self-referential *amour de soi* and the intrinsically socially oriented natural compassion, as experienced and practically expressed through *amour-propre*. This analysis synthesizes these dimensions, highlighting the multifaceted nature of human social existence.

Throughout, this chapter provides an investigation of Rousseau's thinking on individual and collective aspects of the human condition, clarifying complexities in the self-other relationship. Our examination of Rousseau's thinking offers an understanding of the balance between the personal dimensions of individual existence and social interconnectedness.

Part I. *Amour de Soi*

In the first part of this chapter, we investigate the intricacies of Rousseau's conceptualization of *amour de soi* and its role within the state of nature. Rousseau, in accord with his directive that the true study of *Emile* is that of the human condition, challenges us to "generalize our views" and consider the individual, or "abstract man, man exposed to all the accidents of human life," allowing for an examination of the human condition as it is conditionable (though not yet conditioned) by those accidents.[86] He employs the state of nature as a philosophical tool to generalize our views, i.e., to strip

[86] Ibid. 42

away the particular ways in which we have already been socially conditioned, thus providing an expressly theoretical context to understand the intrinsic motivations and behaviors that drive actual human interaction. Through this exploration, we gain insight into how individuals might relate to one another in an environment that is devoid of the complexities of social acknowledgment and social expectations. This state is also crucial as a starting point for comprehending the developmental trajectory of human dispositions, character, and cooperative dynamics, preparing us for a subsequent discussion on the transformation from *amour de soi* to *amour-propre,* self-esteem in the midst of social complexities.

Unveiling the Human Condition: Rousseau's State of Nature as a Foundation for Self-Other Relations

In investigating Rousseau's thinking on the relationship between the self and the other, he asks us to begin by taking on a general perspective. Rousseau urges consideration of the individual (i.e., "abstract man"), not in their immediate, historically situated, lived social context, but as that which can be conditioned by such contexts, as an instance of the natural human condition.

For Rousseau, 'nature' comprises the essential and fundamental forces that define beings. He sees nature as indicative of the essence of beings, a force that persists in its expression despite the imposition of influences or extrinsic habits. While extrinsic habits and inclinations can be imposed on beings, they do not alter the nature of these beings. This view is based on the observation that once extrinsic pressures are removed, original natural tendencies reassert themselves, just as a plant forced to grow in a certain direction will return to its natural, vertical growth pattern when freed from constraint.

Rousseau's state of nature is a cornerstone of his philosophical inquiry into the essence of the human condition, including the fundamental dynamics of the self-other relationship. The state of nature is crucial for understanding the nature of the relationship between self and other through the lens of *amour de soi* (and, later, natural compassion) because it functions as a hypothetical and conditional reference from which we can discern the natural and original expression of human inclinations and interactions. Rousseau advocates for the significance of this concept as it represents an idealized version of existence free from the distortive influences of habits imposed by society's institutions, conventions, and relationships. By contemplating the human condition in such a state, we can consider the natural behaviors and motivations that define our being, which are otherwise obscured by the complexities of social constructs. The state of nature allows Rousseau to construct a narrative that explains how these natural characteristics and predispositions might manifest in the absence of complex social norms and structures, thus providing a hypothetical and conditional lens through which to examine the natural aspects of the human condition and the nature of our social relationships.

We also note that using the concept of the state of nature to understand the nature of things in Rousseau's philosophy goes beyond examining natural human characteristics, encompassing the fundamental forces that govern all entities within the natural world. The state of nature serves as a conceptual tool to investigate the essential forces that define entities of all sorts, offering a theoretical context where the nature of things can manifest without the distortions of pre-determined and socially informed interpretations. This state is not merely an absence of society but a presence of natural order in its most unadulterated form. Rousseau posits that by understanding the state of

nature, one can grasp the natural forces that naturally arise and regulate living beings and their surroundings. Thus, the connection between the nature of things and the state of nature lies in their mutual concern with essences – what things are as they are prior to any socially informed interpretation of them. Rousseau's inquiry into the state of nature is, therefore, an exploration into the true characteristics of the nature of things at large, providing a foundational perspective from which to understand all natural phenomena, including human behavior.

Rousseau is clear about his methodological approach:

> *Let us…begin by setting aside all the facts…The Inquiries that may be pursued…ought not to be taken for historical truths, but only for hypothetical and conditional reasonings; better suited to elucidate the Nature of things than to show their genuine origin…*[87]

Rousseau explicitly and clearly posits that the state of nature is not an accumulation of historical facts, it's not a place or time that actually existed, nor is it a genealogy of the origins of things, but is rather a speculative approach aimed at investigating the nature of things, including individuals, prior to the imposition of historically informed social constructs, such as laws, cultural norms, economic systems, and political structures. Beginning by discarding historical facts, Rousseau abstracts away from the lived experience of already being embedded in a social context in order to discover and describe the essence of the forces that make things what they are. In doing so, he shifts the focus to a hypothetical and conditional investigation of the human condition, utilizing the state of nature as a theoretical instrument to explore the foundational aspects of human behavior and the development of social organization.

[87] Rousseau, *The Second Discourse*, 132

This hypothetical model, then, serves at least two functions that are relevant to this chapter. First, it makes possible an investigation of the human condition in an unadulterated state, offering insights into our natural humanity, conceived of as unswayed by social influence. Second, it functions as a tool to comprehend how social milieus transform the ways individuals interact and relate to one another. As we will see, the juxtaposition of a "hypothetical and conditional" natural state and the actuality of structured society furthers our understanding of how social constructs shape the dynamics of the self's relationship with others. For instance, within the constraints of society, the pursuit of social acknowledgment may drive our interactions, while in the state of nature, our relations with things and others align with our instinctual drive to survive and thrive.

Rousseau's exploration of the state of nature offers a foundational perspective on the human condition, separating it from historical and social complications to reveal our natural human motivations and how they might manifest without social influence. His hypothetical and conditional approach, emphasizing a speculative rather than historical examination, sheds light on the essence of human interactions and the potential for authenticity in our relationships (by grounding them in our nature). Through this lens, Rousseau aims to understand the development of the self in and apart from society, highlighting the contrast between natural human inclinations and the effects of social structures.

Instinct and Well-being in Rousseau's State of Nature: The Central Role of Amour de Soi

Having investigated the state of nature as Rousseau's conceptual framework for understanding human existence free from social structures, we now return to *amour de*

soi. This allows us to examine how, in this natural state, an instinctual and self-referential motivation for the preservation and advancement of one's well-being functions as a foundational aspect of human behavior.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Rousseau's thinking regarding the instinctual affect of *amour de soi* is rooted in his understanding of the human condition and the essential needs of the individual, such as food, shelter, water, and reproduction. He posits that *amour de soi* is a natural force that helps define human existence, driving individuals towards survival and development. The reason behind Rousseau's characterization of *amour de soi* as an instinctual force lies in his views on the natural state of human beings. He theorizes that in the state of nature individuals are driven by a natural instinct that is necessary for their survival and well-being – *amour de soi*.

Amour de soi extends beyond mere physical survival to encompass the natural and pre-reflective satisfaction of affective states. As Rousseau says, "Whoever does what he wants is happy if he is self-sufficient; this is the case of the man living in the state of nature."[88] *Amour de soi* drives the individual to perpetually seek the preservation and enhancement of their well-being, including their affective well-being. *Amour de soi* is a pre-reflective way of being that informs (as we've seen in Chapter One) the individual's immediate experience of entities in the world guiding them towards natural ways of behaving that align with their instinctual nature. To the extent that the individual is guided solely by nature and necessity, they are authentic. Rousseau addresses this, stating, "The only habit useful to children is to subject themselves without difficulty to the necessity of things, and the only habit useful to men is to subject themselves without

[88] Rousseau, *Emile*, 85

difficulty to reason. Every other habit is a vice."[89] In this context, "the necessity of things" refers to the reality of dealing with life's circumstances as they are, not as one might wish them to be. It's about accepting the constraints of the world, and, when it comes to education, allowing learners to identify, adapt, and respond to the truths of their surroundings. In Rousseau's thought, these truths are well-defined in their existence in things but may become muddled through acts of socially informed interpretation and judgment. For Rousseau truth resides intrinsically within things themselves and is directly apprehensible without the need for comparative reasoning. It is when individuals begin to reason about these truths, comparing them and considering the relations of things to other things (an act that accompanies social development, as seen below), that the possibility for error arises. Therefore, the truths of their surroundings are clear and distinct to those who engage with them in their immediacy, free from the distortions of reflective judgment that is inherently socially informed. It is this direct engagement that constitutes the authenticity of *amour de soi*.

This grounding in the reality of existence paves the way for the eventual transition to being guided by the necessity of reason as adults in a social context. Authenticity in *amour de soi* emerges from a direct engagement with truths as they are encountered in life, free from the distortions of thinking about those truths or understanding them under the influence of pre-determined social interpretations. *Amour de soi*, in this state, drives individuals to seek experiences and interactions that fulfill their affective needs, such as affective stability and a rudimentary (because pre-reflective) sense of purpose.

[89] Ibid. 160

Contrasting with social life, where affective needs are entangled with social expectations and desires, in the state of nature, these needs are met through direct interactions with one's surroundings and occasional, transitory encounters with others. *Amour de soi* in this context fosters affective well-being that is free from the anxieties, competitions, and dissatisfactions that are pervasive in historically situated social life. The absence of social pressures allows individuals to experience affective states that are pure and unburdened, characterized by a pre-reflective sense of contentment and balance. Without social influences, individuals guided by *amour de soi* do not experience the affective turmoil associated with, for example, envy or, more generally, the need for comparison with others. In the state of nature, individuals experience a stable, non-contemplative, and content state of self-referential being, free from the upheavals resulting from social pressures and comparisons.

The independence and self-sufficiency associated with *amour de soi* contribute to this experience of affective well-being. In the state of nature, reliance on one's own capabilities naturally leads to a sense of fulfillment and stability. This is because self-reliance promotes a sense of competence and effectiveness. When the individual depends on their own skills and judgments to navigate their surroundings, they develop a stronger sense of autonomy and capability. This engagement fosters a pre-reflective sense of confidence and accomplishment, as individuals see the direct results of their actions. Additionally, the lack of reliance on extrinsic validation or comparison with others in this state reinforces a pre-reflective sense of individual contentment and affective stability. The focus on one's capabilities rather than extrinsic approval or competition with others leads to a more grounded and self-affirming sense of well-being.

When encountering adverse circumstances, an individual guided by *amour de soi* instinctively persists without succumbing to despair. This instinctive drive ensures that even when outcomes aren't as desired, the individual does not engage in the reflective assessment typical of failure but naturally continues to strive for well-being. This pre-reflective response to challenge is part of the natural course of life, fostering natural resilience and an inherent capacity to adjust to life's unpredictable nature. Without social measures of success or failure, the individual instinctually focuses on the process rather than the outcome, maintaining a natural equilibrium through life's vicissitudes. This inherent adaptability and resilience, embedded in the state of nature, fortify a self-sustaining mode of existence, readying the individual to navigate the uncertainties of life without the need for reflective deliberation.

Rousseau's articulation of *amour de soi* represents a central tenet in his examination of the human condition. Within the confines of the state of nature, the instinctual force of *amour de soi* emerges as a primary driver of behaviors that preserve and promote self-care and well-being. This instinctual affect, extending beyond the mere necessities of survival, cultivates a natural, pre-reflective state of contentment. It is in this original state, unmarred by social demands or comparisons, that the individual's affective well-being thrives, free from the distortions of extrinsic validation. Rousseau's exploration of this concept stresses the natural capacity for self-sufficiency and the fulfillment found in direct engagement with one's surroundings. *Amour de soi*, thus, is not only foundational to understanding human motivation but also essential to the conception of a common way of being where, as we will see, individual fulfillment and communal harmony coexist without the impositions of sophisticated social structures.

Beyond Survival: Amour de Soi *and the Flourishing of Individual Talents in Rousseau's State of Nature*

Building on our understanding of the basics of *amour de soi*, we now turn to its role not just in meeting essential needs but in enhancing individual capabilities and talents. In the unencumbered state of nature, this instinctive drive not only supports survival and affective well-being but also encourages the growth and refinement of skills and natural dispositions, or what Rousseau refers to as our "perfectibility."[90]

In the state of nature, *amour de soi* is characterized by a liberating absence of social constraints, fostering a milieu where individuals can engage in behaviors that naturally expand their innate capacities. *Amour de soi* prompts individuals to actively develop their capacities in ways that not only sustain life but also advance well-being, allowing them to explore and develop their capacities in alignment with their instinctual inclinations. Rousseau reflects on this developmental aspect of the human condition by asserting, "We can know the use of our organs only after having employed them. It is only long experience which teaches us to turn ourselves to account, and this experience is the true study to which we cannot apply ourselves too soon."[91] Rousseau is stressing that true understanding and mastery of our natural abilities are achieved through their active use. This active engagement, or "true study," is crucial and should be initiated as early as possible, as there is no premature start to learning practically through experience. These experiences are indispensable, as they allow us to understand and develop our capacities most authentically and effectively. He suggests that understanding and proficiency in using our natural abilities come only through practical application and experience. This

[90] Rousseau, *The Second Discourse*, 141
[91] Rousseau, *Emile*, 147

process of experiential learning is not just incidental but is the way through which we should seek to develop and understand our authentic, natural selves. Inauthenticity arises when one's actions are dictated by extrinsic influences – when one is swayed by the imposed values, desires, or pre-determined interpretations imposed by society rather than being guided by their own natural tendencies. Authentic development is thus characterized by a congruence with one's natural state, fostering an authentic expression of self that is not derived from the artificial roles, statuses, or mores ascribed by social structures.

This approach aligns with Rousseau's broader thinking that values natural development over imposed learning or social constructs. He emphasizes the importance of active engagement and practice in the cultivation of one's capacities. The state of nature provides the foundational backdrop for this kind of natural progression. In such an environment, individuals naturally progress in developing their talents and abilities under the guidance of nature, particularly *amour de soi*.

Moreover, *amour de soi* shapes the character of the individual. Responding to *amour de soi*'s instinctual drives shapes an individual's character by reinforcing traits and behaviors that mirror their idiosyncratic natural tendencies, or their "particular genius."[92] This could manifest as independence and self-reliance in one inclined towards solitary exploration or as collaboration and compassion in one drawn to cooperative endeavors. Within the framework of the state of nature, then, *amour de soi* acts as a fundamental force for individual fulfillment and development, driving individuals to satisfy their

[92] Ibid. 94. We will discuss Rousseau's notion of 'particular genius' in much more detail in the following chapter.

essential needs and instincts in a way that is aligned with their natural dispositions rather than by the dictates of social constructs.

In Rousseau's state of nature, *amour de soi* is not only about survival but also about the flourishing of individual abilities and character. Freed from social constraints, individuals follow their natural inclinations to develop and refine their capacities. This authentic growth aligns with one's natural dispositions, allowing each individual to express their unique character and maximize their potential in a way that resonates with the natural forces which guide them.

Amour de Soi:
Cultivating Peaceful Coexistence in Rousseau's Natural State

Moving forward from our investigation of *amour de soi*'s role in individual development within the state of nature, we now examine its impact on creating harmonious social environments. We transition from focusing solely on individual fulfillment and growth to how *amour de soi* shapes peaceful and cooperative relationships between individuals in their natural state.

The self-regulation of the behavior of an individual among individuals by *amour de soi* in the state of nature stems from the instinctual self-preservation and advancement of one's well-being. The state of nature, envisioned as a realm of resource and spatial abundance, negates competition, allowing individuals to satiate *amour de soi* independently and self-sufficiently without the need to hoard or encroach upon the pursuits of others.

Actions motivated by *amour de soi* in the state of nature are characterized by a natural equilibrium, where each individual's pursuit of self-care occurs without infringing

upon others', not due to moral consideration but as an aspect of the natural state. Rousseau notes, "as the natural needs are everywhere the same, the means of providing for them ought to be equal everywhere," implying a scenario of shared abundance in the act of gathering resources.[93] In the state of nature, resources necessary for survival are plentiful and uniformly distributed, ensuring that individuals can fulfill their needs without the necessity for competition or hoarding. Furthermore, Rousseau states, "our common needs unite us by interest," reinforcing the notion that in the state of nature, uniformity in the availability of essential resources facilitates a congruent coexistence among individuals.[94] The notion of equal means of providing and the unity brought by common needs imply a natural balance between individuals, again negating the need for conflict or hoarding behavior. This aligns with the notion of a peaceful natural state, where individual survival is balanced with the collective needs and well-being of all, thus maintaining equilibrium among individuals.

From Self-Sufficiency to Social Harmony: The Emergent Cooperation in Rousseau's State of Nature

Transitioning from our exploration of *amour de soi* in the state of nature, where individual actions are naturally non-conflictual and self-sufficient, we shift our focus to understand how this very individualism inadvertently fosters a setting that makes cooperation among individuals possible. This shift is crucial in illustrating how *amour de soi*, while primarily focused on individual well-being, unexpectedly leads to cooperative endeavors. These endeavors arise not from conscious moral deliberation but as a natural

[93] Rousseau, *Emile*, 194
[94] Ibid. 221

consequence of the alignment of self-interested pursuits within a milieu characterized by plenty and mutual non-interference.

Rousseau asserts that affectivity, particularly *amour de soi*, "is the sole spring of human actions," which aligns with the notion that in the state of nature, individuals act out of self-interest.[95] Acting from self-interest in such a natural state leads individuals to naturally avoid causing harm to others. *Amour de soi* not only avoids harm but inadvertently and naturally fosters an environment conducive to spontaneous cooperation. Cooperation in the state of nature is not a product of moralistic duty but a natural consequence of individual self-interest aligning with the interests of other individuals. To use Rousseau's example, the collective effort in hunting a deer requires each individual to maintain their role, not out of duty, but because it aligns with their immediate self-interest to do so. If a rabbit happens by, the individual in the state of nature will abandon the herd and satiate their *amour de soi* individually.

Rousseau's observation that individuals are more driven by immediate and perceptible interests ("far from being concerned with a distant future, they did not even give thought to the next day") indicates the incidental nature of cooperation in the state of nature.[96] As pre-reflective, *amour de soi* lacks foresight. This lack of foresight means that cooperative behavior is not based on long-term planning or ethical considerations but on the spontaneous alignment of individual interests.

In the state of nature, the absence of conflict and the emergence of cooperation are not the results of conscious mutual respect or cooperative intentions. Instead, they arise from self-oriented individuals independently pursuing their well-being amidst

[95] Rousseau, *The Second Discourse*, 163
[96] Ibid.

plenty and a self-other relationship characterized by mutual non-interference. This state is not characterized by active social cooperation but by an absence of the need for such interactions, reaffirming the notion that in the state of nature, equilibrium and cooperation are incidental, not deliberate constructs. In the state of nature, then, the expression of *amour de soi* gives rise to a harmonious social existence, as *amour de soi* ensures the self-sufficiency and well-being of each individual, thereby naturally avoiding conflicts and fostering cooperative relationships.

In Rousseau's state of nature, the self-sufficiency attributed to *amour de soi* inadvertently promotes cooperative dynamics among individuals. This cooperation emerges spontaneously, not from moral duty but from the practical alignment of self-interests within an environment of abundance and non-interference. *Amour de soi* directs individuals to engage in mutually beneficial activities without deliberate intention, creating a social harmony that is an incidental, rather than an intentional, aspect of human behavior. The natural state thus fosters an equilibrium where cooperation is an unintended yet positive outcome of individual pursuits of well-being.

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To summarize this Part of the chapter, in Rousseau's thinking, *amour de soi* is central to his view of the human condition and social interaction among individuals in the state of nature, a hypothetical and conditional realm free from social constraints, employed to understand the nature of the human condition. This instinctual care for oneself drives individuals towards self-preservation and well-being in a non-aggressive way, focusing on personal needs and desires, leading to peaceful coexistence. *Amour de soi* also fosters instinctual interactions and contentment, promoting growth in line with

natural inclinations. Rousseau posits that in the state of nature, *amour de soi* naturally leads to harmonious social existence and spontaneous cooperation, not from duty but from individual pursuit of well-being, emphasizing its role in fostering a natural, cooperative human existence free from the complexities of organized social milieus.

Transitioning to Part II, our explication shifts towards the transformation of *amour de soi* into *amour-propre* amidst the complexities of historically determined social constructs. Distinct from *amour de soi*, *amour-propre* emerges as a form of caring for oneself that is historically situated and contingent upon validation from others and social recognition, signifying an intertwining of one's self with others in social constructs. This next Part aims to examine the effects of social phenomena such as education and cultural norms on the nature of the human condition, one's way of being in a society, and interpersonal dynamics. We will investigate both the potentially constructive and potentially destructive ways that *amour propre* can manifest, providing an understanding of the influence of social structures in shaping individual identity and social interactions, transitioning from the solitary theoretical paradigm of *amour de soi* to the socially interwoven realness of *amour-propre*.

Part II. *Amour-propre*

Part II adopts a two-part structure to investigate the complex nature of *amour-propre*. This division allows for an exploration of two critical yet distinct facets of the self-other relationship in actual social contexts: first, the genesis and evolution of *amour-propre* in response to social interactions and validation, and second, its multifaceted impact on personal and social dynamics. By separating these elements, we can investigate

both the origins and consequences of *amour-propre*, providing a thorough understanding of its role in shaping individual and collective identities in Rousseau's thought.

Amour-propre*:*
Validation from Others and the Emergence of Social Being

Amour-propre arises with social situatedness, where a person's perceptions and behaviors, and even the nature of their existence, become informed by that social situatedness, leading them to seek recognition, esteem, and validation from others. In Rousseau's thinking, the transformation from *amour de soi* to *amour-propre* represents a fundamental change in the way actual persons, as opposed to "abstract man" (i.e., the isolated individual), exist. This transition is captured by Rousseau when he discusses the shift from an "absolute" existence to a "relative" existence. When Rousseau states that effective social institutions "denature" an individual by "tak[ing] his absolute existence from him in order to give him a relative one and transport the *I* into the common unity," he is describing a shift in the way one exists in a concrete social milieu.[97]

An absolute existence is a way of being we've seen. It is in the theorization of the state of nature where an individual's ("abstract man") sense of self and purpose is derived independently and naturally, free from influences by others or comparisons with them. In this state, the individual's identity and value are naturally generated and independent, grounded in *amour de soi*. This state of existence is characterized by an unmediated relationship with oneself, where the measure of one's worth and the pursuit of one's interests are not contingent upon others, but rather stem from their natural way of being.

