

In short, Rousseau argued that human civilization, that is, the product of progress in the arts and sciences, had done little to advance the happiness of humankind. As such, he was attacking one of the basic tenets or faiths of the philosophes in particular and of the Enlightenment in general, that is, the equating of knowledge with goodness. In this sense, Rousseau was one of the first postmodernists. Rousseau argued that increased knowledge in the arts and sciences, rather than contributing to the moral improvement of humankind, tended to corrupt humankind by taking away their natural innocence. In juxtaposing natural or primitive human beings with civilized or learned ones, Rousseau suggested that the primitive or natural human being is free and happy, not due to the absence of boundaries or constraints, but because primitive or natural human beings have learned to live in accordance with the limitations or constraints found in nature. For Rousseau, progress in the arts and sciences meant the creation of unnatural and evil boundaries and restraints on human freedom.

Herein lies the crucial point, or what Rousseau would subsequently identify as "the origin of inequality." Simply put, Rousseau believed that natural or primitive humankind has, through the impulses and instincts of nature, the ability to learn about and live within the world they inhabit. Rather than enhance or support this natural ability, advancements in the arts and sciences have tended to deny and thus alienate modern beings from this natural capacity. Rousseau offers us more than just a lament over the lost innocence of the natural or primitive human beings. Realizing that we cannot "return again to the forests to live among bears," that we "can no longer subsist on plants or acorns," that we "must remain in society and respect the sacred bonds of the community, loving [our] fellow-citizens, obeying the laws, honoring the wise and good princes," the task becomes one of creating a human society that emulates the natural restraints primitive human beings once encountered. At the very least such a society must be grounded in what Rousseau identified as the general will, which the members of the society knowingly defer to and accept.

It is at this point that Rousseau's Social Contract and Emile come into play. Rousseau introduces The Social Contract with the assertion that "Man is born free and everywhere he is in chains." Every and any society has chains for they are the necessary restraints or coercions that hold the separate parts together. As stated earlier, the problem becomes one of finding or creating some form of society so consistent with humankind's natural capacities that all will willingly accept its laws and restrictions. Establishing such a society requires negotiating a "social contract" in which the individual freely gives up natural freedom, but gains civil freedom in return. This means sublimating one's individual will to the will of the group or general will.

Rousseau's concept of the general will is different from and superior to the will of all in that it concerns common, as opposed to individual, interests. Rousseau's notion of the general will is elusive and apparently understandable only by those properly educated. Our only hope of developing individuals capable of sublimating their own private wills to the common or general will is to educate

future generations in accordance with the laws or restraints of nature. To explain how this could and should be done, Rousseau wrote *Emile* and *The Social Contract* concurrently, publishing *Emile* six months after publishing *The Social Contract*.

Reminiscent of *The Social Contract*, *Emile* begins by suggesting that "God makes all things good; man meddles with them and they become evil." Remember, from Rousseau's perspective, since his society—the one corrupted by the arts and sciences—is evil, for *Emile* to be properly educated he must be isolated from such a corrupt society. Such isolation is necessary if *Emile* is to recapture his natural state. Recapturing this natural state is necessary if *Emile* is to "see with his own eyes and feel with his own heart." Once this natural state has been recaptured and properly nurtured, *Emile* will, or so Rousseau suggests, make the right moral decision. *Emile* will knowingly and willingly subjugate himself to the general will and seek the common good.

Nature is the key to Rousseau's educational process. According to Rousseau, a young child is apolitical, asexual, and amoral. Initially the child knows only that she or he inhabits a physical world and quickly learns to abide by the law of necessity. Rousseau suggests the young child should never act from obedience but only from necessity. In the early stages of her or his development, the child should be dependent only on things. As *Emile* develops under the skillful manipulation of his tutor (Rousseau himself), he internalizes the notion that restraints are natural and inevitable. Once this lesson is learned, and as *Emile* develops an appreciation for the moral, political, and social worlds he inhabits and the laws that govern these worlds, this properly educated individual comes to understand and appreciate the general will or common good. In short, what Rousseau offers us in *Emile* is the prototype of what human beings could and should be. Through an educational process that follows in an unjust world. By emulating nature in the education of our children and youth, Rousseau is suggesting that it is possible to develop a society of *Emiles* who willingly subjugate their own desires to those of the common or general will. It is these individuals who will establish the just or good society by creating the social contract, in the process resolving once and for all the conflict between individual needs and societal demands.

From *Emile* (1762)

Consistency is plainly impossible when we seek to educate a man for others, instead of for himself. If we have to combat either nature or society, we must choose between making a man or making a citizen. We cannot make both. There

is an inevitable conflict of aims, from which come two opposing forms of education: the one communal and public, the other individual and domestic.

To get a good idea of communal education, read Plato's *Republic*. It is not a political treatise, as those who merely judge books by their titles think. It is the finest treatise on education ever written. Communal education in this sense, however, does not and can not now exist. There are no longer any real fatherlands and therefore no real citizens. The words "fatherland" and "citizen" should be expunged from modern languages.

There remains then domestic education, the education of nature. But how will a man who has been educated entirely for himself get on with other people? If there were any way of combining in a single person the twofold aim, and removing the contradictions of life, a great obstacle to happiness would be removed. But before passing judgment on this kind of man it would be necessary to follow his development and see him fully formed. It would be necessary, in a word, to make the acquaintance of the natural man. This is the subject of our quest in this book.

In the natural order where all men are equal, manhood is the common vocation. One who is well educated for that will not do badly in the duties that pertain to it. The fact that my pupil is intended for the army, the church or the bar does not greatly concern me. Before the vocation determined by his parents comes the call of nature to the life of human kind. Life is the business I would have him learn. When he leaves my hands, I admit he will not be a magistrate, or a soldier, or a priest. First and foremost, he will be a man. All that a man must be he will be when the need arises, as well as anyone else. Whatever the changes of fortune he will always be able to find a place for himself.

Instead of the difficult task of educating a child, I now undertake the easier task of writing about it. To provide details and examples in illustration of my views and to avoid wandering off into airy speculations, I propose to set forth the education of Emile, an imaginary pupil, from birth to manhood. I take for granted that I am the right man for the duties in respect of age, health, knowledge and talents.

A tutor is not bound to his charge by the ties of nature as the father is, and so is entitled to choose his pupil, especially when as in this case he is providing a model for the education of other children. I assume that Emile is no genius, but a boy of ordinary ability: that he is the inhabitant of some temperate climate, since it is only in temperate climates that human beings develop completely; that he is rich, since it is only the rich who have need of the natural education that would fit them to live under all conditions; that he is to all intents and purposes an orphan, whose tutor having undertaken the parents' duties will also have their right to control all the circumstances of his upbringing; and, finally, that he is a vigorous, healthy, well-built child.

True happiness comes with equality of power and will. The only man who gets his own way is the one who does not need another's help to get it: from which it follows that the supreme good is not authority, but freedom. The true free man wants only what he can get, and does only what pleases him. This is my fundamental maxim. Apply it to childhood and all the rules of education follow.

There are two kinds of dependence: dependence on things, which is natural, and dependence on men, which is social. Dependence on things being non-moral is not prejudicial to freedom and engenders no vices: dependence on men being capricious engenders them all. The only cure for this evil in society would be to put the law in place of the individual, and to arm the general will with a real power that made it superior to every individual will.

Keep the child in sole dependence on things and you will follow the natural order in the course of his education. Put only physical obstacles in the way of indiscreet wishes and let his punishments spring from his own actions. Without forbidding wrong-doing, be content to prevent it. Experience or impotence apart from anything else should take the place of law for him. Satisfy his desires, not because of his demands but because of his needs. He should have no consciousness of obedience when he acts, nor of mastery when someone acts for him. Let him experience liberty equally in his actions and in yours.

Let us lay it down as an incontestable principle that the first impulses of nature are always right. There is no original perversity in the human heart. Of every vice we can say how it entered and whence it came. The only passion natural to man is self-love, or self-esteem in a broad sense. This self-esteem has no necessary reference to other people. In so far as it relates to ourselves it is good and useful. It only becomes good or bad in the social application we make of it. Until reason, which is the guide of self-esteem, makes its appearance, the child should not do anything because he is seen or heard by other people, but only do what nature demands of him. Then he will do nothing but what is right.

May I set forth at this point the most important and the most useful rule in all education? It is not to save time but to waste it. The most dangerous period in human life is that between birth and the age of twelve. This is the age when errors and vices sprout, before there is any instrument for their destruction. When the instrument is available the roots have gone too deep to be extracted. The mind should remain inactive till it has all its faculties.

It follows from this that the first education should be purely negative. It consists not in teaching virtue and truth, but in preserving the heart from vice and the mind from error. If you could do nothing and let nothing be done, so that your pupil came to the age of twelve strong and healthy but unable to distinguish his right hand from his left, the eyes of this understanding would be open to reason from your very first lessons. In the absence of both prejudices and habits there would be nothing in him to oppose the effects of your teaching and care.

Assuming that my method is that of nature and that I have not made any mistakes in putting it into practice, I have now brought my pupil through the land of the sensations right up to the bounds of childish reason. The first step beyond this should take him towards manhood. But before entering on this new stage let us cast our eyes backward for a moment on the one we have traversed. Each age and state of life has its own proper perfection, its own distinctive maturity. People sometimes speak about a complete man. Let us think rather of a complete child. This vision will be new for us and perhaps not less agreeable.