[97] Rousseau, *Emile*, 40, original emphasis

As we saw in the previous chapter, "Everything is good as it leaves the hands of the Author of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man."[98]

Conversely, a relative existence, brought about by *amour-propre*, is one where a person's way of being, along with a newly developed sense of self and worth, becomes dependent on their relationship with, and perception by, others. In this state, a person's existence, identity, self-esteem, and purpose are defined by factors such as social status, recognition, and comparison with others in a historically determined social milieu. When Rousseau says that effective social institutions "transport the *I* into the common unity," he captures this transition, where a person's being is no longer grounded in the individual's natural qualities but is increasingly defined and shaped by their personal place and role within the "common unity" of some actual social context.

The introduction of organized society alters the nature of the self-other relationship drastically. Newly imposed social structures introduce a dimension to personal well-being centered around others' perception and recognition. Here, a person's well-being goes beyond the satisfaction of physical or natural needs, expanding to include the need for social standing and reputation, for example, by a professor's pursuit of recognition in their field beyond monetary compensation, personal satisfaction in their studies, or care for the well-being of others through teaching.

Social influence prompts a transformation of *amour de soi* into *amour-propre*. This change represents a shift from the theoretical, self-referential *amour de soi* of the conditionable individual in the state of nature to a historically situated *amour-propre* of the conditioned person within society. Rousseau captures this transformation by

[98] Ibid. 37

emphasizing the need to "respect your species" by recognizing its composition as "essentially of a collection of peoples."[99] In this transformation, Rousseau is stressing the social aspect of actual human existence, contrasting it with the isolated individualism characteristic of *amour de soi*. He suggests that our essence is bound up with our relations to others in society. When Rousseau says to "respect your species," he is emphasizing the imperative to acknowledge and embrace our interconnectedness – that our identities are, in fact, shaped by and bound to the collective human community. This marks a significant departure from the self-contained independence of the state of nature and implies an evolution towards a selfhood that is defined in relation to others – the foundational concept of *amour-propre*. This recognition of the essentially social element of our being aligns with the transition from the self-focused *amour de soi* to the socially aware *amour-propre*: Rousseau is advocating for an understanding of oneself not just as an isolated individual as in the state of nature, but as a person that is part of a historically determined social milieu.

Rousseau suggests that our understanding of ourselves is incomplete without considering our relationships with others and standing within the broader human community. As we've seen, "The study suitable for man is that of his relations…When he begins to sense his moral being, he ought to study himself in his relations with men."[100] Here, Rousseau indicates that the realization of one's moral self, i.e., the self insofar as one has absorbed the norms of society, is intricately linked to social interactions. The emergence of moral consciousness is a byproduct of recognizing and navigating one's relationships within the social milieu, marking an evolution from the abstract and solitary

[99] Ibid. 226
[100] Ibid. 214

amour de soi to the historically determined and socially intertwined *amour-propre*, the concrete way of being from which the former was abstracted. So, as persons become increasingly integrated into social structures, *amour-propre* arises, causing their sense of self-worth, identity, and existence to align with social norms and values, thereby transforming their way of being from abstract, atomistic, and instinctual to one that is historical, socially intertwined, and reflective.

Shifting from examining how *amour de soi* transforms into *amour-propre* through social development, we turn to investigate the dual nature of *amour-propre* itself. This next section will explore how *amour-propre*, informed by social interaction and the quest for recognition, can lead to varied outcomes. It may foster constructive communal bonds or, conversely, incite destructive sentiments like vanity and jealousy, which erode interpersonal relationships. This exploration is important in understanding the complex dynamics of self-other relationships in Rousseau's thinking, particularly how social contexts and educational influences shape the diverse manifestations and impacts of *amour-propre* on the nature of one's existence, personal identity, and social interactions.

The Dual Faces of Amour-propre*:*
Construction or Destruction

Depending on various factors, including education and social constructs, *amour-propre* can manifest in different ways. Education, the development of capacities that results from nature and our understanding encounters with objects and others, plays a particularly crucial role in shaping the nature and expression of *amour-propre*.

Three sources of education – nature, objects, and others – emerge as pivotal in the transition from *amour de soi* to *amour-propre*. The first of these, education from nature,

is, as Rousseau explains, "The internal development of our faculties and our organs."[101] Education from nature plays a foundational role in preparing one for *amour-propre*. It represents a natural, instinctive progression of an individual, characterized by nature's unstructured spontaneity, distinct from formal and socially influenced modes of learning. This form of education allows for the natural unfolding of an individual's capacities, emphasizing growth rooted in one's natural dispositions. Rousseau notes the importance of natural development: "Everything we do not have at our birth and which we need when we are grown is given us by education."[102] In this respect, education from nature forms the ground of self-awareness, a prerequisite for navigating the complexities of social interactions and the later development of *amour-propre*. As he says, "To live is not to breathe; it is to act; it is to make use of our organs, our senses, our faculties, of all the parts of ourselves which give us the sentiment of our existence."[103] This indicates that mere biological existence is not enough to constitute life. Life, according to Rousseau, is active engagement with the world through our capacities. It is through this active engagement that we gain a sentiment of our existence, or self-awareness. This self-awareness is not just a cognitive awareness of being alive, but a more comprehensive understanding of our capacities, needs, and place in our surroundings. Education from nature is crucial for the development of self-awareness as it allows individuals to actively engage with and adapt to their surroundings, thus learning to understand their own abilities, limitations, and potential, forming the foundation for their sense of self.

An example of this is a learner learning to navigate different terrains while hiking

[101] Ibid. 38
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid. 42

in the woods or navigating their way around a house. This experience is not just about physical movement; it's about the learner actively engaging with their surroundings. They learn to balance, coordinate their movements, and become aware of their physical capabilities and limitations. Active engagement with their surroundings teaches them judgment in choosing safe paths, how to estimate distances, and builds their strength and endurance. This kind of learning, grounded in natural experience and instinctive abilities, is crucial for the development of self-awareness. It's this awareness that forms the foundation for the learner's understanding of themselves and their relationship with the world, an understanding that is essential for navigating social interactions and the development of *amour-propre* later in life.

Rousseau describes education from objects as "what we acquire from our own experience about the objects which affect us."[104] This notion emphasizes learning through interactions with objects, based on affective experiences, bodily understanding, and practical activity, understanding at the most basic level whether objects are beneficial or harmful to our well-being. Such experiential learning is crucial in developing *amour de soi*, as it nurtures practical skills and self-reliance through affectively charged experiences of objects. As *amour de soi* shifts into *amour-propre*, the affective impact of objects continues to be significant, now blended with social perceptions and pre-conceived interpretations. Affective, embodied, purposeful experiences evoke an understanding of objects and also symbolize social values, thereby influencing *amour-propre*'s development.

For instance, a learner learning to cultivate a garden gains not only practical

[104] Ibid. 38

knowledge of plants and nature, but also an understanding of patience, nurturing, and the cyclical nature of life. This relationship with the garden becomes a means of social connection, where the learner can share their knowledge and produce with others, fostering a sense of community and achievement. However, this interaction can also become a source of envy or competition if the learner compares their garden to others'. Thus, objects, in their affective and social dimensions, play a pivotal role in the development of *amour-propre*, affecting the dynamics of social bonds.

The third source, education from others, is most intricately tied to the development of *amour-propre*. Rousseau states that, "The use that we are taught to make of this development [i.e., the education of nature] is the education of men."[105] This source of education encompasses the assimilation of social values, behaviors, and norms, shaping a person's interaction with others. This social learning, extending beyond the mere acquisition of formally acquired knowledge, is crucial for understanding complex relationships between persons and assimilating the written and unwritten rules of a culture. It is through this process that persons forge their moral frameworks and develop their social identities. Education from others is central to the development of *amour-propre* as it influences how persons perceive their worth and success through the lens of social standards and feedback.

An example of learning from others is a child being taught table manners by their parents. This education involves not just the mechanics of using utensils, but also the broader social norms of polite behavior during meals, such as not speaking with a full mouth, waiting for others to start eating, and expressing gratitude for the meal. This type

[105] Ibid.

of learning goes beyond formal knowledge, instilling in the learner an understanding of social etiquette and respect for others, which are key components of their moral development within the community.

The interrelatedness of the three forms of education – from nature, objects, and others – is crucial in shaping the development of an individual into a person, yet achieving harmony among them is difficult. Rousseau points out the challenge in harmonizing these educations, stating, "Each of us is thus formed by three kinds of masters. The disciple in whom their various lessons are at odds with one another is badly raised and will never be in agreement with himself."[106] He further elaborates that achieving the ideal in education, the development of a person who is "in agreement with himself" (i.e., who is authentic), a person whose sources of education are not at odds with one another, is almost a matter of luck, as it is "almost impossible for it to succeed, since the conjunction of the elements necessary to its success is in no one's control."[107] The difficulty arises from the fact that while some aspects of these educations can be controlled, at least to some extent, others, particularly those from nature, are beyond our control. Rousseau emphasizes, then, that the ultimate goal of education should align with nature's intent, yet acknowledges the challenges in orchestrating this harmony, reflecting on the balance between each of the three forms of education that is required in educational processes.

To illustrate an education in which lessons are not at odds with themselves, consider a young musician. Their natural aptitude for rhythm and melody (education from nature) is the foundation. As they practice with their instrument (education from

[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid.

objects), they refine these natural abilities through physical interaction and sensory and affective experience. Finally, their music lessons, feedback from teachers and peers, and understanding of musical traditions (education from others) shape their social and cultural understanding of music. Were any of these elements at odds with the others, their education in music would not be successful.

Education from nature, objects, and others sets the stage for personal development, but it is the unique cultural and social environments that further refine *amour-propre*. Different social values and practices significantly influence persons' self-perception and social status, leading to a variety of manifestations of *amour-propre* that reflect the diversity of human experiences in varied social contexts.

Social upbringing, involving the unique values, practices, and norms of various societies, influences a person's development. Each society imparts a distinct set of cultural practices, values, and expectations to its members from birth. This socialization process shapes the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of persons, including their self-perception and social roles. Consequently, this influences the development of *amour-propre* in the eyes of others and the pursuit of social recognition.

Cultural norms, which differ markedly across societies, are pivotal in shaping a person's perceptions and values, particularly regarding self-worth and social status. Cultures vary in their criteria for what is considered valuable, respectable, or worthy of recognition. These varying standards impact how persons assess their own worth and status in comparison to others. For instance, in a society that prioritizes academic achievement, persons might base their *amour-propre* on educational accomplishments. Conversely, in a culture valuing communal harmony, persons may find worth from their

society in their contributions to community welfare. Or, in a culture that values economic success, a person may find worth by how much money or many material possessions they have procured.

Rousseau observes the folly of a rigid upbringing in a dynamic world: "given the mobility of human things…can one conceive of a method more senseless than raising a child as though he never had to leave his room…"[108] Here, he criticizes the inflexibility of traditional education methods, emphasizing the unpredictability and constant change inherent in human life. Educating a learner in a sheltered, unchanging environment is a mistake, as it does not prepare them for the ever-changing realities of the outside world and the flux inherent to social life. Rousseau advocates for an education that acknowledges and adapts to the dynamic nature of human society and lived experiences. By doing so, he suggests that persons will be better equipped to understand, adapt to, and navigate the complexities and fluctuations of their cultural and social environments, thereby developing a more grounded and realistic sense of self-worth and social standing.

After assessing how education and culture shape a person's expression of *amour-propre*, our focus now shifts to an investigation of the dual nature of *amour-propre* itself. This next stage examines how *amour-propre*, molded by social and educational influences, leads to diverse personal manifestations. We further explore how positive social values can channel *amour-propre* towards fostering communal bonds, while negative influences may skew it towards rivalry and vanity. This investigation is key to understanding the complex ways in which *amour-propre*, a product of both nature and nurture, operates within social frameworks.

[108] Ibid. 42

In a society where constructive values and mutual respect prevail, the nature of *amour-propre* is influenced constructively. The character of a society, particularly its prevailing values and its norms of interpersonal relationships, significantly impacts the form and expression of *amour-propre*. The social context in which persons operate provides the framework within which *amour-propre* develops and is manifested. A society's values and norms, especially those pertaining to interpersonal interactions, inform how persons perceive themselves and how they seek recognition and esteem from others. As Rousseau articulates, "This *amour-propre* in itself or relative to us is good and useful…It becomes good or bad only by the application made of it and the relations given to it."[109] These social characteristics can either nurture a constructive and healthy form of *amour-propre* or lead to more detrimental and destructive expressions.

In societies where constructive values and mutual respect are prevalent, *amour-propre* is channeled towards fostering communal well-being and collaborative behaviors. Persons, in such contexts, are inclined to seek recognition in ways that benefit both themselves and the larger community. This perspective is anchored in Rousseau's assertion that *amour-propre* is "naturally neutral" and its moral character is determined by its application and the nature of its relationships.[110] Thus, when situated in an environment that values cooperation and communal welfare, *amour-propre* motivates actions that contribute to the collective good of the community.

We pause our discussion of *amour-propre*'s capacity for fostering both harmony and discord to address a puzzling claim Rousseau makes (without explaining what he

[109] Ibid. 92
[110] Ibid.

means) in this context that *amour-propre* "is reason."[111] This statement introduces a paradox, inviting us to explore how *amour-propre,* which inherently involves comparing ourselves to others, can be both a product of comparative reason and identical to comparative reason.

To unpack this, we can begin by looking towards Rousseau's distinction between "*sensual* or *childish* reason" and "*intellectual* or *human* reason."[112] The former is the preliminary stage of experiential understanding discussed in the previous chapter, directly tied to sensory experience. Sensory experience, as we saw, involves the affective, direct, and rudimentary understanding of experienced objects through our active and bodily encounters with those objects. For Rousseau, sensations are direct, unmediated, pre-reflectively understood experiences we have of objects in the world. When such sensations are combined, they are our "simple ideas." As Rousseau says,

> *Simple ideas are only compared sensations. There are judgments in simple sensations as well as in the complex sensations which I call simple ideas. In sensation, judgment is purely passive. It affirms that one feels what one feels. In perception or idea, judgment is active. It brings together, compares, and determines relations which the senses do not determine. This is the entire difference, but it is great. Nature never deceives us. It is always we who deceive ourselves.*[113]

We recall that "truth is in things and not the mind which judges them."[114]

Intellectual or human reason signifies a more advanced cognitive stage relative to sensual or childish reason. It arises from the ability to form complex judgments by comparing simple ideas: "It is the art of comparing them among themselves that is called human reason…what I call *intellectual* or *human* reason consists in forming complex

[111] Ibid.
[112] Ibid. 158. original emphasis
[113] Ibid. 203
[114] Ibid. 272

ideas by the conjunction of several simple ideas."[115] This level of reason engages in comparative analysis, moving beyond direct sensation to assess and evaluate relationships between simple ideas.

Rousseau further elaborates on the act of judgment, pivotal to understanding human reason, by highlighting its active nature:

> *To see two objects at once is not to see their relations or to judge their differences. To perceive several objects as separate from one another is not to number them. I can at the same instant have the idea of a large stick and of a small stick without comparing them and without judging that one is smaller than the other…These comparative ideas, larger and smaller, just like the numerical ideas of one, two, etc., certainly do not belong to the sensations, although my mind produces them only on the occasion of my sensations.*[116]

This passage emphasizes intellectual judgment as an active process that goes beyond sensory perception. It involves the mind's engagement in constructing meanings and relationships beyond what is immediately sensed. The comparison between and combination of simple ideas, the cornerstone of "intellectual reason," thus requires an active, discerning effort (which is subject to error) that is distinct from sensations, which are never deceptive in themselves.

We can try to make sense of his claim that *amour-propre* "is reason" by considering that the nexus of social life is where Rousseau locates the evolution of reason. As individuals live in close quarters, they unavoidably observe and evaluate one another, leading to the honing of judgment: "Permanent proximity cannot fail in the end to give rise to some bond [in which those who are bonded] grow accustomed to attend to different objects and to make comparisons."[117] In this web of social bonds, *amour-propre*

[115] Ibid. 157-158. original emphasis
[116] Ibid. 271
[117] Rousseau, *The Second Discourse*, 165

thrives on the comparisons drawn between persons. However, rather than merely reflecting a sense of self that is grounded in the comparison of oneself with others, these comparisons are the building blocks of our rational faculties. The social sphere becomes the milieu in which our reason is both expressed and shaped – *amour-propre* is not just an outcome of our ability to reason but is instrumental in developing it.

In this light, Rousseau's statement that *amour-propre* "is reason" can be seen as encapsulating the notion that *amour-propre* is the lived expression of our rational capacity within the social world. It's the act of comparing ourselves to others that not only utilizes our reason but also hones it. Thus, *amour-propre* is both a demonstration of reason in practice and a means by which reason itself is developed and sharpened. This dual nature of *amour-propre* – both stemming from and contributing to our capacity for reason – dissolves the paradox. It is through *amour-propre* that the individual's intellectual capabilities, the acumen to discern, evaluate, and relate, are realized and continually refined within the social milieu.

Through examining the progression from sensual to intellectual reason, we see how the paradox of *amour-propre* as both dependent on and equivalent to reason is resolved. *Amour-propre* entails the application of "intellectual reason" for self-comparison within a social milieu, yet it is also through these very acts of comparison that our faculty of reason, particularly its intellectual form, is honed and refined. In essence, *amour-propre* and reason are intertwined in a dynamic relationship, with *amour-propre* acting as both a manifestation and a facilitator of our evolved capacity to reason.

Now, to return to our discussion of the dual nature of *amour-propre* in shaping the quality of social milieus (i.e., whether they are constructive or destructive), we note

that *amour-propre,* as essentially comparative, is particularly susceptible to the incorporation of values that prioritize superficial achievements or emphasize the importance of being superior to others. The term 'superficial' here is used to denote achievements or attributes that are extrinsic and not necessarily reflective of one's intrinsic qualities or moral character. These markers are considered superficial because they represent social constructs that may be arbitrary and transient, often bearing no direct relation to a person's true nature or virtues[118], but instead reflecting the prevailing mores of the community of which that person is a part. In societies where status, material wealth, or physical appearance are highly valued, persons may develop a form of *amour-propre* that is contingent on these superficial markers. These markers are superficial because they are often disconnected from the natural qualities or virtues of the person, reflecting instead the values of the community of which that person is a part. This dependence on extrinsic validation can distort self-perception and lead to an unhealthy, destructive expression of *amour-propre*. Rousseau describes the genesis of such traits:

> *…as soon as [children] can consider the people who surround them as instruments…they become difficult, tyrannical, imperious, wicked, unmanageable…for it does not require long experience to sense how pleasant it is to act with the hands of others and to need only to stir one's tongue to make the universe move.*[119]

Here, Rousseau discusses the destructive transformation in behavior that occurs when children (or, we might add, anyone else) learn to view others as mere means to achieve their own ends. This reflects the broader idea that *amour-propre* is influenced by social values. When a society values superficial achievements, persons, like the children

[118] In the following chapter, we explain the way in which Rousseau takes 'virtue' to be a manifestation of the original dispositions of *amour de soi* and natural compassion.
[119] Rousseau, *Emile*, 67-68

Rousseau describes, may learn to manipulate and use others to attain these coveted statuses. This manipulation becomes a source of apparent pleasure and dominative power, reinforcing the notion that, in this context, self-worth and esteem are gained through validation from others and control over them. We note that, for Rousseau, the apparent freedom associated with dominating others is in fact a trap, and that the dominator is no less a slave than the dominated, given that the dominator's actions must always be determined and guided by the opinions of others in order to maintain their domination. As he says, "There are some who may believe themselves masters of others, and are no less enslaved than they."[120]

In examining the, so to speak, darker aspects of *amour-propre* as influenced by social values, Rousseau describes how comparison can evolve into, for example, sentiments of vanity and envy, which are detrimental traits fostered by an unhealthy reliance on extrinsic validation. Vanity manifests when individuals, propelled by a distorted *amour-propre*, become overly preoccupied with their physical appearance or accomplishments (real or merely perceived), craving adulation for attributes that are often superficial. Envy arises as individuals engage in unfavorable comparisons with others whom they understand as superior, leading to feelings of inadequacy and resentment. A comparative assessment of oneself in relation to others typically leads to the conclusion that one is either better than or worse than the other to whom they are comparing themselves, and both assessments give rise to resentment. Rousseau elucidates this phenomenon by stating, "what makes him [i.e., the person] essentially wicked is to have

[120] Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. 1994. *The Social Contract*. Translated by Christopher Betts. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 45

many needs and to depend very much on opinion."[121] This emphasizes the discontent of a destructive *amour-propre* that thrives on competitive comparison; unlike *amour de soi*, which is self-sufficient and satisfied with fulfilling basic needs, *amour-propre* is insatiable, constantly seeking validation through comparison with others. As Rousseau says, "…*amour-propre*, which makes comparisons, is never content and never could be, because this sentiment, preferring ourselves to others, also demands others to prefer us to themselves, which is impossible."[122]

For example, consider a corporate professional who, driven by a destructive manifestation of *amour-propre*, becomes excessively focused on outshining colleagues. This person's vanity is evident in their relentless pursuit of recognition and accolades, often prioritizing these superficial achievements over genuine skill or virtuous conduct. Simultaneously, they experience envy when peers receive promotions or praise, perceiving these events as personal affronts rather than as independent accomplishments. In both cases, the possibility for constructive, collaborative endeavors is stifled and destructive endeavors that erode relationships are prioritized. This scenario illustrates Rousseau's argument: the person's incessant need for extrinsic validation typically fuels not only a cycle of discontent but also a social milieu where worth is perpetually measured and judged in relation to others.[123] This dynamic is the crux of moral

[121] Rousseau, *Emile*, 214
[122] Ibid. 213-214
[123] It is important to stress that even in a society where values are not superficial but are instead centered on inherent virtues and moral worth, the dynamic of *amour-propre* still leads to discontent. This is because the comparative nature of *amour-propre* means that it is always looking beyond itself for affirmation. In any society, the need to be esteemed by others is a never-ending pursuit, as the satisfaction of one comparison always leads to the need for another, perpetuating a cycle of insatiability. Rousseau's critical view of *amour-propre* thus underscores an important psychological insight: authentic contentment cannot be found in the relentless quest for external validation, no matter the social context.

degradation in civil society, where the relentless pursuit of opinion-based validation supersedes the innate contentment found in *amour de soi*.

Rousseau's critique of *amour-propre,* particularly when it morphs into a quest for superiority and domination, sheds light on the potentially pernicious expression of this sentiment and its impact on both individual and social levels. He observes that this manifestation of *amour-propre* frequently leads to a destructive form of competition, where achieving personal success becomes inextricably linked to the detriment of others. In his thinking regarding educational practices in this context, Rousseau remarks, "It is quite strange that…no instrument for guiding [learners] has been imagined other than emulation, jealousy, envy, vanity, avidity…With each lesson…a vice is planted in the depth of their hearts."[124] This statement points to a concern about the ways in which competitive values are ingrained in persons, fostering not just a desire to excel, but to do so by eclipsing others. Such a framework of education leads to the cultivation of vices rather than virtues, with each competitive achievement sowing seeds of emulation, jealousy, envy, and vanity.

Rousseau's critique extends beyond the person, highlighting the broader social ramifications of fostering such competitive instincts. The destructive competition he describes is characterized by a zero-sum mentality, where one's gain is perceived as another's loss. This mindset, permeating social interactions, not only damages personal relationships but also undermines communal cohesion, creating a milieu where collective well-being is sacrificed for personal accolades. Rousseau's perspective thus emphasizes a critical concern: the need for an educational and social shift away from values that

[124] Ibid. 91-92

promote destructive competition and towards those that foster constructive cooperation, mutual respect, and a sense of shared success.

Rousseau's observations emphasize the importance of fostering a constructive form of *amour-propre*, free from destructive comparisons and competition: "Let there never be any comparisons with other [learners], no rivals, no competitors…I prefer a hundred times over that [Emile] not learn what he would only learn out of jealousy or vanity."[125] Here, Rousseau is advocating for an educational approach that avoids fostering jealousy and vanity in learners through pernicious competition and comparison with others. He suggests that learning driven by such destructive behaviors is damaging to the character of the learner and he emphasizes the importance of developing an *amour-propre* that is not contingent on being better or worse than others. Rousseau's perspective here aligns with his broader thinking that education should cultivate natural goodness and self-motivation rather than external validation or the pursuit of superiority. This approach emphasizes the nurturing of natural instincts and inclinations, education from nature, independent of extrinsic validation and social comparison, advocating for an upbringing that steers clear of instilling destructive passions in learners.

The question then arises whether the cultivation of such an *amour-propre* is feasible in the absence of a cooperative, constructive society. Rousseau would likely claim that while the social context is influential, it is not wholly determinative. The core of his educational philosophy hinges on the learner's capacity for self-improvement and intrinsic development, suggesting that with the right guidance and support, even amidst a less than ideal society, educators can still nurture a form of *amour-propre* that does not

[125] Ibid. 184

rely on unhealthy comparison or competition. This helps explain why Rousseau posits that the educator ought to minimize the learner's contact with more destructive forms of social milieus. It is through conscious effort to value and reinforce a self-worth that is grounded in one's original dispositions (i.e., *amour de soi* and, as we will see momentarily, natural compassion) that one can combat the otherwise pervasive pressures of society. Thus, while a supportive social framework can facilitate this process, it is not an absolute prerequisite for the development of a healthy *amour-propre* that is free from the need to outdo others.

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To sum up this Part of the chapter, the distinction between *amour de soi* and *amour-propre* is crucial in understanding the evolution of the self-other relationship within society. *Amour de soi* exists independently of social influences, focusing on personal well-being and survival. In contrast, *amour-propre* emerges with social development, shifting the human condition from an abstract, atomistic, and authentic existence to an inauthentic one, i.e., one intertwined with actual social interactions and the quest for validation from others. This inauthentic form of existence is so because it is not adequately grounded entirely in the learner's original dispositions, which implies that, since our actually lived experience takes place through *amour-propre,* our everyday way of being is inauthentic. This transition from an "absolute existence," where an individual's way of being, identity, and value are self-contained and self-referential, to a "relative" one reliant on social standing and recognition, marks a fundamental change in the nature of one's existence. *Amour-propre* reflects a reality where self-worth is, in all cases, shaped continually by social comparisons and judgments, leading to behaviors that

may or may not prioritize personal status at the expense of communal harmony. This shift underscores a key conflict in Rousseau's thinking between natural self-sufficiency and the complexities of social dependence, arising from how social structures inform human behavior and relationships. For Rousseau, while natural self-sufficiency is intrinsically peaceful and stable, a cooperative society that supports others can elevate the person's natural goodness to a form of collective well-being, thus enriching human experience, despite its inherent inauthenticity. However, this hinges on the society's ability to foster the right values that align with our natural dispositions, rather than distorting them.

We now transition to Part III, focusing on the affect of natural compassion. This shift moves us from the social and often competitive nature of *amour-propre*, a form of self-esteem deeply entangled with social recognition and validation, to the natural human tendency towards an instinctual form of compassion. In this next Part, we will explore how Rousseau conceptualizes natural compassion as an instinctive, pre-reflective affect that fosters understanding and resonation with the experiences of others.

Part III. Natural Compassion

In Part III of this chapter, we investigate Rousseau's concept of natural compassion. We explore its intrinsic nature, its manifestation in social contexts through Rousseau's three maxims of compassion, and the related concepts of identification and transportation. This Part aims to illustrate how natural compassion forms a fundamental aspect of human connection, transcending individualism and fostering a shared human experience.

The Nature of Natural Compassion

Rousseau's concept of natural compassion is an important theme in his investigation into the human condition, particularly in how he understands the natural tendencies of individuals towards compassion and understanding towards others. Natural compassion is not a moral inclination but an instinctive form of empathy for others in distress that arises independently of social influence or reflection.

In Rousseau's thinking, the concept of natural compassion (like that of *amour de soi*) is abstracted from the historically situated manifestations of *amour-propre*, existing in its pure expression as a phenomenon in the state of nature. This theorization process is integral to Rousseau's depiction of natural human attributes that are unencumbered by social conditioning. Natural compassion, alongside *amour de soi*, represents Rousseau's conceptualization of fundamental human tendencies. These tendencies are only hypothesized for the purpose of informing human existence in general and only find pure expression in an imagined state devoid of social constructs. As we will see in detail below (Part IV), Rousseau postulates these natural tendencies to emphasize the divergence between natural human propensities and their practical expression in the realm of *amour-propre*. The hypothesis of natural compassion in the state of nature serves as a critical tool for understanding the basis of human compassion and interconnectedness, apart from the complexities and distortions introduced by historically situated social dynamics.

Rousseau describes natural compassion as a force that is "the pure movement of nature prior to all reflection" emphasizing its instinctual and unmediated character.[126]

[126] Rousseau, *The Second Discourse*, 152

Additionally, when Rousseau says in the same passage "such is the force of natural [compassion], which the most depraved morals still have difficulty destroying," he indicates that natural compassion is an essential part of the human condition, not easily eradicated by social corruption or moral degradation.[127] This suggests that compassion is a human instinct, one that exists as a natural aspect of our being and is not a product of reflective thought or moral reasoning. It occurs spontaneously, as a direct and immediate response to the suffering of others and is resilient against social influences that might corrupt or diminish it.

Rousseau connects this instinctive compassion to the shared vulnerabilities of human existence. He states, "It is man's weakness which makes him sociable; it is our common miseries which turn our hearts to humanity; we would owe humanity nothing if we were not men."[128] Our weaknesses and the universal experience of suffering are what drive our natural inclination towards compassion. The shared experience of vulnerability, pain, and sorrow is a unifying human trait that fosters instinctual compassion and understanding among individuals. This shared human condition turns our hearts towards humanity and cultivates a sense of compassion that is natural and universal (or, as we will see, at least nearly universal).

In another observation, Rousseau reflects on the essential qualities of human life, noting, "Men are not naturally kings, or lords, or courtiers, or rich men. All are born naked and poor; all are subject to the miseries of life, to sorrows, ills, needs, and pains of every kind. Finally, all are condemned to death."[129] Here, Rousseau is emphasizing the

[127] Ibid.
[128] Rousseau, *Emile*, 221
[129] Ibid. 222

fundamental equality of all humans at birth, through life, and in their ultimate fate. He points out that social roles and wealth are not natural, but constructed aspects of human life. This perspective aligns with his broader stance that emphasizes a natural equality in suffering and in death. By highlighting the shared experiences of sorrow, need, and mortality, Rousseau emphasizes a common condition that persists even after the introduction of artificial social distinctions. This commonality, Rousseau suggests, characterizes humanity and is inextricably linked to our instinct for compassion. This commonality is an appeal to recognize the shared vulnerabilities and destinies of all people, which fosters a sense of compassion that Rousseau views as essential to our humanity.

Rousseau conceives the soul as the seat of human instincts and affects, fundamentally characterized by the instinct for self-care and a natural compassion towards others. He articulates,

> *Hence disregarding all the scientific books that only teach us to see men as they have made themselves, and meditating on the first and simplest operations of the human Soul, I believe I perceive in it two principles prior to reason, of which one interests us intensely in our well-being and our self-preservation, and the other inspires in us a natural repugnance to seeing any sentient Being, and especially any being like ourselves, perish or suffer.*[130]

In this passage, Rousseau distinguishes two instinctual or natural affects: the instinct for self-care (*amour de soi*) and an instinctual aversion to the suffering of others (natural compassion). The latter involves an instinctual revulsion in witnessing the suffering of sentient beings, especially those akin to ourselves. This instinctual repugnance is not a product of reflective thought or social learning but a natural aspect of the human

[130] Rousseau, *The Second Discourse*, 127

condition. Natural compassion causes us, instinctively, to have compassion for others and to aim to alleviate their suffering, and this affect is as deeply embedded in our nature as our instinct to survive. This instinct is evident, for instance, when we unthinkingly reach out to catch someone who is about to fall, a spontaneous act of natural compassion to prevent their injury.

Natural Compassion in a Social Context

To investigate deeper Rousseau's conception of natural compassion, now as it occurs within a social context informed by *amour-propre*, let us turn to his three maxims of compassion. The first is, "It is not in the human heart to put ourselves in the place of people who are happier than we, but only in that of those who are more pitiable [i.e., compassion-evoking]."[131] This assertion opens up an investigation of compassion and its triggers in human social experience. Rousseau posits that when it comes to the wealthy or noble, our attachment is not a simple act of placing ourselves in their position of prosperity. Instead, he argues, our compassion typically arises from their misfortunes. This perspective challenges a superficial understanding of compassion, suggesting that natural compassion is not about envying or desiring the happiness of others but about a connection with their sufferings. Rousseau implies that even in situations where one might appear to admire or aspire to the prosperous conditions of others, the human heart, at a deeper level, may feel compassion rather than envy. For example, Rousseau suggests that when someone looks enviously at another's wealth, they might, at a deeper level,

[131] Rousseau, *Emile*, 223

actually feel empathy for the burdens and moral compromises that often accompany such wealth.

Furthermore, Rousseau also touches upon the notion of relatability and attainability in the context of compassion. He notes that the happiness of certain ways of being, such as the rustic and pastoral life, touches us because we do not see it tainted by envy. The reason for this is our perception that such a life is attainable if desired – it is a "resource for a rainy day."[132] This sense of potential attainability makes the happiness of others in such conditions appealing and non-threatening. This aspect of Rousseau's thought reveals an important dimension of natural compassion: we are more inclined to empathize with others in situations that we perceive as relatable or attainable, where there is no barrier of envy or resentment. In Rousseau's words, "It is a resource for a rainy day which causes only agreeable ideas, since in order to be able to make use of it, it suffices to want to do so."[133] This contemplation of a simple, contented life as within reach helps to kindle a genuine interest and pleasure in the happiness of others, free from the insidious influence of envy.

However, Rousseau proposes that when guiding learners in their education about humanity, emphasis should be placed on the repellent aspects of seemingly attractive situations instead of their appeal. This approach, he suggests, is critical because "one must make [the learner] fear it. Then, by an evident inference, he ought to cut out his own road to happiness, following in no one else's tracks."[134] Encouraging learners to create their own paths to contentment, rather than being swayed by the apparent successes of

[132] Ibid.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Ibid.

others, is integral to fostering a compassionate and individualistic approach to life. This approach to fostering compassion underscores the importance of understanding and relating to the hardships and vulnerabilities of others, rather than coveting their success. It suggests that natural compassion is established via recognizing shared human frailties and miseries rather than via aspiring to shared joys or successes.

Turning to Rousseau's second maxim of natural compassion, he states, "One pities [i.e., has compassion for] in others only those ills from which one does not feel oneself exempt."[135] This maxim invites us to investigate deeper into the dynamics of compassion and human connection. It touches particularly on the perception of shared vulnerability and the recognition of common frailty. Rousseau begins his explication of this maxim with a quote from Virgil's *The Aeneid*: *Non ignora mali, miseris succurrere disco*, which can be translated as 'Not myself being unacquainted with difficulty, I learn to succor the distressed.' This captures the essence of the second maxim: natural compassion is rooted in a pre-reflective understanding and recognition of suffering. It's a pre-reflective acknowledgment of one's own susceptibility to misfortune that deepens one's capacity for compassion towards others. Rousseau elaborates this idea by reflecting on the lack of compassion often observed in those who perceive themselves as immune to certain misfortunes. He asks, "Why are kings without [compassion] for their subjects?" and answers that it is because they do not envisage themselves as ever being mere persons.[136] Similarly, he questions the indifference of the rich towards the poor and the contempt of nobility for commoners, attributing these attitudes to their lack of fear or expectation of ever finding themselves in such lower statuses. Rousseau suggests that

[135] Ibid. 224
[136] Ibid.

compassion is diminished when persons consider themselves above or exempt from the sufferings of others. In contrast, he observes that Turks are generally more humane and hospitable than their European counterparts because of their recognition of the precariousness and uncertainty of fortune. In a social milieu in which status and wealth are unstable, persons more readily have compassion with those in distress, recognizing that their own fortunes could change rapidly. This understanding of shared vulnerability fosters a deeper sense of compassion. Rousseau advises against educating learners to view the sufferings of the less fortunate from a position of detachment or superiority. He does not want to teach them to pity others. Instead, he suggests instilling the recognition that misfortune can befall anyone, regardless of birth, health, or wealth. By presenting examples of those who have fallen from higher statuses to positions of suffering, Rousseau emphasizes the unpredictability of life and the universal susceptibility to misfortune. This approach aims to develop a sense of compassion grounded in the recognition of shared human frailty.

Furthermore, Rousseau insists on the importance of not just telling but showing the realities of human suffering to foster compassion. For Rousseau, imagination is a faculty that enables individuals to conceive of possibilities beyond their immediate sensory experiences, thereby allowing them to reflect on past experiences, envision future scenarios, and create constructs that transcend their current understanding of reality. When it comes to teaching, Rousseau advocates for unsettling and frightening the imagination through the perils that surround every person, thereby developing a deeper understanding and feeling for human calamities. This method is intended to cultivate a sense of compassion and humanity, even at the cost of inducing timidity or fear.

Rousseau's third maxim of compassion is, "The [compassion] one has for another's misfortune is measured not by the quantity of that misfortune but by the sentiment which one attributes to those who suffer it."[137] This maxim suggests that our compassionate responses are shaped more significantly by our understanding and interpretation of the sufferer's affective experience than by the actual severity of their situation. Our understanding of another's suffering is heavily influenced by the interplay of memory and imagination. While the physical sensation of suffering may seem limited to the observer, it is the continuity of this suffering, as maintained by the observer's memory, and its extension into the future, as imagined by the observer, that heightens the sense of compassion. This highlights that compassion extends beyond immediate pain to encompass anticipated future suffering and remembered past pains, thus deepening compassionate responses to the plight of others.

In the context of society, moreover, we can address how social biases and positions influence our capacity for compassion. For instance, Rousseau observes that the rich may feel less compassion towards the poor, assuming they are less capable of feeling the depth of their suffering. This assumption, rooted in social status and prejudice, diminishes their compassionate response as they perceive the suffering of the poor as less significant or acute. Rousseau suggests that such misperceptions, influenced by social hierarchies, significantly distort the nature and depth of compassionate engagement. Furthermore, Rousseau critiques the idea that happiness and misery are uniformly distributed across social classes. He challenges the notion that changing one's social station would not alleviate suffering, particularly emphasizing the difference in the nature

[137] Ibid. 225

of suffering experienced by the rich and the poor. He argues that while the miseries of the rich are often self-inflicted and a result of the misuse of their position, the sufferings of the poor are largely imposed by circumstances beyond their control. This distinction is important in understanding the nature of compassion, as it recognizes that understanding another's suffering must take into account the context and cause of their distress.

Transportation and Identification in Natural Compassion

To further understand the nature of compassion, it is important to examine Rousseau's thoughts about the concepts of transportation and identification. These concepts indicate a transformative process. The transports of natural compassion take one beyond conventional empathy, moving before cognitive understanding to a pre-reflective affective immersion in another's experience.

Rousseau's emphasis on the shared experience of pain as a fundamental aspect of human connection is critical to the concepts of transportation and identification. He suggests that compassion is more deeply aroused by our shared suffering than by shared joys. This idea is encapsulated in his statement, "we are attached to our fellows less by the sentiment of their pleasures than by the sentiment of their pains…"[138] This emphasizes how transportation in compassion involves not just understanding another's pain but feeling a connection to it, leading to a shared affective state that goes beyond the individual experience of the observer.

Moreover, Rousseau discusses the transformative role of social institutions in shaping personal identity and compassion. As we've seen, he argues that effective social

[138] Ibid. 221

institutions reshape personal identities, making each person feel and be part of a collective whole rather than an isolated individual. Rousseau articulates this as a process of, as he puts it, 'denaturing' the individual, where individual identity is subsumed into a collective identity, which may enhance compassion and unity, but more often results in discord and alienation. We return to a passage quoted above, "Good social institutions are those that best know how to denature man, to take his absolute existence from him in order to give him a relative one and transport the *I* into the common unity." This process of transportation involves a reorientation from abstract self-centeredness to an actual, lived, and communal way of being, which is pivotal in fostering a deeper, more authentic compassion.

To further understand the notion of transportation, generally, in Rousseau's thinking, we can turn to the way in which Rousseau critiques the common tendency to evade reality by fixating on unattainable futures, a practice he sees as a diversion from the formation of constructive social connections. He considers this residence in imagined futures as not only futile but also detrimental to experiencing the present moment, which is essential for authentic affective experiences such as natural compassion. Rousseau articulates this concern by cautioning, "I hear from afar the clamors of that false wisdom which incessantly projects us outside of ourselves…by dint of transporting us where we are not, transports us where we shall never be."[139] Here, Rousseau describes how people are often lured by a deceptive form of wisdom, one that encourages them to constantly place themselves in imagined future scenarios or different situations, thereby transporting themselves away from the actuality of their current situation. This constant

[139] Ibid. 79

transportation, he argues, ultimately leads persons to a state of perpetual absence from their own lives, as they are always focusing on where they are not, rather than where they actually are. As a result, they end up in a state where they are neither fully present in their current situation nor able to reach these imagined future states or scenarios. Rousseau contrasts this problematic manifestation of transportation with the empowering experience of natural compassion, which requires being fully present and affectively connected with another person in the moment of their distress through a transport into their immediate experience.

A further example illustrating the concept of transportation in general can enhance understanding how it works in natural compassion. We choose the transports of love as an example, since, as he says,

> *One wants to obtain the preference that one grants. Love must be reciprocal. To be loved, one has to make oneself lovable. To be preferred, one has to make oneself more lovable than another, more lovable than every other, at least in the eyes of the beloved object. This is* ***the source of the first glances at one's fellows****; this is* ***the source of the first comparisons with them****…*[140]

Rousseau describes love as a power that transports individuals beyond their inherent self-centered tendencies. He acknowledges that love can incite irrational behavior, such as making impulsive decisions or disregarding practical concerns, and can even foster destructive traits like possessiveness or jealousy. However, he asserts that the authentic experience of love necessitates the existence of estimable qualities such as empathy, altruism, the capacity for deep emotional understanding, selflessness, and a willingness to grow and adapt for the betterment of the relationship. These venerable attributes are essential because they enable persons to transport beyond themselves to appreciate and

[140] Ibid. 214. my emphasis

engage the object of their love, going beyond mere infatuation or self-serving desire. Without these qualities, what one experiences may resemble love in its intensity, but lack the depth and transportive potential of true love, failing to extend the person beyond a focus on self. In this context, Rousseau views love as a kind of transportation, a self-movement outside of oneself that transcends individual self-interest. He elucidates this idea by stating,

> *True love, whatever is said of it, will always be honored by men; for although its transports lead us astray, although it does not exclude odious qualities from the heart that feels it – and even produces them – it nevertheless always presupposes estimable qualities without which one would not be in a condition to feel it.*[141]

In this observation, Rousseau acknowledges the dual nature of love: it is a transportive sentiment that, while potentially leading to misguided actions and igniting less desirable traits, requires estimable qualities such as those listed above.

Rousseau delineates the transcendence of individualistic preoccupations that characterizes authentic natural compassion. He claims that natural compassion necessitates an affective movement that extends beyond the narrow confines of the individual and its subjective experiences. This notion is succinctly encapsulated in his rhetorical question: "how do we let ourselves be moved by [compassion] if not by transporting ourselves outside of ourselves"?[142] Here, Rousseau emphasizes that compassion is contingent upon a transport into the others' experiences; it is a significant divergence from the self-serving outlook that often permeates interactions between persons in actual, lived social conditions. This process requires the cultivation of specific attributes such as self-awareness, an embrace of humility, readiness to engage with

[141] Ibid.
[142] Ibid. 223

vulnerability, and the capacity to accord equal importance to the experiences of others as to one's own. Rousseau's thinking suggests that this shift is not merely a superficial, conscious recognition of others' affective states, but rather a deep, immersive identification with their experiential situatedness that engenders a compassionate connection that goes beyond simple acknowledgment and extends into shared human experience.

The concept of identification, closely linked with transportation, within natural compassion represents a connection that goes beyond the bounds of typical empathy. Unlike conventional empathy, which is 'conventional' insofar as a distinction is constantly maintained between the observer and the sufferer that preserves the individuality of the observer, identification in natural compassion signals a deeper, instinctive union. This process involves an involuntary merging of experiences and way of being, where the observer's state becomes so closely aligned with that of the sufferer that they share the same affective experience. Still, even within this profound identification, a vestige of distinction remains, as the observer's initial awareness of their separateness from the sufferer is what allows for the compassion to arise. It is a paradox where the observer, while momentarily losing themselves in the plight of the sufferer, taking on the being of the other for a time, is still fundamentally distinct. For Rousseau, our compassion moves us profoundly, yet does not wholly consume our individuality. Such compassionate union signifies not just a redirection of focus but an experiential and existential alignment with the sufferer's state, an identification, effectively blurring the lines between self and other.