When I picture to myself a boy of ten or twelve, healthy, strong and well built for his age, only pleasant thoughts arise in me, whether for his present or for his future. I see him bright, eager, vigorous, carefree, completely absorbed in the present, rejoicing in abounding vitality. I see him in the years ahead using senses, mind and power as they develop from day to day. I view him as a child and he pleases me. I think of him as a man and he pleases me still more. His warm blood seems to heat my own. I feel as if I were living in his life and am rejuvenated by his vivacity.

The clock strikes and all is changed. In an instant his eye grows dull and his merriment disappears. No more mirth, no more games! A severe, hard-faced man takes him by the hand, says gravely, "Come away, sir," and leads him off. In the room they enter I get a glimpse of books. Books! What a cheerless equipment for his age. As he is dragged away in silence, he casts a regretful look around him. His eyes are swollen with tears he dare not shed, his heart heavy with sighs he dare not utter.

Come, my happy pupil, and console us for the departure of the wretched boy. Here comes Emile, and at his approach I have a thrill of joy in which I see he shares. It is his friend and comrade, the companion of his games to whom he comes. His person, his bearing, his countenance reveal assurance and contentment. Health glows in his face. His firm step gives him an air of vigour. His complexion is refined without being effeminate; sun and wind have put on it the honourable imprint of his sex. His eyes are still unlighted by the fires of sentiment and have all their native serenity. His manner is open and free without the least insolence or vanity.

His ideas are limited but precise. If he knows nothing by heart, he knows a great deal by experience. If he is not as good a reader in books as other children, he reads better in the book of nature. His mind is not in his tongue but in his head. He has less memory but more judgment. He only knows one language, but he understands what he says and if he does not talk as well as other children he can do things better than they can.

Habit, routine and custom mean nothing to him. What he did yesterday has no effect on what he does today. He never follows a fixed rule and never accepts authority or example. He only does or says what seems good to himself. For this reason you must not expect stock speeches or studied manners from him but just the faithful expression of his ideas and the conduct that comes from his inclinations.

You will find in him a few moral notions relating to his own situation, but not being an active member of society he has none relating to manhood. Talk to him about liberty, property and even convention, and he may understand you thus far. But speak to him about duty and obedience, and he will not know what you mean. Command him to do something, and he will pay no heed. But say to him: "If you will do me this favour, I will do the same for you another time," and immediately he will hasten to oblige. For his part, if he needs any help he will ask the first person he meets as a matter of course. If you grant his request he will not thank you, but will feel that he has contracted a debt. If you refuse,

he will neither complain nor insist. He will only say: "It could not be done." He does not rebel against necessity once he recognizes it.

Work and play are all the same to him. His games are his occupations: he is not aware of any difference. He goes into everything he does with a pleasing interest and freedom. It is indeed a charming spectacle to see a nice boy of this age with open smiling countenance, doing the most serious things in his play or profoundly occupied with the most frivolous amusements.

Emile has lived a child's life and has arrived at the maturity of childhood, without any sacrifice of happiness in the achievement of his own perfection. He has acquired all the reason possible for his age, and in doing so has been as free and as happy as his nature allowed him to be. If by chance the fatal scythe were to cut down the flower of our hopes we would not have to bewail at the same time his life and his death, nor add to our griefs the memory of those we caused him. We would say that at any rate he had enjoyed his childhood and that nothing we had done had deprived him of what nature gave. . . .

The passions are the chief instruments for our preservation. The child's first sentiment is self-love, the only passion that is born with man. The second, which is derived from it, is the love he has for the people he sees ready to help him, and from this develops a kindly feeling for mankind. But with fresh needs and growing dependence on others comes the consciousness of social relations and with it the sense of duties and preference. It is at this point that the child may become dominating, jealous, deceitful, vindictive. Self-love being concerned only with ourselves is content when our real needs are satisfied, but self-esteem which involves comparisons with other people never is and never can be content because it makes the impossible demand that others should prefer us to themselves. That is how it comes that the gentle kindly passions issue from self-love, while hate and anger spring from self-esteem. Great care and skill are required to prevent the human heart being depraved by the new needs of social life. . . .

My readers, I foresee, will be surprised to see me take my pupil through the whole of the early years without mentioning religion. At fifteen he was not aware that he had a soul, and perhaps at eighteen it is not yet time for him to learn. For if he learns sooner than is necessary he runs the risk of never knowing.