Let us return to a previous passage from above, now extended a bit:

> *…how do we let ourselves be moved by [compassion] if not by transporting ourselves outside of ourselves and identifying with the suffering [person], by leaving, as it were, our own being to take on [their] being? We suffer only so much as we judge that [they] suffer. It is not in ourselves, it is in [them] that we suffer.*[143]

Rousseau here accentuates the transformative essence of natural compassion. Natural compassion necessitates a shift that is transcendent in nature – moving beyond the confines of one's individual experience and merging with that of the suffering individual. This process of identification goes beyond conventional empathy; that is, it is not merely understanding or sharing in another's pain from a distance. Instead, it involves a pre-reflective taking on of the sufferer's affective state, to such an extent that the observer's being is inseparable from the sufferer's. The observer experiences the sufferer's pain as their own, undermining a strict distinction between self and other. In this way, the observer's suffering is not merely a reflection of their own capacity for empathy, but rather one with the understood suffering of the other. Rousseau's thinking thus reveals the depth of natural compassion: compassionate experience is not simply a cognitive or emotional response, but a complete, though temporary, experiential identification with another.

The existence of consistent natural compassionate responses across diverse human contexts indicates that natural compassion is an inherent human trait. Regardless of cultural or social differences, there is a common thread of natural compassionate response to others' suffering. This repeated manifestation of natural compassion in human settings, even (and especially) those with minimal influence from extrinsic social norms or values of whatever sort, points to its universality and suggests that it is not

[143] Ibid.

merely a social construct. The fact that naturally compassionate responses are observed (nearly) universally, including in cultures and societies less shaped by the imposition of the norms or values of others, indicates that natural compassion arises from something more fundamental to the human condition than social influence.

We say 'nearly', since Rousseau indicates that natural compassion, despite being instinctual and natural, is not quite universal: "however numerous the wicked are on the earth, there are few of these cadaverous souls who have become insensitive, except where their own interest is at stake, to everything which is just and good."[144] Here, Rousseau acknowledges that, while most individuals naturally possess the capacity for natural compassion, exceptions exist. These wicked exhibit affective insensitivity. He notes that even among these "cadaverous souls," insensitivity is often limited to situations where their self-interest is involved, implying that self-interest can stifle natural compassionate instincts. In any case, for Rousseau, natural compassion is an instinctual aspect of human existence, not the result of cultural or social conditioning. The observation of the expression of natural compassion in a wide array of human settings, particularly where social influences are minimal, reinforces the notion that it is an instinctual trait ingrained in the human condition.

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In Rousseau's thinking, the natural human tendencies towards self-care and natural compassion are pivotal to understanding the self-other relationship. Rousseau posits that alongside the instinct for self-care, there exists a parallel inclination towards natural compassion which manifests as an instinctive empathy for others in distress. This

[144] Ibid. 287

form of compassion, natural and unmediated, thereby arises independently of social influence, underscoring the fundamental aspect of human connection where shared vulnerabilities and suffering form the basis of the self-other relationship. The concepts of transportation and identification in the context of natural compassion are crucial. Transportation is a transformative process beyond cognitive understanding to a deep affective immersion in others' experiences leading to a shift from atomistic self-interest to social being. Identification involves a profound, instinctive union with the sufferer, merging the observer's experience with that of the sufferer and blurring the lines between self and other. This interplay is further elucidated through Rousseau's three maxims of compassion, which highlight the human tendency to be compassionate with those who suffer, the heightened compassion deriving from a shared recognition of vulnerability, and the influence of understanding and interpretation on the process of compassion. Understanding Rousseau's concept of natural compassion is fundamental to understanding the nature of the self-other relationship in his thought: it reveals how our natural compassion shapes our connections with others, transcending individualism and fostering a shared human experience.

Having investigated the intricacies of *amour de soi*, *amour-propre,* and natural compassion and their roles in understanding the self-other relationship in Rousseau's thought, we transition now to an exploration of the paradoxical relationship between the inherently uninflected nature of *amour de soi* and the socially informed *amour-propre*, as well as their interaction with the essentially relational natural compassion. We will examine how *amour de soi,* as an instinct focused on self-care, and natural compassion, as an instinct focused on the well-being of others, coexist and interact with *amour-*

propre, which defines the actual social conditions from which the concepts of *amour de soi* and natural compassion emerge. Doing so will involve exploring the ways in which *amour de soi*'s inherent self-referentiality evolves in the context of social interactions, leading to the development of *amour-propre*. Moreover, we will investigate how these facets of the human condition are complemented by natural compassion. Part IV endeavors to resolve the apparent contradiction between the naturally atomistic self-referentiality of *amour de soi* and the natural social orientation of natural compassion, considering how *amour-propre* is the lived social condition that mediates between these states. This exploration is important for a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted and adaptive human condition regarding the self-other relationship, where individual authenticity (understood as acting according to one's natural instincts) coexists with and is enriched by social interconnectedness and compassion.

Part IV. The Paradox of Natural Self-Referentiality and Natural Sociality

Rousseau's concepts of *amour de soi* and natural compassion introduce a paradox: the former indicates an absolutely self-sufficient instinct for self-care, independent of social influence, while the latter emphasizes an essentially relational inclination towards compassion, necessitating a natural awareness of and response to the affective states of others. This juxtaposition poses a fundamental question about the nature of human beings: are we inherently self-referential or inherently social beings? Rousseau's framework implies that both instincts coexist, shaping our interactions and identity in actually lived experience.

The seeming contradiction between *amour de soi* and natural compassion presents a paradox at the heart of Rousseau's thinking in the sense that it might not seem possible for us to be both essentially self-referential and essentially social. The former implies an intrinsic self-sufficiency, with humans prioritizing their own welfare, while the latter envisions a naturally empathetic and interconnected disposition. This dichotomy prompts an inquiry into our fundamental nature: are we solitary beings driven by self-interest, or social creatures compelled by compassion?

Rousseau did not explicitly address this paradox, but he might have posited that these aspects are not binary but exist on a continuum, mediated by *amour-propre*, which enables a nuanced interaction between self-interest and compassion. This suggests a fluidity in the human condition, allowing for a balance between autonomy and sociability that is responsive to different circumstances. We can infer from Rousseau's thinking that he holds an integrated view of the human condition, where these elements coexist and are expressed adaptively, affirming that our concern for self and our concern for others are interconnected and complementary. *Amour-propre* bridges the gap between the natural self-care of *amour de soi* and the empathetic nature of natural compassion, actively shaping our social identity and interactions in lived experience.

In addressing the paradox, Rousseau might have suggested that individualism and sociality are not separate but rather coexist and interact fluidly, a process carried out and through *amour-propre*. This element is pivotal; it does not merely reflect a desire for social esteem but acts as a bridge between the instinct for self-care and the capacity for social empathy. *Amour-propre* thus represents a harmonizing force, guiding individuals to integrate self-interest with communal concern.

Amour-propre, as Rousseau suggests, is, as noted above, "naturally neutral" and only becomes either beneficial or detrimental through its application and the social context it operates within. When situated within a cooperative, supportive society, *amour-propre* can align with and amplify natural compassion, nurturing the empathetic impulse natural in humans. Even in less ideal conditions, where social structures may encourage more self-centered sentiments, *amour-propre* still does not negate the presence of natural compassion. Instead, it can complicate the expression of this compassion, overlaying it with the drive for recognition and esteem that may or may not serve communal well-being.

Rousseau's assertion that "the fate of man is to suffer at all times" stresses a shared human vulnerability that *amour-propre*, in its neutral state, does not inherently address but through which natural compassion universally (or nearly so) operates. Despite the variations in social contexts, this common vulnerability acts as a constant that can continually evoke natural compassion. Moreover, Rousseau's recognition that natural compassion is a force "prior to all reflection" and difficult to destroy, even by "the most depraved morals," suggests that it is a fundamental aspect of human existence – persistent and resilient to the fluctuations of *amour-propre*'s varied manifestations.

Thus, while *amour-propre* can enhance the expression of natural compassion in a conducive social environment, the essence of natural compassion persists regardless. It is this underlying persistence that reflects the natural capacity for empathy and interconnectedness in humans, which can be cultivated to overcome the potentially divisive effects of *amour-propre* in any social setup. Through an intentional cultivation

of *amour-propre*, individuals and societies can navigate the paradox of self-interest and empathy, fostering a balanced expression of both autonomy and sociability.

Investigating further Rousseau's possible resolution of the paradox, we encounter his critique of binary rationality. Rousseau challenges the Enlightenment's overreliance on rational analysis, arguing that it creates artificial dichotomies – such as the individual versus the social which his influential predecessors Hobbes and Locke employ in *Leviathan* and the *Second Treatise*, respectively – that fail to capture the complexity of human experience. Rousseau suggests that while rational thought offers valuable insights, it can also hinder our understanding of the human condition if it becomes the sole perspective for analysis. Rousseau advocates for an approach that embraces the multifaceted nature of human experiences, grounded in the observation of real social interactions, which extends beyond the scope of binary categorization. He thought suggests that the human condition is too dynamic and nuanced to be confined within the strictures of binary reason, emphasizing the importance of considering affective, intuitive, and pre-reflective aspects of our existence. The inherent fluidity and perpetual evolution of human experience reject the dichotomy of rigid categories like individual versus social. The concrete human condition is essentially conditioned. The inherent fluidity of human experience rejects the dichotomizing juxtaposition of rigid categories like the individual versus the social. The complexity of human life cannot be captured by categorical models that fail to accommodate its dynamic nature. Each person's life is a unique combination of influences and interactions that defy simplistic classification. Rousseau's insight into the coexistence of our solitary and social inclinations illustrates

the inherent complexity of the human condition, one where individual autonomy and a natural propensity for empathy are not in opposition but are intertwined within our being.

Rousseau's thinking recognizes the complexity of individuality and social interdependence, positing that personal experiences, though distinctive, are deeply influenced by both. This perspective emphasizes the insufficiency of models that prioritize single commanding factors to represent the nuanced spectrum of human existence. With the limitations of categorical thinking in mind, Rousseau shifts from abstract theorization to an examination of the lived experiences underpinning these concepts. This focus on lived reality sheds light on the dynamic interplay between self-reliance and communal bonds. By examining the lived circumstances that inform *amour de soi* and natural compassion, we discern how these elements, far from being at odds, are integrated within the human condition as facilitated by *amour-propre*. This integrative approach offers a view of the human condition which Rousseau envisions as a blend of natural individualism and natural sociability.

Rousseau regards the shift from self-centered *amour de soi* to the socially conscious *amour-propre* as evidence of human adaptability. This transition reflects an instinctual broadening of focus from self-interest to a more communal perspective, informed by natural compassion – a shift that is more reflexive than deliberate, highlighting human malleability within social contexts. This flexibility is not confined to social duties but stems from a natural human tendency towards compassion and collaboration. Individual aspirations thus naturally accommodate the welfare of others, illustrating a dynamic interplay between personal and communal realms. In essence,

natural compassion does not supersede personal goals but rather enriches them with a sense of shared humanity.

Amour-propre emerges as the mediator in this dynamic, reconciling self-care with communal responsibilities. It facilitates the navigation of social intricacies, ensuring that individuality and social harmony may coexist without discord. Through *amour-propre*, personal desires are expressed in a manner that is attuned to the broader social environment. Such adaptability exemplifies the complexity of human experience, where self-referentiality and social engagement are not polar opposites but elements of complex human behavior. The capacity for this complex to shift, adapting to various situations, epitomizes the intricate nature of being human – individual autonomy and social connection are not just coexistent but integral to our lived experience.

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Part IV explored the paradox between natural individualism, represented by *amour de soi*, and natural sociality, exemplified in natural compassion. *Amour de soi* signifies a native instinct for self-preservation and well-being, operating independently of social influences. In contrast, natural compassion is an empathetic, caring response to others' suffering, indicating an inherent social nature and relationality in human beings. Rousseau's framework suggests that these aspects are not contradictory but exist as part of a complex human constitution, with *amour-propre* serving as a mediator. This continuum demonstrates the adaptability of human conditionality, the conditioning of the human condition, allowing persons to be self-focused or socially empathetic as needed depending on the actual context of their lived experience. Human existence, therefore, is marked by a dynamic balance characterized by the integration and interaction of

individualistic and social tendencies in the historical realities of concrete social life. Rousseau's perspective challenges binary categorizations of human nature, emphasizing the complexity and fluidity of the human condition, in which individualistic *amour de soi* coexists and interacts with socially-oriented natural compassion as facilitated by *amour-propre*. Rousseau's thought suggests that the human condition cannot be fully understood within the strict dichotomies of self-interest versus communal interest, as it embodies a spectrum of potentialities that are socially mediated and constantly evolving.

Conclusion

This chapter has investigated Rousseau's perspective on the self-other relationship, delineating and examining the constructs of *amour de soi*, *amour-propre*, and natural compassion. The investigation in Part I revealed *amour de soi* as an innate, self-regulatory form of caring for oneself that is natural to the human condition and that functions independently of social constructs. *Amour de soi*, centered on self-preservation and personal well-being, operates devoid of external affirmations, highlighting Rousseau's perspective on the self's authentic existence in its most natural state.

Transitioning to Part II, the focus shifted to the evolution of *amour de soi* within the complexities of society. Here, *amour-propre* emerged as a socially conditioned manifestation of *amour de soi*, demonstrating the transformation of individual existence under the myriad influences of social structures. This Part emphasized how *amour de soi*, initially an abstract and individualistic concept, adapts and transforms into *amour-propre*, a concrete and socially mediated self-conception.

In Part III the focus shifted further to Rousseau's interpretation of natural compassion as an instinctive, empathetic response to the suffering of others. This aspect of Rousseau's thinking emphasized the naturally social aspect of the human condition, revealing natural compassion to be an instinctual human propensity that fosters empathy and connectivity, independent of reflective reasoning in its basic state.

Part IV confronted a seeming paradox within Rousseau's thinking. The analysis here synthesized the seemingly opposing tendencies of *amour de soi*'s natural individualism and natural compassion's social orientation within the lived experience of *amour-propre*. This segment elucidated the coexistence and interaction of these aspects in lived experience as reflecting the dynamic, multifaceted nature of human existence.

In sum, this chapter investigated Rousseau's perspectives on individual and collective aspects of the human condition and illuminated the dynamics shaping the self-other relationship. Rousseau's thinking challenges simplistic dichotomies of individualism versus sociality, offering a nuanced understanding of the human condition as a spectrum encompassing natural self-focused instincts alongside a natural propensity for social empathy and interconnectedness. This insight enhances our comprehension of the self-other relationship's complexity, highlighting its pivotal role in shaping both individual identity and collective social structures. In the next chapter, we turn to examine the nature of a particular type of self-other relationship: that between the educator and the learner.

Chapter Three:
Rousseau and the Educator-Learner Relationship

Introduction

In line with Rousseau's directive that the study appropriate for human beings is the study of our relations and that the true study of *Emile* is that of the human condition, we have investigated Rousseau's thinking about the nature of the self-object relationship in Chapter One and the nature of the self-other relationship in Chapter Two. In this final chapter, we investigate the nature of the relationship between the educator and the learner as Rousseau conceives of it. We recall from Chapter Two that for Rousseau there are three interrelated sources of education: objects, others, and nature. In this chapter, we primarily focus on how the educator facilitates natural learning. Rousseau envisions education not as a hierarchical, one-way transmission of information but as a fostering process in which the educator's role is to protect and nurture the learner's natural developmental potential. According to Rousseau, education ought to be grounded in a responsiveness to the natural unfolding of the learner's dispositions. This responsiveness is what Rousseau terms 'negative' education – a pedagogical approach that prioritizes the facilitation and guardianship of the learner's independent pursuit of understanding and virtue over didactic instruction.

This chapter is organized into four integrative parts. In Part I, 'Natural Curiosity and the Educator-Learner Relationship', we articulate the central role of natural curiosity in the negative educational process and how it frames the negative educator's responsibility to the learner. In particular, we describe a relational dynamic where the negative educator and learner co-navigate the pursuit of understanding, guided by the learner's natural curiosity as grounded in the instinctual forces of *amour de soi* and

natural compassion. In Part II, 'Educating for Virtue', we look further into these drives as foundational to the development of virtues and character. Rousseau challenges the notion of virtues as externally imposed traits, arguing instead for their natural emergence from the expression of a learner's instinctual forces, as fostered (rather than imposed) through the negative educator's subtle and strategic guidance. Part III, 'Individualized Pedagogical Projects', transitions the discussion to the practical implications of Rousseau's philosophy, emphasizing the need for pedagogical approaches that are attuned to the idiosyncratic characteristics of each learner. As we will see, Rousseau's argument for an individualized pedagogical strategy aligns the practice of negative education with the learner's unique set of dispositions, requiring each pedagogical endeavor to be as unique as the learner it serves. Lastly, Part IV, 'Preparing for Social Integration', extends the largely individual focus of negative education as it is discussed in previous Parts into the social sphere, examining how the qualities nurtured within the negative educational setting equip the learner for active and authentic participation in social life.

This chapter aims to provide a detailed account of Rousseau's pedagogical ideas, with an emphasis on articulating the nature of the educator-learner relationship in negative education. For Rousseau, education should be an adaptive process that aligns with and safeguards the development of a learner's natural dispositions and nurtures a reflective and virtuous character, ultimately preparing them for a form of social participation in which their authenticity remains intact.

Part I. Natural Curiosity

In examining Rousseau's thinking on education, we discover a view of the educator-learner relationship that challenges conventional pedagogical norms, of his time and of ours. Rousseau posits that the essence of a genuine and liberatory education lies not in the transmission of information from one person to another, but in nurturing the development of the natural curiosity that drives each learner. Central to this relationship is negative education, where the negative educator's role abandons its traditional didactic function and works instead to create an open environment conducive to allowing the learner to independently unfold their own always developing dispositions.

The following investigation into Rousseau's educational thought reveals a dynamic interaction between the instinctual forces of *amour de soi* (a natural force that motivates learners towards self-preservation and growth) and natural compassion (a natural force that orients learners towards empathy and understanding of others) in the process of coming to understand. Through Rousseau's lens, we learn how these instinctual motivations shape the learner's understanding engagement with the world in the context of negative education.

By examining the shift from pre-reflective to reflective capacities within this relational framework, we aim to illuminate the transformative process that Rousseau envisions for education – a process rooted in respecting and cultivating the learner's dispositions within thoughtfully designed and minimally intrusive educational settings.

Foundations of Inquiry:
Rousseau on the Primacy of Natural Curiosity in Education

For Rousseau, the educator-learner relationship is deeply informed by *amour de soi*, an instinctual force that aims to preserve and enhance one's well-being and serves as a foundational element for a natural curiosity that propels the learner's pursuit of understanding. He emphasizes that, as we saw in Chapter One, "The innate desire for well-being and the impossibility of fully satisfying this desire make [the learner] constantly seek for new means of contributing to it."[145] This natural drive expresses itself as an always ongoing quest for understanding as a means to preserve and enhance one's well-being. As he says, "There is an ardor to know which is founded only on the desire to be esteemed as learned; there is another ardor which is born of a curiosity natural to man concerning all that might have a connection, close or distant, with his interests."[146] Rousseau further elaborates that this curiosity is "a principle natural to the human heart, but one which develops only in proportion to our passions and our enlightenment."[147] It is this natural principle that motivates a learner's pursuit of an authentic understanding that is rooted in the development of the disposition to care for the preservation and advancement of their own well-being, the disposition for concern for the well-being of others, and an enlightened awareness of what the learner is and is not capable of doing.

In Rousseau's view, the development of a learner's reflective capacities is a natural progression from instinctual experiences to thoughtful contemplation on the phenomena that present themselves in those experiences, a process subtly facilitated by the educator through negative education. The role of the negative educator is not to

[145] Ibid. 167
[146] Ibid.
[147] Ibid.

provide direct instruction but to foster an environment in which the learner's natural instincts, along with idiosyncratic dispositions (discussed in more detail in Part III below), can thrive and incite self-guided discovery.

The development of the disposition for reflective thought signals a shift from a pre-reflective, instinctual engagement with the world to a reflective, social interaction framework essentially informed by *amour-propre*. As discussed in Chapter Two, *amour-propre* "is reason."[148] As we've seen, Rousseau provides insight into the dynamics of what he considers to be deliberate, reflective, and rational consideration:

> *By comparison, I move [sensed objects], I transport them, and, so to speak, I superimpose them on one another in order to pronounce on their difference or their likeness and generally on all their relations.*[149]

This capability of discernment, though initially inactive, is activated and stimulated through our engagement within society, becoming the scaffold for cognitive progression, in stride with the unfolding of human reason, described as "forming complex ideas by the conjunction of several simple ideas."[150] For Rousseau, an idea is an immediate conscious awareness of some object in one's surroundings. The reflective grasping of that which is experienced involves a scrutiny of simple ideas, analyzing and ascertaining their interrelations to construct more complex ideas. It is through such synthesis that the mind assembles complex ideas, directly grasped from foundational empirical realities, thus circumventing the distortion of representation. This cognitive synthesis and correlation lie at the core of Rousseau's view on human reason and reflective thought, subject to

[148] Ibid. 92
[149] Ibid. 270
[150] Ibid. 158

error as our reflective, evaluative comparison of ideas may misrepresent the true nature of relationships among entities.

The capacity to reflectively compare, to reason, awakens as learners begin to measure themselves against others, a process intrinsic to the evolution of *amour-propre,* which is, as we have seen in Chapter Two, the practical expression of *amour de soi* and natural compassion in a social context. *Amour-propre* is contingent upon social recognition, catalyzing the learner's engagement in reflective comparison. Through this lens, the capacity to reflectively compare evolves from a latent potential into a dynamic process for navigating and understanding the relational nature of social milieus and objects in general.

The role of the negative educator is instrumental in this process, designing experiences that stimulate the latent disposition to reflectively compare, to reason and to actively judge, thus informing the learner's thoughtful examination of the phenomena that present themselves in their experiences. The progression from basic reflective comparisons to complex analyses is a gradual process that unfolds as the learner's social consciousness, informed by *amour-propre,* deepens. This intellectual evolution, from reflectively comparing oneself to others to engaging in broader reflective thought, emphasizes the transformation of *amour-propre* into a guiding principle for reason. The learner's path from instinctual experience to reflective contemplation exemplifies the development of the capacity to reflectively compare not only as an intellectual skill but also as an expression of *amour-propre*. This developmental trajectory is encapsulated in Rousseau's claim that, as we have seen, we are best understood in terms of the nature of our relations, and so

> *The study suitable for man is that of his relations. So long as he knows himself only in his physical being, he ought to study himself in his relations with things…When he begins to sense his moral being, he ought to study himself in his relations with men*.[151]

This indicates that the act of comparison, once awakened by *amour-propre*, becomes a deliberate and essential tool for understanding the relations that constitute oneself, social dynamics, and objects more generally. The capacity to compare, therefore, goes beyond its initial role as a mechanism for personal survival and well-being in a concrete social context, evolving into rational and reflective thought more generally and deeply entwined with the learner's quest for social esteem and recognition.

We pause here to note and engage with a paradox in Rousseau's thought. If the essence of reason is comparative, and such comparison stems from the social via *amour-propre*, then it would seem to follow that our exploration of relational understanding should begin with the social. Yet Rousseau instructs us to first investigate our relationships with objects, a step that appears to precede the social genesis of comparative reason. How can we reconcile this directive with the notion that our capacity for comparison, and thus for reason, is fundamentally cultivated through *amour-propre*, a faculty that arises within the social sphere? Rousseau's educational approach may resolve this paradox. He posits that *amour-propre*, while being the source of our capacity to compare, initially operates in an amoral sphere. It, being "naturally neutral," simply acknowledges the real relations of our social existence, mapping the terrain of interpersonal relationships without the imposition of moral judgment. Before the learner can grapple with the moral dimensions of social relations, they must first develop a fundamental understanding of comparison in a context that is less morally complex. In

[151] Ibid. 214

this developmental schema, the study of objects serves as a preliminary stage. Here, the learner learns to compare, distinguish, and relate entities in the world, building a foundation for reasoning that is devoid of moral considerations. This step is not merely a conceptual exercise but a concrete engagement with the world, necessary to establish the basic mechanics of reason. By engaging with objects, the learner practices the act of comparison in its simplest form, allowing for the cultivation of a fundamental reasoning skill set that is isolated from the complexities and biases introduced by morally charged social interactions. This process of objective comparison among non-social entities forms the necessary precursor to the social comparisons governed by *amour-propre*. Only after this capacity for objective comparison is developed does Rousseau believe it becomes suitable to elevate the faculty of reason to its moral capacity. At this juncture, the learner, now equipped with the skill to discern relations among objects, is ready to extend this ability to the social sphere and its mores. With a developed sense of moral being, comparisons made through *amour-propre* are now infused with ethical significance, transforming amoral considerations of our relations into moral considerations. This transition from non-social to social comparison, then, is not arbitrary but a considered progression. It is only after learners have forged their capacity for comparison among objects in general that they can engage in the complex and morally charged comparisons of social relations. Thus, the study of objects is the propaedeutic groundwork for the moral and relational understanding that characterizes the mature expressions of *amour-propre*. Rousseau's sequence of study, moving from relations with objects to relations with others, encapsulates a social trajectory from the development of reasoning skills in an amoral context to their application within lived moral and social domains. The

cultivation of reason is, therefore, a deliberate pursuit that begins with the practical realm of our relations with objects and subsequently allows for a more sophisticated engagement with the moral dimensions of our social nature.

Now, for Rousseau, there is a distinct and intricate evolution of a learner's reflective capacities, which mature from instinctual responses to more sophisticated contemplation. This maturation also occurs with respect to natural compassion. Unlike the self-focused *amour de soi*, natural compassion is outward-looking towards others, steering the learner towards a caring and pre-reflective understanding of those who are suffering. Natural compassion, as we discussed in the previous chapter, is instinctual and activated immediately upon witnessing the suffering of another; like *amour de soi*, it finds practical expression through *amour-propre*. The basic manifestation of natural compassion, instinctual and pre-reflective, is instigated by an affective and immediate experience of the perceived misfortunes of others. Rousseau brings this to light with the question, "Who does not [have compassion for] the unhappy man whom he sees suffering?"[152] This rhetorical question implies that the affect of compassion is a universal human instinct, acknowledging that the sight of suffering naturally elicits compassion from any observer. Or, as we have seen previously, at least almost any observer (i.e., those without "cadaverous souls").[153] The immediate compassionate experience this question refers to indicates that before any reflection, human beings naturally feel for one another in their perceived misfortunes. What's more, everyone always suffers under

[152] Ibid. 221
[153] Ibid. 287

misfortunes, perceived or otherwise: “The fate of man is to suffer at all times. The very care of his preservation is connected with pain.”[154]

As pre-reflective compassion is honed through negative education and experience, it develops into a more discerning and intentional form of reflective compassion, the conscious care we have for others. This reflective compassion involves a comparative assessment, where the learner evaluates their situation against that of the suffering person. Rousseau presents this evolution with a subsequent question, “Who would not want to deliver him from his ills if it only cost a wish for that?,” which asks the learner to consider their willingness to help if it were within their effortless capacity to do so.[155] This rhetorical question introduces wishing and willing as gateways to reflective compassion. It suggests that the act of wishing to help in a particular context represents a step in the progression from feeling to thinking. It is a mental exercise that stirs the reflective faculties by consciously comparing one’s own situation with that of another, prompting the learner to actively engage with reflective compassion and its implications.

The negative educator’s role is pivotal in aiding the learner’s path from natural compassion to a deliberate practice of reflective compassion, where the learner thoughtfully embraces the situation of another while maintaining their own unique perspective. Rousseau says, “To become sensitive and [compassionate], the [learner] must know that there are beings like him who suffer what he has suffered.”[156] This awareness is the crux of a reflective process in which the learner’s personal situations are

[154] Ibid. 48
[155] Ibid. 221
[156] Ibid. 222

juxtaposed with those of others, catalyzing a developed understanding and prompting the impetus to consciously and deliberately take action.

Rousseau posits that this nurturing of reflective compassion is essential to the negative educational experience, requiring an intellectual and sentimental participation that goes beyond pre-reflective affective experiences. Learners are subtly coaxed, rather than commanded, by the negative educator to critically engage with the broader social and ethical ramifications of their compassionate experiences: "what is there to do other than to offer the [learner] objects on which the expansive force of his heart can act."[157] This action, involving a reflective judgment, cultivates insight that may profoundly influence their personal beliefs and actions. The comparison inherent in this act of judgment is critical to the learning process, steering the learner from a self-focused understanding to an enlightened recognition of their interdependence with others and their surroundings. This trajectory, advancing from instinctual to reflective compassion, represents a transformational experience within the pedagogical process that guides the learner's pursuit for understanding from immediate, pre-reflective experiences to a more sophisticated contemplation of their interconnectedness with others and objects in the world.

In *Emile*, the episode of the magician and his wax-duck serves as an example of how a negative educator can guide a learner towards the activity of reflective awareness. The story begins with Emile's matured curiosity and desire for recognition, which leads him to replicate a magician's trick of making a magnetized wax duck follow a piece of bread. "We put the duck in the water, we bring the top part of a key close to the bill, and

[157] Ibid. 223

we see with a joy easy to understand that our duck follows the key exactly as the one at the fair followed the piece of bread."[158] Emile's success in this endeavor propels him to publicly challenge the magician the next day by replicating his trick, a move driven by *amour-propre*, seeking acclaim and validation. However, when Emile's second attempt, on the third day, at replication fails in a public setting (the magician changed the way the trick worked after Emile's initial replication), he faces the crowd's ridicule, a stark contrast to the previous day's applause for his successful replication. It is at this juncture that the negative educator's role becomes crucial. Instead of intervening, the negative educator, Jean-Jacques, allows Emile to grapple with his failure and shame, thereby setting the stage for the magician's subsequent private visit, which becomes instrumental in activating Emile's reflective compassion. The magician's gentle reproach and revelation of the trick's updated mechanics evoke in Emile a dawning recognition of the consequences his actions could have had on the magician's well-being. Rousseau notes the shift in Emile's understanding in response to the question, "What did he [i.e., the magician] do to us to make us want to discredit his games and take away his livelihood?"[159] This question stirs in Emile a comparison between his motivations and the magician's situation, marking an awakening of reflective compassion. As Rousseau recounts the narrative, "The next day we return to the fair to see again the trick whose secret we have learned. We approach our magician-Socrates with profound respect."[160] Emile's compassion, pre-reflective at first, is modified into reflective compassion as he is compelled to consider the magician's perspective and the broader implications of his own

[158] Ibid. 173
[159] Ibid. 174
[160] Ibid. 175

actions. This act of comparison and reflective compassion, facilitated by the negative educator through a strategically harnessed experience, shifts Emile's focus from self to other, from a preoccupation with self-esteem to a reflective understanding of his responsibilities towards others. Thus, the story illustrates the transformative power of the negative educator in nurturing reflective compassion. By allowing Emile to experience the consequences of his actions and then reflect on those consequences, the negative educator fosters a depth of understanding and a capacity for compassion that is reflective, comparative, and humane.

Here, the negative educator's role is pivotal in shaping the learner's path from natural, instinctual compassion to a more sophisticated and reflective compassion. By asking probing questions and leaving the learner to answer them, for example, the negative educator facilitates a reflective space where the learner can autonomously examine the context of his actions and its relationship to the present, thereby enabling a transition from self-oriented curiosity to a comprehensive, empathetic, and reflective understanding. This educational dynamic, characterized by a carefully maintained balance between providing indirect guidance and allowing independent thought, encapsulates the essence of the educator-learner relationship in Rousseau's thinking. The negative educator's skill lies in their ability to recognize and respond to the learner's dispositions, prompting learners not only to ask questions but to seek their own answers, fostering an educational environment where the learner's curiosity is expanded into a broadened comparative understanding that is both empathetic and reflective.

The negative educator's careful design of learning experiences that stimulate comparison allows the learner to autonomously analyze similarities and differences,

evaluate causes and effects, and understand the interconnectedness of human existence. In this interplay of *amour de soi*, compassion, and the act of comparative judgment, the learner evolves from a pre-reflective state to a conscious, reflective, and socially aware being. This progression equips them with the intellectual and affective acuity to consider their actions within the context of collective human experience and well-being, fostering a deepened sense of compassion and understanding that is critical for their development as reflective and empathetic persons. Through this process, the educator-learner relationship in Rousseau's thinking is one characterized by careful cultivation and guidance, allowing natural curiosity to direct the learner's pursuit of understanding, accompanied by the negative educator's subtle yet strategic facilitation.

From Instinct to Engagement: Manifestations of Amour de Soi *and Natural Compassion in Rousseau's Vision of Negative Education*

Building upon the foundational concept of natural curiosity in the context of the educator-learner relationship, we investigate further the manner in which learners, encouraged by their negative educators, express the natural forces that guide this curiosity through their behaviors. We move to uncover in more detail how these natural forces, nurtured within the negative educational framework, manifest in the learners' engagement with their surroundings, thereby illustrating the practical expression of curiosity in behavior as fostered by the negative educator.

As we will discuss in more detail in the following section, Rousseau pivots from the educational norms of his time towards cultivating the learner's instinctual curiosity.

We can further elucidate the transformative process of negative education by once again examining, as we did in Chapter One, Rousseau's assertion that,

> *Since man's first natural movements are…to measure himself against everything surrounding him and to experience in each object he perceives all the qualities which can be sensed and relate to him, his first study is a sort of experimental physics relative to his own preservation.*[161]

Here, Rousseau connects the learner's natural curiosity with the principles of physics applied to self-care, indicating that just as a physicist experiments and observes to understand the forces of nature, so too must the learner interact with their surroundings to consciously discover and harness the natural, instinctual forces that guide the learner. This analogy enriches our comprehension of the negative educator's role by implying that negative educators must carefully design experiences that go beyond passive observation to actively engage the learner in a practical, independent, and experimental approach to their education. This approach fosters an active learning environment where learners are encouraged by the negative educator to, so to speak, 'scientifically' investigate their experience and their natural curiosities, and, through reflection, to connect their discoveries to broader concepts, thereby transitioning from the pre-reflective experience of natural curiosity to a more disciplined, reflective, and deliberate inquiry grounded in an understanding of the meaning of their own lived experience. Through a dynamic and responsive teaching approach, the negative educator enables learners to move from passive absorbers of information to active participants in a pursuit of understanding. As Rousseau says, "The goal is less to teach him a truth than to show him how he must always go about discovering the truth."[162] This active engagement is crucial for the

[161] Ibid. 125
[162] Ibid. 205

learner to understand the possibilities and limitations of their own dispositions and capacities, i.e., to become "enlightened," and it is the negative educator's curated guidance that influences the development of natural curiosity into reflective and deliberate learning.[163]

In the educator-learner dynamic, Rousseau emphasizes the role of natural, instinctual motivation as the root of the learner's pursuit of understanding. This pursuit is intrinsically tied to the learner's being and is further shaped by the negative educator's indirect guidance. Rousseau advises, "Make your pupil attentive to the phenomena of nature. Soon you will make him curious. But to feed his curiosity, never hurry to satisfy it. Put the questions within his reach and leave them to him to resolve."[164] In accordance with this advice, through the negative educator's strategic curation of direct experiences of phenomena, learners actively engage with their surroundings, seeking to uncover and interpret the meanings that present themselves in their experience. Echoing the guidance of Rousseau's Vicar in *Emile*, learners are led to

> *limit [their] researches to what [is] immediately related to [their] interest, to leave [themselves] in a profound ignorance of all the rest, and to worry [themselves] to the point of doubt only about things it [is] important for [them] to know*.[165]

This process does not fulfill an abstract conception of curiosity; it is rather a practical interaction with their world, whereby learners, through their own initiative and discovery, come to understand the relevance of their surroundings to their self-care. They learn not because the negative educator has imparted information that might help them do so, but

[163] Ibid. 39
[164] Ibid. 168
[165] Ibid. 269

because they have independently acquired an understanding that contributes to the carrying out of their life.

Parallel to this, natural compassion prompts the learner to extend their exploratory behavior towards reflectively understanding others. This extension is not for the sake of learning for learning's sake, but is driven by the learner's instinctual compassion. The same curiosity that leads a learner to experiment and inquire about objects in the world under the negative educator's largely hands-off guidance also compels them to grasp the feelings, needs, and well-being of others. Natural compassion and *amour de soi,* as concretely expressed through practical activity, thus inform the 'how' and 'what' of such curiosity-driven activity.

A narrative from *Emile* that we briefly engaged with in Chapter One can serve as an example to elucidate the principles of *amour de soi* and natural compassion within the context of negative education. As Emile engages in the simple act of planting beans, he demonstrates an innate curiosity and a drive to affect his environment, in line with Rousseau's assertion that every learner, as we saw earlier, has a natural propensity "to want to create, imitate, produce, give signs of and activity."[166] When Emile takes ownership of the land by planting, Rousseau reflects that there is something of his being infused in the earth: "He takes possession of [the land] by planting a bean in it…there is [now] in this earth something of himself that he can claim against anyone whomsoever."[167] This direct, practical, physical engagement with the land imparts a lesson, more effective than any lecture or textbook, about the labor theory of property when Emile returns to his garden and discovers that his beans have been uprooted. In this

[166] Ibid. 98
[167] Ibid.

dramatic moment, the gardener who had already worked the land before Emile got to it expresses his own sense of loss and violation: "You have done me an irreparable wrong, and you have deprived yourselves of the pleasure of eating exquisite melons."[168] Through these events, Emile encounters the complex realities of ownership, labor, and mutual respect. His understanding of property is not derived from abstract principles or didactic lessons but from the experience of his labor being overturned by the prior claim of the gardener's labor. This lived experience is a manifestation of the natural motivation Rousseau describes, one that goes deeper than intellectual comprehension to include affective engagement. Emile's response to the gardener's actions, from dismay to understanding, mirrors the natural movements of which Rousseau speaks: to measure oneself against one's environment and to learn through lived experience. This interaction, though distressing, is an authentic application of the curiosity that guides the learner's behavior under the careful observation of the negative educator. Through this situation, Emile not only learns about property but also experiences the compassionate stirrings that arise from understanding another's perspective and claim. This narrative thus exemplifies how learners, under the auspices of a negative educator, can progress from an unstructured interaction with their surroundings to a reflective understanding of the social and normative dimensions of human life.

The foundational concepts of *amour de soi* and natural compassion, as understood in the educator-learner relationship, are not mere philosophical notions but are observable in the learner's actions as subtly guided by the educator. This practical application shows that learners, under the educator's indirect guidance, express their natural curiosity

[168] Ibid. 99

through behavior that is both self-directed and other-aware. Rousseau's perspective emphasizes the importance of these natural instincts in motivating learners to engage with their world in a meaningful, curious, and compassionate manner.

A Contrast to Locke's Positive Pedagogy

The emphasis of Rousseau's educational thinking on natural curiosity presents a distinct approach to the educator-learner relationship when compared to the dominant educational ideals of his time (and, we note, to many of the ideals of our own), particularly those informed by his highly influential predecessor John Locke as he expressed them in his *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*. As Locke says,

> *The great mistake I have observed in people's breeding their early children has been, that this has not been take care enough of in its due season; that the mind has not been made obedient to discipline and pliant to reason, when at first it was most tender, most easy to be bowed.*[169]

Rousseau bluntly criticizes the prevailing educational methods, greatly influenced by Locke, polemically stating, "I see nothing more stupid than these children who have been reasoned with so much," challenging Locke's emphasis on beginning education by instilling discipline by teaching learners how to reason.[170]

The differences between Rousseau and the "wise Locke" with respect to the nature of the educator-learner relationship can be traced back to their differing views about the nature of perception.[171] Locke, in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, conceptualizes the mind as a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate at birth, shaped by internally

[169] Locke, John. 1693. *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*. 35. I have modified the spelling of the original to align it with contemporary English.
[170] Rousseau, *Emile*, 89
[171] Ibid. 126

interpreted, representational experiences of external sensory stimuli. These experiences come from two sources: sensation, the passive reception of external stimuli through the senses, and reflection, the mind's active consideration of its own operations. Understanding of the world, for Locke, is not direct but is built upon these initially meaningless sensory experiences as the mind works to represent, organize, and interpret them, giving them meaning, rather than discovering and interpreting their meaning through the direct experience of phenomena, as Rousseau holds. We recall again that for Rousseau, "truth is in things, not the mind which judges them."[172]

Locke's model implies that educators play a critical role in systematically and didactically building the learner's understanding of the world through the empirical accumulation of knowledge, focusing on learning from external stimuli and the internal, representational, and rational processing of these experiences. In contrast, Rousseau states, "Of all the faculties of man, reason, which is, so to speak, only a composite of all the others, is the one that develops with the most difficulty and latest," highlighting his belief in an approach to education which is grounded in the active, natural, instinctual forces that motivate learners' behavior and which ground rational thought.[173]

Contrasting with Locke's *tabula rasa*, Rousseau proposes that learners possess natural curiosity from birth (as an extension of affectivity). This influences the dynamics of the educator-learner relationship. For Rousseau, the mind is always already actively engaged with its surroundings (not just itself), instinctively reaching out to understand the truth of things. For Emile, "the lesson always came to him from the thing itself."[174]

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[172] Ibid. 272
[173] Ibid. 89
[174] Ibid. 124

Rousseau proposes an education that aligns with and nurtures natural tendencies, rather than imprinting information onto a passive learner who apes the reason of his Lockean positive educator, i.e., the educator who posits. Rousseau holds that learners are born with inherent tendencies (*amour de soi*, natural compassion, and idiosyncratic dispositions) that drive their learning process. His perspective reshapes the role of the educator from being a dispenser of information to a curator of experiences that nurture and guide the learner's natural development. He critiques the premature use of reason in education, stating, "This is to begin with the end, to want to make the product the instrument," emphasizing his belief in the natural progression of learning rather than the forced imposition of rationality, or anything else beyond scenarios in which learners can engage in the type of curious, independent, and experimental education discussed above.[175]

The fundamental difference in Rousseau's and Locke's views on the source of learning and development significantly impacts the nature of the educator-learner relationship. The positions each philosopher has regarding the nature of perceptual experience underlies their different approaches to education. While Locke sees the mind as a blank slate to be didactically inscribed with rationally interpreted experiences, Rousseau views it as active and understanding from the start, driven by instinctually grounded natural curiosity. He believes education should foster this curiosity to support self-discovery and personal growth, redefining the educator's role as a facilitator and guardian of active experiential understanding rather than a didactic instructor.

[175] Ibid. 89

Rousseau warns against imposing reason too early, believing it leads to vanity and rebelliousness. As he says,

> *By speaking to them from an early age a language which they do not understand [i.e., rationality], one accustoms them to show off with words, to control all that is said to them, to believe themselves as wise as their masters, to become disputatious and rebellious.*[176]

This illustrates Rousseau's concern that the premature imposition of rationality can stifle natural curiosity and lead to pretension and defiance. Instead, he suggests that educators should first stimulate learners' natural curiosity and indirectly guide them in a process of personal growth and self-discovery in which reason emerges unforced. This approach not only reframes the educator's role but also suggests a way of teaching that values the intrinsic motivations and development of the learner over the rote learning of rationalized concepts. It is through this lens that we can further understand Rousseau's concept of negative education: it is a way of allowing learners to explore and learn from the directly experienced phenomena themselves in a self-guided process that aligns with their natural development, rather than imposing structured instruction upon them. As we discussed in Chapter One, "always begin with the phenomena…accustom your pupil to take these phenomena not for reasons but for facts."[177] This pedagogical approach places the learner and their direct experience of phenomena at the center, valuing their personal pursuit of growth, and redefines the educator's role to one of subtle guidance and support.

[176] Ibid.
[177] Ibid. 177

Constructing the Scaffold of Learning: The Role of Environment in Rousseau's Educational Model

Having contrasted Rousseau's promotion of natural curiosity with Locke's structured and rationalistic pedagogy, we pivot to examining how Rousseau's theories translate into practical educational environments. While Locke advocates a foundational, rational approach from the outset, Rousseau promotes the nurturing of natural curiosity through direct interaction with one's surroundings. This emphasis on the experiential and instinctual, as opposed to imposed and pre-determined knowledge, emphasizes Rousseau's belief in the transformative power of education. Genuine learning stems from the learner's active and understanding engagement with their surroundings, guided subtly by the educator, to cultivate independent thinking.