My picture of hopeless stupidity is a pedant teaching the catechism to children. If I wanted to make a child dull I would compel him to explain what he says when he repeats his catechism. It may be objected that since most of the Christian doctrines are mysteries it would be necessary for the proper understanding of them to wait, not merely till the child becomes a man but till the man is no more. To that I reply, in the first place, that there are mysteries man can neither conceive nor believe and that I see no purpose in teaching them to children unless it be to teach them to lie. I say, further, that to admit there are mysteries one must understand that they are incomprehensible, and that this is an idea which is quite beyond children. For an age when all is mystery, there can be no mysteries, properly so-called.

Let us be on guard against presenting the truth to those unable to comprehend it. The effect of that is to substitute error for truth. It would be better to have no idea of the Divine Being than to have ideas that are mean, fantastic and unworthy. . . .

Sophie should be as typically woman as Emile is man. She must possess all the characteristics of humanity and of womanhood which she needs for playing her part in the physical and the moral order. Let us begin considering in what respects her sex and ours agree and differ.

In the mating of the sexes each contributes in equal measure to the common end but not in the same way. From the diversity comes the *first* difference which has to be noted in their personal relations. It is the part of the one to be active and strong, and of the other to be passive and weak. Accept this principle and it follows in the *second* place that woman is intended to please man. If the man requires to please the woman in turn the necessity is less direct. Masterfulness is his special attribute. He pleases by the very fact that he is strong. This is not the law of love, I admit. But it is the law of nature, which is more ancient than love.

The faculties common to the sexes are not equally shared between them; but take them all in all, they are well balanced. The more womanly a woman is, the better. Whenever she exercises her own proper powers she gains by it: when she tries to usurp ours she becomes our inferior. Believe me, wise mother, it is a mistake to bring up your daughter to be like a good man. Make her a good woman, and you can be sure that she will be worth more for herself and for us. This does not mean that she should be brought up in utter ignorance and confined to domestic tasks. A man does not want to make his companion a servant and deprive himself of the peculiar charms of her company. That is quite against the teaching of nature, which has endowed women with quick pleasing minds. Nature means them to think, to judge, to love, to know and to cultivate the mind as well as the countenance. This is the equipment nature has given them to compensate for their lack of strength and enable them to direct the strength of men.

As I see it, the special functions of women, their inclinations and their duties, combine to suggest the kind of education they require. Men and women are made for each other but they differ in the measure of their dependence on each other. We could get on better without women than women could get on without us. To play their part in life they must have our willing help, and for that they must earn our esteem. By the very law of nature women are at the mercy of men's judgments both for themselves and for their children. It is not enough that they should be estimable: they must be esteemed. It is not enough that they should be beautiful: they must be pleasing. It is not enough that they should be wise: their wisdom must be recognised. Their honour does not rest on their conduct but on their reputation. Hence the kind of education they get should be the very opposite of men's in this respect. Public opinion is the tomb of a man's virtue but the throne of a woman's.

On the good constitution of the mothers depends that of the children and the early education of men is in their hands. On women too depend the morals, the passions, the tastes, the pleasures, *aye* and the happiness of men. For this reason their education must be wholly directed to their relations with men. To give them pleasure, to be useful to them, to win their love and esteem, to train them in their childhood, to care for them when they grow up, to give them counsel and consolation, to make life sweet and agreeable for them: these are the tasks of women in all times for which they should be trained from childhood.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the individual-collectivity problem?
2. How does Rousseau attack it head on?
3. Do you agree with Rousseau's position that the arts and sciences have done little to advance the happiness of humankind? Explain.
4. Why is Rousseau's view of education characterized as negative education?
5. Is such a characterization justified? Explain.
6. From Rousseau's perspective, can human beings improve upon nature? Explain.
7. Have human beings improved upon nature? Explain.
8. What is Rousseau's solution to the social malaise he sees all around him?
9. Emile's tutor clearly manipulates the environment to ensure that Emile responds properly or learns the desired principle. Is there anything morally wrong with such manipulation? In pedagogy, does the end justify the means? Explain.
10. Given what you know about Rousseau and his times, why do you think he was so openly critical of the harshness with which children were treated in his day?
11. How does Rousseau define freedom?
12. What, for Rousseau, should be the role of the teacher?
13. How does Rousseau suggest that we teach someone to read?
14. What does Rousseau have to say about competition in education?
15. What are Rousseau's views on the use of books in the education of our children?
16. Why was *Robinson Crusoe* Rousseau's favorite book?
17. Do you think that Rousseau succeeded in resolving the individual-collectivity dilemma? Explain.
18. Is the kind of education Rousseau advocates feasible in a democracy? Explain.
19. Does such education promote or sustain democracy? Explain.
20. To what extent is the education advocated by Rousseau a kind of moral education?
21. Describe in your own words Rousseau's vision of the ideally educated individual.
22. How, for Rousseau, would an ideally educated woman be different from an ideally educated man?