Creating a relatively safe and stimulating environment is crucial for allowing learners' natural curiosity to manifest without fear or restriction. Rousseau posits that a learner's experiential interaction with their surroundings is a critical component of their educational experience. As we've seen, this interaction, under the subtle direction of the negative educator, encourages the emergence and development of a learner's instinctual drives. Rousseau contends that this educational liberty is not merely the absence of constraints but a dynamic process wherein the negative educator actively, purposively, and strategically creates opportunities for the learner's self-discovery and development. According to Rousseau, such freedom is essential for learners to cultivate authentic self-identity and character. Rousseau provides a directive for negative educators:

> *Prepare from afar the reign of [the learner's] freedom and the use of his forces by leaving natural habit to his body, by putting him in the condition always to be master of himself and in all things to do his will, as soon as he has one.*[178]

[178] Ibid. 63

Rousseau suggests that the will emerges as learners interact with their surroundings, gradually gaining self-mastery and the ability to make independent choices as they learn from natural consequences and cultivate their own natural habits or dispositions. Here he emphasizes the importance of early preparation for the learner's future autonomy. This preparation involves allowing the natural habits or forces of the body (i.e., *amour de soi*, natural compassion, and idiosyncratic dispositions) to form without undue interference, thus enabling the learner to become accustomed to self-governance and to act according to their own will as it develops. Rousseau sees this gradual preparation for autonomy as a fundamental aspect of negative education because it aligns the learner's developing will with their actions, ensuring that they can act freely and independently. Rousseau's thinking suggests that the capacity for self-determination is akin to a muscle that develops through use. In the context of negative education, the educator's role is to scaffold this development by carefully designing experiences that prompt the learner to make choices and reflect on outcomes. The progression from guided experiences to autonomous decision-making is crucial. It enables the learner to form a congruence between, so to speak, inner drives, which are initially instinctual and non-conscious, and conscious choices that are exercised in a deliberate manner. By gradually transferring the locus of control from the educator to the learner, the educator ensures that the learner's independent actions are an authentic reflection of their will and dispositions. The alignment of the developing will with action is not an instantaneous process but an evolutionary one, where the learner incrementally assumes the role of an autonomous agent. Rousseau implies that the freedom to choose, the responsibility of choice, and the reflection on natural consequences are the triad that empowers the learner to act in a

manner that is free and self-determined, fostering a robust and independent character capable of navigating the complexity of human society.

In addition, Rousseau advances the concept of "well-regulated freedom," which further elucidates the role of the negative educator.[179] He suggests that negative educators should refrain from involving themselves in the learning process unless they can guide learners exclusively by the "laws of the possible and the impossible alone."[180] By this, he means that negative educators should not impose unnecessary rules or limitations; instead, they should only intervene in accordance with the direct experience of consequences and limitations that occur in the world. Such guidance ensures that the learner's freedom is grounded in a realistic understanding of what can and cannot be achieved, fostering a sense of freedom and authenticity that is informed and bounded by reality.

Rousseau's vision for education, deeply rooted in the principles of liberty and the careful guidance of the negative educator, is presented as crucial for learners to develop a strong sense of self and a resilient character. The negative educators' role is to prepare learners for an uncertain future by allowing them the freedom and dignity to act according to their developing will while at the same time instilling an understanding of the limits and possibilities of their capacities. In this way, the learner is expected to naturally build an authentic self-identity, grounded in a reflective understanding of their own capacities, that is robust enough to withstand the challenges and vicissitudes of life.

In the educational environment as curated by the negative educator, it is crucial to understand that learning – encompassing the development of personal capacities and

[179] Ibid. 92
[180] Ibid.

cultivating the potential for growth – is best realized in a setting that is deliberately and strategically crafted by the negative educator to encourage exploration and the natural development of curiosity. Rousseau asserts, "Each mind has its own form, according to which it needs to be governed; the success of one's care depends on governing it by this form and not by another."[181] This highlights the importance of the educator's role in not only recognizing but also adapting to the idiosyncratic needs of the learner, as we will discuss in further detail below in Part III. A negative education requires the educator to observe and discern the learner's natural dispositions during states of free play, where their engagement with their surroundings is most authentic and unrestricted by the limitations typically imposed by traditional educational settings. In this way, the negative educator becomes a facilitator of a learning path that is aligned with the unique intellectual and affective makeup of each learner, allowing for the natural unfolding of the learner's curiosity and the maximization of their natural developmental potential.

By allowing learners the space to explore and experience the world on their own terms, within the framework of a curated educational environment, Rousseau believes that they will naturally learn by the repeated frustration of coming up against the resistance of the world to navigate life's challenges, cultivate resilience, and develop a balanced perspective that integrates self-care with compassionate concern for others. He posits that doing this is key to unlocking a learner's capacities, providing a foundation for learning that is as concerned with the development of virtue as it is with intellectual growth, as we will soon discuss in more detail below in Part II.

[181] Ibid. 94

In Rousseau's view, learning within the educator-learner relationship is essentially centered around natural curiosity and the unstructured, free interactions learners have with their surroundings. He believes that it is through the freedom to engage in play and exploration, a process thoughtfully facilitated by the negative educator who provides the space necessary for this to occur, that learners can investigate and experiment with their own abilities and limitations. This approach goes beyond the outcomes of traditional structured education, as Rousseau posits that self-guided discovery not only fosters resilience, creativity, and adaptability, but also equips learners with essential understanding and skills for their always ongoing development. As we've noted, "Everything is learning for animate and sensitive beings."[182] He advocates for an educational setting that encourages exploratory learning, a space where learners can continuously mature naturally through the implementation of the natural forces that guide them, propelled by an instinctual desire to understand their surroundings, unrestricted by prescribed learning methods or other extrinsic impositions.

However, Rousseau is also acutely aware of the challenges in providing an environment conducive to a purely negative education. He inquires, "Will we keep [the learner] in the moon's orb or on a desert island? Will we keep him away from all human beings?"[183] These questions acknowledge the near impossibility of isolating the learner from society's potentially pernicious influence, which may hinder the development of the learner's natural capacities. He concedes, "Will he not constantly have in the world the spectacle and the example of others' passions?" thereby recognizing the omnipresence of social norms and behaviors that the learner will inevitably encounter and potentially

[182] Ibid. 62
[183] Ibid. 94

emulate, thereby taking them away from their authentic self.[184] Rousseau does not shy away from these difficulties and admits they may be insurmountable, yet he holds firm in his conviction that striving to overcome them is both necessary and valuable for a negative education. He asserts, "But it is still certain that in applying oneself to overcoming them, one does overcome them up to a certain point."[185] By setting the ideal, Rousseau does not guarantee its attainment but emphasizes that the closer one comes to this ideal, the more successful the educational endeavor will be.

Rousseau emphasizes the role of the learner's surroundings in their education when he writes,

> *Instead of letting him stagnate in the stale air of a room, let [the learner] be taken daily to the middle of a field. There let him run and frisk about; let him fall a hundred times a day. So much the better. That way he will learn how to get up sooner. The well-being of freedom makes up for many wounds. My pupil will often have bruises. But, in compensation, he will always be gay. If your pupils have fewer bruises, they are always hindered, always enchained, always sad. I doubt whether the advantage is theirs.*[186]

Here, Rousseau isn't just advocating for physical activity; he is emphasizing the role of the negative educator in engaging the learner's entire being in a pedagogical setting – the body, mind, and heart in learning. The act of falling and rising is both a physical and a metaphorical learning process that teaches a resilience that can be drawn on in any situation, intertwining the physical with the intellectual and, as we will see in detail below, the virtuous. As we've noted, "Far from being attentive to protecting Emile from injury, I would be most distressed if he were never hurt and grew up without knowing

[184] Ibid.
[185] Ibid. 95
[186] Ibid. 78

pain. To suffer is the first thing he ought to learn and the thing he will most need to know."[187]

In *Emile,* the scene of a lavish feast serves as a rich illustration of the pedagogical principles underpinning the relationship between the negative educator and the learner. Amidst the opulence of a feast, where "many people, many lackeys, many dishes, an elegant and fine table service" are present, the learner is placed in a situation simmering with seductive sensory experiences.[188] Rousseau describes this setting as intoxicating, capable of overwhelming the senses of one unaccustomed to such excess. It is here that the negative educator in the narrative, Jean-Jacques, seizes an instructive moment, whispering a provocative question to Emile: "Through how many hands would you estimate that all you see on this table has passed before getting here?"[189] This query serves as a catalyst for reflection, instantly diverting the learner from the "vapors of the delirium" and transforming the festive environment into an impromptu classroom.[190]

This moment reflects the essence of Rousseau's educational ethos, where learning emerges not from structured lessons but from the immediate, direct engagement with the learner's surroundings. The opulent table becomes a "text for his instruction," an event for the learner to interpret and understand.[191] "He dreams, he reflects, he calculates, he worries," engaging in a silent contemplation on the complexities of luxury, labor, and mortality.[192] As Rousseau says,

> *With a healthy judgment that nothing has been able to corrupt, what will he think of this luxury when he finds that every region of the world has been*

[187] Ibid. 78
[188] Ibid. 190
[189] Ibid.
[190] Ibid.
[191] Ibid.
[192] Ibid.

> *made to contribute; that perhaps twenty million hands have worked for a long time; that it has cost the lives of perhaps thousands of men, and all this to present to him with pomp at noon what he is going to deposit in his toilet at night?* [193]

The learner, contrasting with the adults who "prate and act like children," undertakes a solitary inquiry, "philosophizing for himself in his corner."[194]

Such experiences, Rousseau posits, are indispensable in cultivating a learner's autonomy and comparative faculties. Through the guidance of the negative educator, who provides opportunities for exploration while withholding immediate answers, the learner is encouraged to exercise their judgment and confront the ethical dimensions of their observations. In this way, Rousseau articulates a vision of education that fosters personal growth, reflection, and an authentic self-identity grounded in an understanding of the wider implications of human actions.

As we will see in more detail below in Part II, Rousseau posits that in the educator-learner relationship, a learner's education should be as concerned with virtuous sentiments as it is with intellectual growth. The ideal curated environment that fosters such comprehensive development is physically and relatively safe as well as affectively and ethically stimulating. This allows the learner to not only observe and interact with their surroundings but to do so with a sense of connection and responsibility towards others.

[193] Ibid.
[194] Ibid.

Empowering Autonomy:
The Role of Negative Education in Nurturing Self-Motivated Learning

In the educator-learner relationship as envisioned by Rousseau, there is a progressive elaboration of the concept of natural curiosity and its practical expressions in the learning environment. While earlier discussions have emphasized the significance of natural curiosity as a natural human attribute, manifesting through active engagement with the learner's surroundings, our focus now shifts to the specific pedagogical approach that educators should employ to best nurture this natural curiosity in learners.

Building upon the previous discussion of creating a conducive learning environment, it becomes evident that the negative educator's role is critical in facilitating a learner's natural development of capacities. This approach is more than the provision of a relatively safe and stimulating environment. It requires the negative educator to have a nuanced understanding of the learner's natural inclinations and capacities, their dispositions, guiding them in a manner that allows their natural curiosity and their idiosyncratic dispositions to fully flourish.

In Rousseau's view, the essence of negative education lies in the delicate art of indirect guidance, where the educator refrains from overt instruction or interference, echoing his conviction that the negative educator should "Let the [learner] do nothing on anybody's word," including that of the negative educator.[195] This approach is predicated on the curation of scenarios that engage the learner's curiosity and stimulate their desire for discovery. The role of the negative educator is to challenge the learner and thereby provoke thought, allowing the learner to undertake their own pursuit of understanding their experiences. Rousseau elaborates on this concept, suggesting that education should

[195] Ibid. 178

be “purely negative,” focusing not on didactically imparting knowledge of virtue or truth but on shielding the learner from vice and error.[196] By safeguarding the learner from extrinsic biases, to the extent that this is possible, and allowing reason to develop in an unforced and uninhibited manner, the negative educator enables the learner to become “the wisest of men; and in beginning by doing nothing, you would have worked an educational marvel.”[197] Through this process, the negative educator’s subtle influence and the learner’s self-motivated inquiry converge, fostering a unique educational experience that is shaped by the learner’s instinctual drive to understand, rather than by the dictates of the positive educator.

Rousseau’s educational approach, emphasizing the significance of a learner’s interaction with their surroundings, is exemplified when he describes an enlightening moment between Emile and his negative educator, Jean Jacques. In this scene, Rousseau illustrates the essence of negative education at work. “I take a stone and feign placing it in the air. I open my hand; the stone falls.”[198] The action is simple, yet it initiates a profound inquiry, prompting Emile to reflect on the nature of gravity. As Jean-Jacques questions, “Why did this stone fall?” the learner is invited to contemplate a natural phenomenon through personal observation rather than receiving a didactic explanation.[199] This methodical inquiry is furthered by the conversation that follows, where the initial, obvious answer, “the stone falls because it is heavy,” is probed deeper, revealing the

[196] Ibid. 83
[197] Ibid. 94
[198] Ibid. 177
[199] Ibid.

circular reasoning that often underlies superficial understanding.[200] Jean-Jacques remarks, "And what is heavy? That is what falls. The stone falls, therefore, because it falls?"[201]

This exchange between Jean-Jacques and Emile is not only an exercise in understanding the physical world but also one in independent thinking, as Emile encounters the limitations of his current comprehension. Here, Rousseau promotes the role of the negative educator, who, through carefully crafted experiences and strategic questioning, encourages the learner to ponder deeply, beyond the initial response: "Here my little philosopher is really stumped. This is his first lesson in systematic physics, and, whether it profits him in this study or not, it will still be a lesson in good sense."[202] The lesson with the stone does not simply promote the contemplation of physical principles but serves as an allegory for the negative educator's broader pedagogical goals. By guiding Emile to recognize the inadequacy of his first answer and inspiring a quest for a more reasoned explanation, the negative educator is nurturing Emile's capacity for independent thinking and self-guided learning. Rousseau's narrative exemplifies how education should foster an environment where the learner is propelled by natural curiosity to a deeper understanding, aligning with Rousseau's pedagogical stance that genuine, natural learning comes from an active and direct engagement with the world, guided subtly by the educator's indirect influence.

In Rousseau's view, the negative educator's responsibility within the learner-educator dynamic is to honor the idiosyncrasy of each learner by grounding their pedagogy in the natural being of the learner. The task is to facilitate a learning

[200] Ibid.
[201] Ibid.
[202] Ibid.

environment that fosters personal discovery and growth. In the spirit of Rousseau's guidance, "To form this rare man [i.e., one who is raised for himself], what do we have to do? Very much, doubtless. What must be done is to prevent anything from being done," the negative educator must carefully navigate the learning process to avoid imposing rigid structure upon the learner's pursuit of understanding.[203] To use Rousseau's metaphor, like a skilled sailor who understands that sometimes the best action is inaction – casting anchor amidst a heavy sea to hold steady rather than tacking against the wind – the negative educator must create the conditions for stillness and self-guided exploration, allowing learners to anchor themselves firmly in their own natural way of being. This educational stance ensures that learning is not simply a transfer of information but a transformative process, aligning with the learner's own drive for understanding and self-fulfillment. As he says, "Take care, young pilot, for fear that your cable run or your anchor drag and that the vessel drift without your noticing."[204] Here, Rousseau warns of the dangers of education without anchor, an education that drifts away from the learner's natural way of being, endangering their authenticity.

Rousseau's directive "What must be done is to prevent anything from being done," serves as a paradoxical instruction that speaks to the heart of his educational philosophy. The phrase captures the essence of a less intrusive, more observational role of the educator, who is tasked with the delicate balance of guiding without directing, of influencing without coercing. Rousseau is advocating for a space where the learner's innate tendencies, interests, and inclinations are allowed to manifest naturally, without the interference of the agendas of others or the imposition of academic formalities. This

[203] Ibid. 41
[204] Ibid.

approach is premised on the belief that every learner naturally possesses the capacity for growth and development. The educator's restraint is a strategic act designed to foster the learner's active engagement with their surroundings, encouraging a form of education where the learner is not a passive recipient but an active participant in their own development. It is through this non-action that the educator facilitates a ground for the learner's self-constructed knowledge, allowing the learner to navigate their own education, make independent decisions, and thus develop a strong sense of self and autonomy. This reflects Rousseau's conviction that education should be a natural process that emerges from the learner's active engagement with the world, rather than a predetermined set of instructions to be followed.

Rousseau's educational thinking, then, promotes a learner-centered approach where the negative educator's role is to facilitate, rather than dictate, the learning process. This approach ensures that negative education is not just a transmission of information but a pursuit of personal development and discovery, guided by the learner's natural curiosity and idiosyncratic capacities.

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Through our exploration of Rousseau's educational philosophy so far, we've gained insights into the nature of the educator-learner relationship in a negative education, emphasizing a pedagogical pursuit that eschews traditional didactic methods. Rousseau advances a model of negative education, focusing on nurturing the natural curiosity inherent in learners and fostering an environment conducive to self-discovery. This approach redefines the role of the educator from a direct instructor to a facilitator who creates a space where learners can explore, reflect, and develop their intellectual and

affective capacities naturally. The dynamic interplay between *amour de soi* and natural compassion in practical activity emerges as a foundational element, driving learners towards a deeper engagement with their surroundings and evolving from instinctual to reflective and socially conscious beings. Rousseau's vision for education is one where the development of reflective capacities is cultivated through experiences that encourage self-guided exploration and the thoughtful examination of the learner's relationship with their surroundings. In this light, Rousseau's insights present a case for a learner-centered and dynamic educational model that values and nurtures the natural capabilities of learners, aiming to produce not only knowledgeable but also ethically conscious and socially aware beings. This examination of Rousseau's thoughts on the educator-learner relationship emphasizes a transformative educational framework that stresses respect, cultivation of inherent capacities, and the importance of creating a supportive and stimulating learning environment.

Rousseau's educational thinking progresses from nurturing natural curiosity to the formation of virtue. Part I provides the foundation for understanding this movement by articulating negative education and its role in personal growth through self-guided learning. Part II advances this narrative by examining how natural instincts are refined into virtues within the negative educational context. This is pivotal for grasping Rousseau's comprehensive educational vision, which aims not just for intellectual growth but also for fostering character development. By analyzing the transformation of instinct into virtue, we deepen our understanding of Rousseau's perspective on personal and social development. Part II thus expands the discussion, emphasizing education's vital role in developing learners who not only understand but are virtuous.

Part II. Educating for Virtue

In this Part of the chapter, we continue to explore the educational thinking of Rousseau, investigating his unique pathway from the cultivation of fundamental human instincts and idiosyncratic dispositions to that of virtue within an educational context. Part II articulates how the forces of *amour de soi* and compassion – natural and instinctual – ground and steer the development of virtuous character when fostered and balanced in a conducive learning environment. Contrasting the instinctual and naturalistic foundations of Rousseau's thinking with the positive, rational, and structured approach of Locke, we elucidate the role of negative education in promoting individual autonomy and authenticity.

Herein, virtues such as courage, integrity, and responsibility are not imposed but discovered and honed through the lived experiences and reflections of the learners, guided subtly by the negative educator. We endeavor here to provide insight into the natural integration of virtues with the learner's character, advocating for a pedagogical approach that supports self-directed virtuous and intellectual development. We now further investigate into the nuances of negative education and its pivotal role in virtue development, highlighting the negative educator's crucial role in nurturing an environment that allows learners to develop their naturally virtuous potential.

Instincts to Virtues: Rousseau's Pathway from Self-Care and Natural Compassion to Virtue in Education

As we have seen throughout this dissertation, the instinctual force of *amour de soi* drives learners towards behaviors and attitudes that prioritize their well-being. This

instinct is not solely a mechanism for survival but also grounds the learner's pursuit of understanding and their mastery of skills that safeguard and enhance their quality of life. At the same time, natural compassion, as an equally primal and instinctual force, complements self-care by directing learners towards compassionate behaviors that contribute to the welfare of others.

The balanced integration of these instincts into pedagogical projects is pivotal for the development of virtues. Rousseau posits that when these natural tendencies are recognized and valued within the learning environment, they lay the foundation for what he considers virtuous behavior. Negative educators, in recognizing these natural impulses, are tasked with guiding the learner's path from instinctual actions to the deliberate cultivation of virtues. This is crucial for a learner's comprehensive development, as negative education not only fosters intellectual growth but also informs the learner's character and virtuous behavior.

In Rousseau's thinking of the learner's experience in the educator-learner relationship, virtue is intimately linked to the realities of human life, diverging significantly from conventional moral philosophy which tends to posit rationally derived principles by which to abide. Rousseau conceives virtues not as abstract concepts but as lived expressions of natural instincts. As he says,

> *…these words [i.e., 'virtue' and 'vice'] are taken in a physical sense and the qualities that can harm an individual's self-preservation are called vices, and those that can contribute to it, virtues; in which case he who least resists the simple impulsions of Nature would have to be called the most virtuous.*[205]

[205] Rousseau, *The Second Discourse*, 150

And, “Let us set down as an incontestable maxim that the first movements of nature are always right. There is no original perversity in the human heart.”[206] Virtue, then, is not an ideal to be pursued in abstraction, not a set of rules to follow, but is instead a characteristic evident in the practical, everyday expressions of our “impulsions of nature” (*amour de soi* and natural compassion) that guide learners toward conduct that is inherently virtuous.

In this naturalistic view of virtue, *amour de soi* drives the learner to engage in behaviors that safeguard and enhance their well-being, crucial for their effective participation in education. Natural compassion, equally a fundamental and natural instinct, propels the learner to consider and empathize with the welfare of others. These instincts are not internal, psychological forces but embedded in the psychophysicality of our being, motivating actions that are inherently virtuous and lived rather than passively learned.

For Rousseau, the evolution of the learner’s character is intrinsically connected to their lived experiences. The principle of non-harm, which he adopts, is not an imposed rule but a consequence of the practical expression of the instincts of *amour de soi* and natural compassion. Rousseau posits, “The only lesson of morality appropriate to childhood, and the most important for every age, is never to harm anyone.”[207] This dictum is not a discrete lesson to be memorized and applied, but the outcome of a learner’s instinctual *amour de soi*, which promotes self-care, and natural compassion, which extends this care to others, intuitively understanding the value of not inflicting suffering, including to oneself.

[206] Rousseau, *Emile*, 92
[207] Ibid. 104

This principle of non-harm emerges in the lived experiences of learners as they engage with their surroundings. When a learner, motivated by *amour de soi*, encounters a situation where their actions could cause harm to others, their natural instinct for self-care as reflectively developed prompts a consideration of consequences. They recognize that causing harm to others could ultimately return to affect their own well-being, creating a social environment that is harmful rather than nurturing. Thus, *amour de soi*, while self-focused in its origin, becomes a reflective social compass, directing the learner towards actions that preserve harmony and well-being within their community.

At the same time, natural compassion compels learners to identify with and be transported into the distress of others. And, as reflective compassion, to compare their own situation with that of the other. This is not a compassion learned from books or lectures, but one that arises spontaneously in the course of lived experience – the sight of another's pain, the understanding of distress, and the instinctive desire to alleviate it. Rousseau's statement above highlights this natural instinct, suggesting that natural compassion, when enacted in the concrete interactions of daily life, leads to a practical and reflective understanding of the principle of non-harm.

The educator's role in Rousseau's framework is to create environments where these instincts can express themselves and be refined. Through negative education – where the learner is not directly taught what to think but is instead given the freedom and dignity to learn from their own experiences – learners come to assimilate the principle of non-harm. They do so not through didactic instruction but through the natural development of *amour de soi* and natural compassion in response to the real situations they encounter. As they navigate complex social landscapes, making choices grounded in

nature and observing their impacts, they learn the value of non-harm in a profound and personal way.

Contrasting Rousseau's Innate Virtue with Locke's Didacticism

By briefly contrasting Rousseau's concepts with those of Locke's, we can further discern the unique and revolutionary nature of Rousseau's thoughts on the instinctual basis of virtue. The cultivation of virtue, as outlined by Locke, is a deliberate and thoughtful process, where the mind's blank slate is inscribed by the rationally interpreted experience of sensory inputs and the careful and didactic guidance of positive educators. Locke posits that virtue arises not inherently but through the molding influence of instruction and practice. The positive educator's task, therefore, is to structure the environment and provide examples that encourage the learner to engage in pre-structured rational reflection and to adopt what the positive educator has deemed to be virtuous habits.

This model starkly contrasts with Rousseau's perspective, which holds that virtue is an innate attribute, intrinsically tied to the natural instincts of *amour de soi* and compassion. Where Locke would see virtue as something to be systematically taught through example and reinforced by reflection on the consequences of one's actions, Rousseau sees it as something to be uncovered and allowed to flourish through the learner's spontaneous and self-motivated actions. According to Rousseau, the negative educator does not instill virtue directly but creates the conditions under which the learner's pre-existing virtuous dispositions can express themselves freely and develop naturally.

In this light, the pedagogical approaches to virtue education are fundamentally different. Locke's pedagogical approach requires a highly structured environment where moral lessons are imparted and good behavior is modeled and rewarded. Conversely, Rousseau's pedagogical approach relies on a less restrictive setting where the learner is free to explore, and through this exploration, discover and refine their natural virtue. For Rousseau, the negative educator's role is not to teach virtue explicitly, but to safeguard the learner from influences that could corrupt their natural goodness, thereby ensuring that the development of virtue remains aligned with the learner's natural character and instincts.

Character Development in Rousseau's Educational Philosophy: The Balanced Interplay of Amour de Soi *and Natural Compassion*

Rousseau's vision of education extends the concept of virtue beyond mere moral correctness with respect to moral precepts; it involves the formation of a whole character that includes, for example, courage, integrity, and responsibility. A brief examination of how these particular virtues develop from a balance of *amour de soi* and natural compassion provides greater insight into the role of the negative educator in cultivating virtues more generally. These virtues become apparent as the learner, influenced by their natural instincts, engages with the world under the guidance of the negative educator.

Courage, within Rousseau's pedagogy, emerges from a balanced interplay between *amour de soi* and natural compassion, especially when a learner is faced with situations that necessitate confronting danger to ensure both personal well-being and the safety of others. Imagine a scenario in which a learner notices a wasp in the classroom that is not immediately visible to others. The negative educator, upon seeing the learner's

concern, might ask, ‘Considering the risk, how can we ensure everyone’s safety?’ This question activates the learner’s *amour de soi,* prompting an assessment of the danger to self, but also draws upon compassion through an awareness of the potential danger to others. The act of courage unfolds as the learner decides to alert others and move to squash the horrid insect, despite the risk of being stung. This decision is rooted in a sense of self-care that does not ignore the well-being of the community. Here, courage is not just a reckless challenge to danger, but a measured response that balances the learner’s own safety with a broader concern for others, embodying Rousseau’s ideal that true virtue, such as courage, arises from following our natural instincts of *amour de soi* and natural compassion as expressed in practical behavior.

Integrity is the virtue of being honest and maintaining one’s authenticity, which, in Rousseau’s educational framework, is not imposed but discovered through the learner’s own lived experiences. As learners negotiate their path between *amour de soi* and natural compassion through practical activity, they instinctively understand the importance of being truthful. For instance, consider a learner involved in a debate competition where they are tempted to use a fabricated argument to secure a win. The negative educator might ask, ‘How does using falsehood affect your sense of self and the fairness of our competition?’ This question encourages the learner to reflect on the importance of authenticity and the ramifications of dishonesty, prompting a realization that true merit lies in integrity. *Amour de soi* motivates the learner towards self-respect and success through genuine effort, while compassion fosters a sense of fairness and empathy towards their competitors and the audience. This reflection leads the learner to choose honesty, embodying integrity as a virtue that benefits both themselves and others.

Responsibility is nurtured in learners as they realize the impact and take ownership of their actions, guided by the dual instincts of *amour de soi* and natural compassion. The negative educator's role is not to dictate behavior but to facilitate situations where the learner's choices lead to self-discovery. Picture a learner involved in coordinating a community cleanup. Here, *amour de soi* motivates the learner to take ownership of a segment of the project, such as waste segregation, because it aligns with their instinct for self-care through environmental care. Compassion extends this sense of responsibility to the collective, urging the learner to consider the broader implications of their actions on the community. The negative educator, instead of providing direct instructions, might pose a challenging question: 'What criteria could we establish to determine the most efficient method of waste segregation?' Asking this question (without answering it) encourages the learner to think independently and innovate, allowing them to experience the fulfillment of personal and communal achievement and to recognize the value of taking responsibility for the environment as a shared resource.

In each case, the learner's development of virtues is not a direct lesson but the result of living through experiences and reflections along with subtle guidance from the negative educator that align with Rousseau's thinking about education. The virtues of courage, integrity, and responsibility are thus woven into the learner's character as natural extensions of their evolving understanding and expression of their own dispositions in a social context. Other virtues, like temperance, liberality, magnanimity, ambition, patience, wittiness, friendliness, and justice, may be similarly derived by understanding them through a balance of self-regard and regard for others. The

educator's subtle guidance ensures that virtues are not simply taught but are understood, lived, and embraced as part of the learner's personal growth and social maturation.

Negative Education and Virtue Formation: Rousseau's Approach to Autonomy and Authenticity

Understanding Rousseau's concept of negative education and the role of the negative educator relative to the learner involves recognizing a dual aim: firstly, to shield the learner from the direct imposition of extrinsic values and, secondly, to equip them for life within society. This educational approach is grounded in the belief that learners should develop according to their natural dispositions, rather than conforming to extrinsically prescribed norms.

Rousseau illuminates this complexity by stating,

> *There is a great difference between the natural man living in the state of nature and the natural man living in the state of society. Emile is not a savage to be relegated to the desert. He is a savage made to inhabit cities. He has to know how to find his necessities in them, to take advantage of their inhabitants, and to live, if not like them, at least with them.*[208]

This passage reveals Rousseau's nuanced stance: while negative education seeks to cultivate the learner's natural virtues, it also prepares them for the inevitable interactions and engagements within typically corrupting social constructs. As we will discuss in more detail in Part IV, the learner is thus envisioned not as an isolated figure but as someone who, while maintaining his natural virtues, is adept at authentically navigating the social landscape.

This perspective is further elaborated when Rousseau describes the disposition of a learner shaped by such an education:

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[208] Ibid. 205

> *He values men's judgments too little to value their prejudices, and he does not care to be esteemed before being known. His way of presenting himself is neither modest nor vain; it is natural and true. He knows neither embarrassment nor disguise, and in the midst of a group he is the same as he is when he is alone and without any witnesses.*[209]

Here, Rousseau outlines the ideal outcome of negative education – a learner who remains authentic and true to their natural self despite social pressures or expectations. Such a learner does not seek validation from external judgments but is self-assured and embodies virtues that are congruent with their innate dispositions.

Rousseau advocates for an educational paradigm that does more than just protect learners from extrinsic impositions; it also prepares them to engage with the world in a manner that is both authentic to their nature and adaptable to social contexts. Negative education is not about complete isolation from society but about fostering a robust sense of self that enables learners to navigate social environments without losing sight of their natural virtues. This approach ensures that learners develop into persons who are not only true to themselves but also capable of meaningful and authentic interactions within their communities.

In Rousseau's vision, the maturation of virtues is cultivated through a negative education that allows itself to be guided by the learner's natural instincts and lived experiences. This approach is encapsulated in Rousseau's statement, "Let us obey nature. We shall know with what gentleness it reigns, and what charm one finds, after having hearkened to it, in giving favorable testimony on our own behalf."[210] Here, Rousseau emphasizes the tranquil authority with which nature can govern the development of

[209] Ibid. 335
[210] Rousseau, *Emile*, 288

virtue, contrasting the peace found in just living with the tumultuous existence of the wicked.

This serenity and joy, the "source in himself," as Rousseau describes it, is exemplified in the educational path of a learner whose experience in a Rousseau-inspired pedagogical environment nurtures the virtues intrinsic to his character.[211] His pursuit of understanding and mastery of skills, reflective of his *amour de soi*, is not a pursuit of external approval but a deeper engagement with his own well-being and fulfillment. His education is a blend of self-discovery and active participation in society, developing virtues through experiential interactions instead of fixed teachings.

Rousseau's assertion that "the serenity of the just man is internal" is mirrored in this learner's assimilation of empathy, as his interactions are marked by a sincere understanding of and caring for others, a virtue emanating from his character ('internal') rather than imposed teaching ('external').[212] It is this 'internal' joy, i.e., the joy that occurs independently of social accolades, that shapes his integrity, enabling him to make choices that are congruent with his authentic self.

The responsibility he exemplifies, an evolution of Rousseau's "joyous" laugh, stands as a clear indication of his self-consistency.[213] His joy, as Rousseau posits, does not rely on extrinsic factors but rather serves as evidence of his virtue, with the ability to communicate contentment to those around him. His educational journey, hence, is not an isolated endeavor but one that contributes positively to his community, realizing

[211] Ibid.
[212] Ibid.
[213] Ibid.

Rousseau's ideal of a just person whose virtues become a source of collective happiness and ethical clarity.

Rousseau's concept of joy as an 'internal' state stresses the idea that true contentment and virtue are self-sustaining, independent of external validation. This intrinsic joy is the hallmark of the well-educated person – it reflects an alignment between the learner's, so to speak, inner moral compass and their outward actions. For Rousseau, such alignment is not incidental but the deliberate product of an education where experiences are not prescribed but discovered, and values are not taught but realized through personal exploration and natural consequences. In this light, the learner's joy becomes not just personal contentment but a social beacon – it demonstrates to others the possibility and the rewards of living authentically. Consequently, the learner's presence in society is not passive; it is an active, living demonstration of the virtues of natural education. The learner becomes the embodiment of Rousseau's ideal, where the cultivation of virtue simultaneously contributes to the betterment of the community. Their actions, stemming from an internal consistency and joy, resonate with others, inspiring similar authenticity and ethical living. This is the essence of Rousseau's educational ideal: the development of learners who, through the integrity of their character, contribute to the creation of a just and joyful society.

By practically incorporating Rousseau's thinking on education, the negative educator fosters an environment where virtues are not merely taught but are lived and experienced. They arise from the learner's own narrative, their own understanding of their lived experience, ensuring a development of virtue that is deeply personal yet

universally resonant, a harmonious balance between self-realization and social contribution.

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In Part II of this chapter, we further investigated Rousseau's educational thinking, focusing on his innovative approach to virtue cultivation through education. Rousseau, in significant contrast to the rationalist traditions of contemporaries such as Locke, posits that virtue arises not from didactic instruction but from the nuanced interplay between a learner's natural instincts – specifically *amour de soi* and natural compassion – and their lived experiences within a supportive educational environment. This exploration reveals that virtues are not imposed externally but developed through the learner's authentic, practical, and experiential engagement with their surroundings, guided subtly by the negative educator. By analyzing Rousseau's vision of negative education, which emphasizes autonomy, authenticity, and the inherent goodness of the natural human condition, this Part of the chapter emphasizes the crucial role negative educators play in fostering an environment conducive to the natural growth of virtuous character.

As we transition to Part III, we pivot from Rousseau's conceptual groundwork on the natural bases of learning and virtue formation towards the pragmatic arena of individualized pedagogical projects. The first two Parts examined the natural human tendencies of *amour de soi* and natural compassion as practically expressed and their vital role in cultivating virtues within the unique dynamics of the educator-learner relationship. We've considered how these virtues are not didactically imposed, but rather discovered and refined through lived experiences under the aegis of negative education. Part III extends this discourse by focusing on the practical implications of Rousseau's

philosophy: the tailoring of educational strategies to align with each learner's unique set of abilities and interests, a process fundamental to the development of their natural potential. This progression is essential as it further captures Rousseau's comprehensive approach to education – one that not only values the natural development of intellectual and virtuous capacities but also recognizes and fosters the authentic individuality of the learner. Here, the discussion shifts from the theoretical to the applied, emphasizing the necessity of adapting educational methods to what Rousseau refers to as the 'particular genius' of each learner, thereby ensuring the formation of not only well-rounded and virtuous individuals but also those who are authentically engaged and self-directed in their lifelong pursuit of learning.

Part III. Individualized Pedagogical Projects

In our investigation into Rousseau's educational vision, the focus shifts from the foundational principles of negative education and the cultivation of virtue to the practical application of these principles in individualized educational strategies. Rousseau advances a pedagogy that recognizes and respects the unique constellation of abilities, interests, and the 'particular genius' of each learner. This Part of the chapter explores how the tailoring of education to the learner's idiosyncratic potential is not only a natural extension of Rousseau's conceptual framework but also a necessary evolution in the practice of negative education.

It is here that the ideals of self-directed growth and the development of virtues meet the educational methodologies required to facilitate them. By adapting pedagogical approaches to the idiosyncratic characteristics of learners, negative educators enable the

authentic development of each learner, ensuring that education serves as a transformative journey towards self-fulfillment and social contribution, rather than a mere acquisition of information.

Tailoring Pedagogy to Potential: Rousseau's Advocacy for Individualized Educational Strategies

Rousseau's conception of the educator-learner relationship respects each learner's unique capacities, emphasizing the need for an educational approach that is finely attuned to the 'particular genius' of every learner. He says, "One must know well the particular genius of the [learner] in order to know what moral diet suits him. Each mind has its own form, according to which it needs to be governed; the success of one's care depends on governing it by this form and not by another."[214] This statement emphasizes the necessity of a custom-fitted educational strategy that aligns with the natural talents, interests, and potential that define the learner's identity and unique path towards understanding and self-awareness. The notion of 'particular genius' in Rousseau's thought is not just an indicator of the individual intellectual abilities of a learner but encompasses a wider spectrum of personal attributes including affectivity, creativity, and physical skills. Rousseau posits that recognizing and fostering these natural qualities are crucial for the comprehensive development of the learner. He advocates against standardized educational models, suggesting instead that the essence of authentic education lies in its ability to adapt to and enhance the learner's natural and idiosyncratic dispositions and capacities.

[214] Ibid. 94

Rousseau's emphasis on intimately understanding the particular genius of the learner calls for educators to engage deeply with each learner's idiosyncratic nature. This involves a shift from a one-dimensional teaching approach to a multifaceted strategy that responds to and nurtures the learner's unique identity. The principle of tailoring education to fit the learner's own form reflects Rousseau's notion that education should not force the learner into a pre-existing mold but rather continuously evolve to meet the learner's ongoing development of idiosyncratic needs and aspirations. Rousseau's assertion within the previously quoted passage highlights a critical element of his educational philosophy – the importance of a personalized, learner-centered approach that cherishes and cultivates the unique potential of each learner. This approach not only enriches the learner's educational experience but also fosters a sense of autonomy, encouraging them to explore and develop their capacities in a supportive environment. Thus, Rousseau's vision for education promotes the learner's journey towards personal growth and self-discovery, advocating for an educational approach that is as dynamic and multifaceted as the learners it serves.

A hallmark of Rousseau's thinking on education is its recognition of the profound depth of individuality, going beyond mere learning preferences to the idiosyncratic nature of a learner's being. His method in the educator-learner context is to discern and nurture this foundational 'genius,' a term he employs to describe the qualities that comprise one's idiosyncratic nature. This approach stands in contrast to the homogenized educational methods prevalent in his time, and, we might add, in our own as well.

Rousseau's notion of particular genius involves more than just acknowledgment – it calls for a practical commitment to designing educational experiences that respect and

adapt to the learner's distinctive characteristics. This aligns with Rousseau's instruction: "Prudent man, spy out nature for a long time; observe your pupil well before saying the first word to him," advocating an adaptive pedagogical approach that is reflective and perceptive of each learner's needs.[215]

Rousseau's emphasis on recognizing the learner's unique traits is not merely a pedagogical choice but an ethical imperative. It reflects a deep respect for the learner's self-determination and worth, advocating for an educational experience that is reflective of their individual identity and goals. This viewpoint reshapes the educator's role from that of a skillful information transmitter to one who actively facilitates the realization and enhancement of the learner's unique potential, a shift that resonates with Rousseau's broader educational thinking which sees education as a liberating and empowering process.

Rousseau's call for a personalized approach to education demonstrates his regard for the natural progression of the learner. He envisions education as an empowering tool, enabling each learner to thrive in a manner unique to them. This vision casts education not as a restrictive practice but as a supportive environment in which the particular genius of each learner is recognized and cultivated.

Tailoring Education to Individuality: Rousseau's Case for Personalized Learning Strategies

Rousseau's advocacy for personalized education in the educator-learner relationship marks a departure from traditional teaching methods by emphasizing the importance of creating pedagogical projects tailored to the distinctiveness of each learner.

[215] Ibid.

He critiques the uniform approach, observing, "One of the things that makes preaching most useless is that it is done indiscriminately to everyone without distinction or selectivity."[216] Rousseau argues against uniform educational practices that overlook "diverse dispositions, so different in mind, humor, age, sex, station, and opinion."[217] He proposes a responsive and dynamic pedagogy that respects the particular genius of each learner – the innate talents, capacities, and interests that define them – necessitating an educational approach that adapts to meet learners in their idiosyncrasy, instead of conforming them to a standard academic model.

The transformative impact of Rousseau's thinking on education lies in its ability to acknowledge each learner's uniqueness and to promote a pedagogy that actively fosters this diversity. Rousseau's vision goes beyond the mere accommodation of different learning styles and views them as a valuable asset. He calls for educational experiences that are as fluid and natural as human development itself, which could result in a variety of dynamic and learner-centered educational practices, such as project-based learning and collaborative tasks that connect with both personal interests and social issues.

Embracing Rousseau's comprehensive educational philosophy means redefining the educator's role from an authoritative and domineering figure to a supportive guide. This shift is pivotal in aiding learners on their educational paths, engaging with each learner's evolving sense of self and worldview. Rousseau advocates for educational strategies that respect learner autonomy and dignity, consistent with his ideal of education as an empowering and liberating process. Such liberation is not merely

[216] Ibid. 319
[217] Ibid.

academic but also personal, enabling learners to discover and refine their capacities genuinely (i.e., in accord with their particular genius), thereby equipping them for thoughtful and authentic participation in the world.

Rousseau's endorsement of flexible and learner-centered educational strategies reflects his respect for the natural progression of the individual learner. This approach challenges educators to cultivate learning environments that are adaptable, considerate, and representative of the multifaceted nature of human potential and aspirations. It aims to allow learners to develop and thrive according to their distinct capacities and interests within the nurturing confines of the negative educational relationship.

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In concluding Part III of this chapter, we synthesize Rousseau's advocacy for educational strategies that are as unique as the learners they serve. We have investigated Rousseau's vision of an education that is more than the mere transference of information, but is rather a personal and liberating pursuit of understanding. Rousseau's pedagogy honors the particular genius of each learner, advancing an adaptive educational approach that aligns with their natural proclivities and idiosyncrasies. This personalized approach encourages a diversity of learning experiences that are not only tailored to but also evolve from the learner's natural characteristics, fostering a sense of autonomy and self-fulfillment. Rousseau's *Emile* is far from being an instruction manual for teaching; rather, it is a philosophical treatise that emphasizes the uniqueness and individuality of each learner, advocating for a personalized approach to education. Rousseau's critique of standardized educational practices and his call for tailored pedagogical strategies stress his belief that education should evolve to meet the distinct needs of each learner. He

complains, "'Propose what can be done,' they never stop repeating to me," expressing his weariness of the limitations of prescriptive educational models.[218] Rousseau's vision for education is not about providing a one-size-fits-all method, but about fostering an environment where the particular genius of each learner is recognized and cultivated. This approach respects the learner's idiosyncratic nature and promotes their autonomy, guiding them towards self-discovery and social contribution. By focusing on individualized educational projects and the natural progression of the learner, Rousseau stresses that true education is a transformative and liberating journey, tailored to the innate talents and interests of each individual. The negative educator's role becomes one of a facilitator who supports and enhances the learner's journey of self-discovery and social contribution, thereby transforming the educational process into an empowering and emancipating experience. The discourse within this Part is a call to action for an adaptable, considerate, and multifaceted pedagogy that cultivates an environment where each learner can flourish in their unique capacity, preparing them for a thoughtful and authentic engagement with their surroundings.

Moving into Part IV from the largely individual-centric elements of Rousseau's pedagogy as it has been discussed in Parts I through III, we advance into the broader social milieu where Rousseau's principles meet community life. Having investigated the complexities of self-awareness, personal virtue, and the cultivation of each learner's particular genius, we now explore the application of these natural developments to social integration. Part IV, builds upon the idea that learners have honed capabilities and virtues and we transition our focus to the collective realm. Here, the autonomous characters

[218] Ibid. 34

developed with the supportive and indirect aid of the negative educator step into roles within their communities, demonstrating how personal enlightenment and social contribution are two aspects of the same negative educational process in Rousseau's educational thinking. This following Part of the chapter aims to capture the fruition of Rousseau's vision – where educated learners not only realize their potential but also harmonize it with their civic duties and social responsibilities.

Part IV. Preparing for Social Integration

Rousseau's educational paradigm shifts seamlessly from the learner's idiosyncratic development to their role within social milieus. Emphasizing the inextricable link between self-awareness and social responsibilities, Rousseau advocates for an education that is more than the transference of information and that instead nurtures the learner's natural capabilities and virtues. He holds that personal development is not a solitary journey but one that prepares the learner for active and authentic community engagement.

Rousseau challenges negative educators to craft experiences that not only resonate with learners' natural tendencies but also equip them to authentically navigate and contribute constructively to the social milieus in which they find themselves. This integrated approach to education aims to cultivate learners who are not only self-aware and capable but also socially responsible, ensuring that their personal growth harmonizes with their civic duties and social contributions.

Synergizing the Self and Society:
Rousseau's Vision for Personal Development within the Community

Rousseau's educational thinking deeply appreciates the intrinsic worth of each learner. This feature is evident in his approach to the educator-learner relationship. He suggests that personal development is fundamental in fostering self-awareness and individual capabilities. As we've seen, Rousseau posits that "from our birth we are affected in various ways by the objects surrounding us."[219] These early dispositions, our capacities to be "affected in various ways," Rousseau argues, are the natural "original dispositions" that form the foundation of our being.[220] In essence, we are what we are able to do. Education should thus promote personal development by resonating with and advancing these natural capacities, rather than simply instilling rote learning.

Consider a learner whose innate empathy and sense of justice are recognized by his negative educator. Rousseau would argue that these traits demonstrate a potential that indicates what he has done or can do, of who he inherently is. For example, by engaging in community service, he actualizes his inherent worth – a worth that is, naturally, not granted by others due to his actions but is acknowledged and expressed through them. Rousseau contends that education should help learners realize and maximize their inherent potential, thereby allowing the learner to engage with the world in a manner that respects their autonomy. He states, "Swept along in contrary routes by nature and by men, forced to divide ourselves between these different impulses, we follow a composite impulse which leads us to neither one goal nor the other."[221] Here, Rousseau reflects on the conflict that arises from the divergence between natural dispositions and social

[219] Ibid. 39
[220] Ibid.
[221] Ibid. 42

pressures. In the educational process, this conflict of forces implies that the natural worth of learners does not come from how well they navigate these forces, but from their capacity to maintain authenticity amidst them. The role of negative education is to support this steadfastness and to foster enlightenment – a genuine understanding of the learner's capacities, surroundings, and place within constitutive relations.

Education that recognizes that intrinsic worth motivates learners to pursue their interests and develop their talents and steers clear of a uniform curriculum. Rousseau's educational approach promotes personal growth and virtuous self-governance based on the learner's natural instincts. As learners become more self-aware and autonomous, they also become more virtuous. Both their intellectual understanding and the virtuous dimensions of their actions and beliefs become deeper.

Rousseau emphasizes the virtuous dimension of education, which requires educators to cultivate experiences that nurture the learner's capacities. He relates this back to our natural tendencies, saying, "It is, then, to these original dispositions that everything must be related," thereby emphasizing the primacy of inherent nature in the pursuit of self-exploration and continuous development.[222] Personal development via education is not just a means of self-improvement but a preparation for the flux of active and cooperative social participation.

Rousseau sees personal development as a pathway to becoming an authentic and conscientious community member. Education should aim to foster learners who are self-aware and skilled, ready to fulfill their civic duties without losing themselves to conformity. The pursuit of personal growth, facilitated by the educator, is inextricably

[222] Ibid. 39

linked to the learner's social engagement, melding individual progress with social obligations.

Harmonizing Individual Growth and Social Duty

Rousseau's educational philosophy stresses the importance of personal development in concert with the cultivation of social responsibilities, emphasizing that true personal growth and an understanding of one's role within society are deeply interconnected. This connection is crucial for a learner's successful integration into society. Rousseau illustrates the significant impact of social influence on one's social existence, noting that without the guidance of negative education, social forces can distort the natural evolution of human potential. However, through negative education that aligns personal growth with social duties, learners can achieve self-awareness, develop their unique abilities, and attain a nuanced understanding of their roles within the community. This undergirds community sentiment and empathy.

Rousseau's perspective is further distinguished by its acknowledgment of the symbiotic relationship between personal growth and social awareness, stressing that without careful nurturing through negative education, learners can become heavily influenced by social forces that stifle their natural propensities. Personal development, in Rousseau's view, both is valuable in itself and serves a broader purpose: preparing learners for meaningful and authentic social participation. This preparation allows learners to comprehend and fulfill their communal responsibilities and to contribute constructively to collective well-being.

In Rousseau's conception, while education should foster the natural development of a learner's character and intellect, it must also grapple with the reality that learners do not exist in a vacuum but within a complex social framework. He acknowledges the inherent tension in fostering a learner's natural dispositions through negative education while ensuring they are prepared for the unavoidable influence of society. Rousseau illustrates this tension through the metaphor of the nascent shrub, in which the learner educated for himself alone is "like a shrub that chance had caused to be born in the middle of a path and that the passers-by soon cause to perish by bumping into it from all sides and bending it in every direction."[223] This imagery captures the vulnerability of a learner whose development is left solely to natural tendencies within the abrasive context of social interactions.

The nascent shrub represents the ideal of a learner whose natural dispositions have been allowed to develop through negative education. Yet, Rousseau recognizes that without careful guidance, this learner, the "shrub," faces the risk of being stunted or distorted by the "passers-by" – the array of potentially stifling social forces, conventions, and structures. His acknowledgment of the challenges facing such a naturally raised learner in society serves as a reminder of the need for a delicate balance in education between the maintenance of authenticity and coexistence with others.

Rousseau is not advocating for a complete withdrawal from society (which, as seen above, is nearly impossible) but rather for an education that respects the learner's natural inclinations while also preparing them to engage with a world characterized by "prejudices, authority, necessity, [and] example."[224] The negative educator's role, then, is

[223] Ibid. 37
[224] Ibid.

not just to protect and nurture the learner's authenticity but also to arm them with the social understanding and resilience required to maintain their unique character against the forces that would otherwise shape them into conformity.

Through his educational philosophy, Rousseau invites us to consider how the individuality of the nascent shrub can be nourished without succumbing to the perils of the trodden path. This calls for an education that not only understands and upholds the innate virtues of learners but also equips them with the ability to withstand and intelligently navigate the social milieu in which they are ensnared. In essence, Rousseau is asserting the importance of an educational path that finds harmony between the natural dispositions of learners and the extrinsic values imposed by society, preparing learners to live authentically within the shared human landscape.

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In the culmination of our investigation into Rousseau's thinking on education, Part IV examines how the learner's idiosyncratic development synthesizes with their imminent social roles, advocating for a symbiotic maturation of self and community. Here, Rousseau's educational thinking reaches its apex, emphasizing that personal growth and social integration are not distinct trajectories but entwined developments. Education thus expands beyond self-awareness to embrace social responsibilities, preparing learners not just for personal success but for meaningful communal engagement. This prepares learners to be responsible members of the community who can contribute meaningfully while maintaining their authenticity.

Conclusion

Through our exploration of Rousseau's negative education, we have seen that the essence and dynamics of the educator-learner relationship emerge as the cornerstone upon which his educational framework rests. This relationship, as articulated throughout the chapter, is not defined in terms of didactic instruction but in terms of transformation, rooted in a responsive understanding and respect for the learner's natural development and potential.

Rousseau reimagines the roles within this relationship, casting the educator not as a mere conveyor of information but as a sensitive and insightful guardian of the learner's path to self-discovery and growth. This redefined role emphasizes the educator's responsibility to create a nurturing environment that allows the natural curiosity and unique capabilities of the learner to flourish. Rousseau's vision emphasizes a pedagogical partnership where the educator and learner embark on a collaborative journey guided by the principles of negative education, which prioritize the facilitation of the learner's autonomous and authentic exploration over direct instruction.

The negative educator, in Rousseau's framework, is tasked with maintaining a delicate balance: to protect the learner from the corrupting influences of society while preparing them to engage meaningfully within it. This requires a nuanced approach that respects the learner's particular genius – their individual talents, interests, and capacities. The negative educator must, therefore, be adept at recognizing and cultivating the natural qualities of the learner and providing tailored guidance that aligns with their natural proclivities. This individualized support not only fosters intellectual and virtue development but also instills a sense of self-worth and autonomy in the learner.

Furthermore, Rousseau envisions this dynamic relationship as essential for preparing the learner for social integration. The development of virtues and capabilities is seen as inherently linked to the learner's ability to authentically contribute to and participate in communal life. The educator's role, therefore, extends beyond personal development to include the cultivation of social awareness and responsibility. Through the educator-learner relationship, learners are equipped with the understanding and skills necessary for active and empathetic engagement in society, exemplifying Rousseau's ideal of a well-rounded and socially conscious individual.

In summary, the educator-learner relationship, as illuminated in this chapter, is central to Rousseau's educational thinking. It is a relationship defined by mutual respect, empathy, and a shared commitment to the learner's holistic development. Rousseau challenges educators to eschew conventional pedagogical norms and practice a dynamic and responsive approach that honors the natural evolution of the learner. This framework not only elevates educational experience but also redefines the purpose of education itself – to nurture and protect rather than instruct. Through this lens, Rousseau's insights into the educator-learner relationship provide a perspective on the transformative power of negative education, emphasizing its capacity to not only facilitate the development of learners but also to influence the essence and quality of community life.

Conclusion

This dissertation explored Rousseau's educational philosophy, most notably through a close reading of his *Emile*. It has also focused on elucidating the experiential and relational dimensions of his thought about education, driven by three foundational principles laid out by Rousseau: that "Our true study is that of the human condition," that "the lesson always [comes] from the thing itself," and that "The study suitable for man is that of his relations."[225]

Methodological Reflections

To reiterate what was stated in the introduction, the adopted methodology acknowledges that all interpretation is inherently shaped by the interpreter's personal and historical context. Any interpretation involves the interaction between the text and the reader. By engaging only with Rousseau's texts, this study aimed to articulate Rousseau's educational insights as I encountered them, influenced by my specific interests in the experiential and relational dynamics of education. This hermeneutic approach, while allowing a fresh and personal engagement with Rousseau, comes with its own set of assumptions and influences. For instance, my interpretations are inevitably colored by contemporary educational concerns and philosophical interests, which might focus attention on certain aspects of Rousseau's text while overshadowing others. A different interpretation, for example one grounded in a socio-political rather than an experiential-relational perspective, is likely to highlight different facets of Rousseau's educational

[225] Ibid. 42, 124, 214

philosophy, offering alternative insights that might complement or even challenge my findings.

My approach intentionally distanced itself from reliance on secondary literature, critical analysis, and contemporary application to minimize the mediation of my encounter with Rousseau's ideas through the contemporary scholarly lenses of others. Instead, the engagement was aimed at extracting insights from Rousseau's own writings as I encountered them, allowing for a unique interpretation of his views on the experiential relationships between the self and objects, the self and others, and between educators and learners. This methodology, while providing fresh insights neglected by the existing body of secondary literature, also presents limitations, as any methodology will. In particular, my approach overlooks the interpretive nuances that the secondary literature could offer, particularly in contextualizing Rousseau more extensively within broader Enlightenment discourses. Future research, discussed in more detail below, would benefit from a more balanced approach that incorporates these secondary analyses to further enrich the understanding of Rousseau's educational philosophy in its full historical context.

Summary of Key Findings

In terms of findings, the dissertation affirms the importance of experiential-relational dynamics in Rousseau's educational theory. It articulates how Rousseau's thoughts on education look beyond the simple transmission of information and emphasize the formation of virtuous character and personal autonomy through experiential-relational

engagements. This experiential-relational focus is pivotal for understanding Rousseau's intent to foster both personal and social virtue through educational practices.

In Chapter One, we investigated Rousseau's account of the intricate dynamics between individuals and the objects they encounter. Rousseau advocates for an integrated, direct interaction with objects, which we explored through the lenses of affectivity, embodiment, and purposeful activity. These elements are not merely additive but are fundamentally interwoven into our experiential encounters, influencing and defining our developmental and educational experiences. We illustrated how Rousseau perceives human beings as active participants with their environments, where interactions with objects reveal deeper understandings of both the self and the objects it encounters, as well as the nature of the relationship between the self and objects. The chapter focuses on how the instinctual affect of *amour de soi* motivates these interactions and shapes engagements with the world through embodied experiences, grounding people in concrete reality and providing a counterpoint to abstract thought. Additionally, we discussed how purposeful activity further enriches this engagement, allowing for a hands-on approach to learning and understanding that is crucial to Rousseau's educational philosophy. This integration of affectivity, embodiment, and purposeful activity offers a framework for comprehending the essential nature of the self-object relationship, underscoring its significance in fostering human development and autonomy.

In Chapter Two, we investigated Rousseau's philosophical insights on how individuals come to understand themselves and others through the interplay of *amour de soi*, *amour-propre*, and natural compassion, highlighting the broader educational implications of these concepts. Rousseau conceptualizes *amour de soi* as an instinctual

form of self-care that exists in its purest form conceptually prior to the complexities of social influence, suggesting a fundamental way in which individuals come to understand their needs and motivations that leads to self-awareness independent of external recognition or validation. This self-awareness evolves into *amour-propre,* indicating a shift from an "absolute" existence to a "relative" one as persons engage with society, where the quest for recognition and esteem significantly shapes one's self-perception and understanding of others. This highlights the role of social contexts in the educational process of self-identity and relational dynamics. Moreover, Rousseau introduces natural compassion as an instinctual empathy towards the suffering of others that fosters an understanding of and connection with others' experiences. The synthesis of these concepts – *amour de soi*, *amour-propre,* and natural compassion – in the chapter addressed the balance between self-sufficiency and social interdependence, illustrating Rousseau's view that true education involves not only the development of individual autonomy but also the cultivation of a connection to others, and thereby broadening the scope of education to include the complex dynamics of coming to understand oneself and others within the milieu of communal life.

Chapter Three investigated Rousseau's conceptualization of the relationship between the educator and the learner, emphasizing a non-traditional, facilitative role for the educator in what Rousseau terms 'negative' education. This approach supports the learner's self-guided exploration and natural development rather than imposing structured learning or didactic instruction. The natural curiosity intrinsic to learners is highlighted as the driving force in Rousseau's educational model, which examines how an educator can foster a conducive learning environment that nurtures this curiosity, allowing learners to

explore and understand their world autonomously. The chapter further explored how Rousseau's educational approach facilitates the development of virtues, which he understands as arising naturally from the learner's experiences and a balance between concern for oneself and concern for others rather than from taught as abstract principles. This understanding integrates the development of virtue seamlessly into the learning process. Furthermore, Rousseau argues for educational strategies tailored to the unique characteristics and potential of each learner, emphasizing the importance of personalizing education to fit the learner's idiosyncratic needs and aspirations and thereby enabling them to pursue their individual potential. Lastly, we discussed how Rousseau's educational philosophy prepares learners for active and authentic participation in society, extending the principles of negative education to the social realm, teaching learners to apply their developed virtues and self-understanding in a broader community context, and maintaining their authenticity while effectively contributing to the community.

Limitations and Potentials

To demonstrate the enduring relevance of Rousseau's educational philosophy, it is important to consider how these experiential and relational dynamics can inform current educational theories and practices Although the findings of this dissertation suggest that Rousseau's educational philosophy offers profound and useful insights, the application of these insights is not without its limitations, particularly when considered within the context of contemporary educational systems.

Implementing Rousseau's educational philosophy in contemporary educational systems faces significant institutional barriers due to entrenched policies and systemic

inertia that resist the profound changes such an implementation would require. Modern educational frameworks are often dictated by standardized testing and a curriculum-focused approach, contrasting sharply with Rousseau's advocacy for natural development and personalized learning. Practical constraints such as large class sizes and limited resources also hinder the adoption of Rousseau's learner-centered methods. Additionally, the reliance on quantitative standardized assessments to measure educational outcomes poses a challenge to integrating Rousseau's qualitative goals, which emphasize moral and affective growth over information acquisition. Adapting educational systems to accommodate Rousseau's ideals would thus require a significant overhaul of firmly entrenched policies, teacher training, and assessment methods, necessitating a monumental shift in educational priorities and administrative strategies to foster a more individualized and comprehensive approach to learning.

Still, while the institutional barriers within modern educational systems may hinder the full implementation of Rousseau's pedagogical philosophy, they do not prevent the utilization of his insights to make educational relationships as humane as possible within these constraints. As we saw him claim regarding striving to overcome the difficulties involved in practically applying his thoughts on education, "But it is still certain that in applying oneself to overcoming them, one does overcome them up to a certain point."[226] Despite challenges such as standardized testing and curriculum limitations, educators can incorporate Rousseau's emphasis on natural development and personalized learning through smaller, incremental changes. For instance, educators might integrate open-ended project-based learning elements that reflect Rousseau's ideals

[226] Ibid. 95

of active and authentic engagement, allowing learners to explore topics in a way of their choosing and that resonate with those learners within the confines of imposed curricula. Additionally, even in large, structured environments, educators can, to some extent, nurture individual learner relationships and thereby appreciate, to some extent, each learner's unique needs and potentials and adjust their pedagogy accordingly. Schools could also foster learning environments that emphasize affective and social growth as complements to cognitive development, integrating aspects of Rousseau's thinking into social-affective learning programs that are already becoming more prevalent. Thus, while the structure of contemporary education may not be in a position to wholly accommodate Rousseau's model, and may be highly resistant to adapting itself to doing so, his philosophy can still inspire more humane and responsive educational practices that adapt to institutional limitations while striving to realize his educational ideals.

An Avenue for Future Research

Building upon the foundational insights derived from this dissertation and the discussion of the challenges and promises of applying Rousseau's views in a contemporary pedagogical context, an intriguing avenue for future research involves the application of a Heideggerian destructive retrieval to his educational theories. Given the focus by both Rousseau and Heideggerian phenomenology on the authenticity of experiential and relational dimensions of human existence, such an approach seems promising. This approach, found in works by Heidegger such as *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* and *Being and Time*, would involve articulating Rousseau's views within their full historical context, critically engaging, through a phenomenological lens, with

his assumptions about the nature of being, and identifying broader phenomenological issues illuminated by this critique.

The initial phase of this destructive retrieval would examine Rousseau's Enlightenment context and its influence on his educational philosophy. Rousseau's philosophy notably diverges from the prevalent rationalist ethos of his era. For example, he promotes the intrinsic, natural development of individuals, positioning this as a counterpoint to the rationalistic molding of learners. This exploration of historical context would articulate and critically assess the assumptions about the nature of being that Rousseau inherited from his socio-historical context, and that are particularly embodied in his idealization of a 'state of nature' as a foundational, idyllic human condition that education should strive to preserve and reflect. The analysis would also investigate Rousseau's less explored notion of "the Being of beings and the Dispenser of things" – a divine, ineffable entity conceived as the author and regulator of the universe that imbues everything 'natural' with existence and goodness.[227] This step would clarify how Rousseau integrates a theological-ontological dimension into his educational framework, thereby influencing his conception of natural human development and the ultimate aims of education.

Building from the first step, the second step in this destructive retrieval would apply the ontological difference, a pivotal Heideggerian concept which differentiates beings from being, to critically assess Rousseau's philosophy. This analysis would scrutinize Rousseau's conflation of being and a particular being (such as 'nature' or the 'Being of beings'), where being is revealed through the existential structures and

[227] Ibid. 269

experiences of human life, particularly in how persons interpret their relationship to 'natural' human conditions or any other entity, divine or otherwise. This step would critically evaluate a thesis underlying Rousseau's educational philosophy, namely that developing natural qualities reflects the essence of being. The critique would explore the limitations of Rousseau's frameworks, in particular questioning the extent to which Rousseau's depiction of natural human states as direct manifestations of a divine 'Being of beings' adequately represents the broader, more complex concept of being. This examination would demonstrate that Rousseau insufficiently accounted for the multifaceted and pluralistic nature of human existence and the essence of being, which is not itself a being.

The third, constructive step would involve exploring broader issues within phenomenology that the phenomenological critique of Rousseau's thought brings to light. This step would reflect on the phenomenological method itself, perhaps scrutinizing its conviction that foundational states of being are more authentic. This reflection might include a critical discussion on the tendency sometimes present in phenomenology to prioritize certain experiences of being over others, and thereby potentially create a hierarchical view of human experiences. Rousseau's emphasis on a natural state as the most authentic form of human existence could serve as a case study for discussing these phenomenological tendencies. The exploration would extend to the issue of how phenomenology can appropriate a more nuanced understanding of the human condition that accommodates the diversity of experiences and the socio-cultural contexts that shape them.

This research direction would not only provide a deeper understanding of Rousseau's educational philosophy but also contribute to broader phenomenological discourse by challenging and refining phenomenological methodologies and assumptions. Such an approach would enrich the philosophical analysis of education by integrating historical, existential, and phenomenological perspectives, thereby offering a more comprehensive view of how educational theories can address the complexity of human existence and learning. This line of inquiry could potentially open new paths for integrating Rousseau's insights with contemporary educational practices and theories, bridging historical philosophical ideas with modern educational challenges and opportunities.

Final Reflections

I end on a brief personal note. I believe that this dissertation's exploration into Rousseau's philosophy reaffirms the timeless value of fostering humane relationships in educational endeavors. As a researcher and educator, carefully articulating Rousseau's thinking from my own perspective has reinforced my belief in education as a transformative pursuit, not just the acquisition of information or skills, but a means to cultivate deeper social empathy and personal integrity. This personal engagement with Rousseau's philosophy has not only deepened my appreciation for educational theory but has also inspired a more thoughtful commitment to apply Rousseau's principles in my own pedagogical practices. The challenge of translating Rousseau's ideals into contemporary educational settings is daunting yet invigorating, providing a fertile ground for my ongoing scholarly and practical endeavors in the field of education.

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VITA

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