Rousseau and the Problem of Human Relations

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Chapter 1

1. For expositional convenience I occasionally use the gender-specific “man” instead of “human beings” or “humanity.”

2. DI page numbers refer to Rousseau (1964).

3. This martyrdom is underscored by the date of the tenth walk, which Rousseau records as Palm Sunday. Rousseau makes himself the Christ figure in his own passion play: his metaphorical return to Les Charmettes, the only place where he was loved for who he was, evokes Jesus’s return to Jerusalem. And much like Jesus, Rousseau’s love of others was rewarded with betrayal: having set out to save Mme de Warens, he was promptly sacrificed by his enemies.


5. 2 Tr. refers to Locke (1980).

6. ECHU refers to Locke (1975).


8. Rousseau is very particular about the use of the term citoyen, and he chastised his contemporaries as well as Bodin for failing to understand the significance of the word. Besides D’Alembert, Rousseau claims in a footnote to the Social Contract that “no other French author, to my knowledge, has understood the true meaning of the word citizen” (SC Vn54).


Chapter 2

1. Compare with Lev. X, 51: “The value or worth of a man is, as of all other things, his prices, that is to say, so much as would be given for the use of his power; and therefore is not absolute, but a thing dependent on the need and judgment of another.”

2. Rousseau, like many sentimentalists, expressed a belief that facial features revealed the disposition of the soul: “It is believed that the face is only a simple development of features already drawn by nature. I, however, think that beyond this development the features of a man’s visage are imperceptibly formed and take on a typical cast as a result of the frequent and habitual impression of certain affections of the soul” (É 230).

3. ML refers to the Moral Letters. All citations from Rousseau (2007).
4. Rousseau is aware that pity for the rich and for the poor can quickly degenerate into contempt. He thus recommends that Emile be publicly humiliated as a way of staying in touch with his own vulnerability (E 245). See also E 172–75, where Rousseau provides an example of how this might be done.

Chapter 3

1. Translator Judith Masters somewhat misleadingly renders *amour-propre* as the pejorative term “vanity.”

2. Rousseau also replaces his judges, claiming that Plato and Xenocrates are better able to assess his work than are the readers at the Academy of Dijon. His explicit disregard of the Academy’s ability to properly judge his *Discourse* is likely among the reasons why the milquetoast Abbé Talbert won the essay competition instead of Rousseau.

3. All *Preface to Narcisse* citations refer to Rousseau (2007).


5. Cranston (1991, 36) reports that Diderot was displeased with Deleyre’s initial entry and made him extensively revise it before agreeing to publish it in the *Encyclopedia*.


7. On the distinctness of love and friendship, see Reisert (2003, chap. 4). Per usual, however, Rousseau is himself the exception to his own rule, for he reports in the *Confessions* that his relationship to Mme de Warens was something between love and friendship.

Chapter 6

1. Cicero and Montaigne were very influential in Rousseau’s age and known to Rousseau himself. Thus I treat their theories of friendship as important parts of the intellectual context Rousseau seeks to reshape. On Cicero see Wood (1988, 3); and Garsten (2006, 60). On Montaigne see Marchi (1994); and Fontana (2008, 24–25).

2. *DI* 95. How critical Rousseau’s engagement is, though, is a matter of some debate. Sorenson (1990) occupies a middle ground between Plattner (1979), who views Rousseau as breaking radically with traditional teleology, and Lemos (1977), who believes that Rousseau’s providentialist language moors him to a broadly teleological view of the world.

3. Though the tutor calls Emile “friend” several times, Emile responds in kind only once, preferring the hierarchical “father” or “master.” The disproportion here suggests either that the two are cogniz-
ing their relationship in very different ways or, more likely, that Jean-Jacques is calling the pubescent Emile his “friend” as part of a pedagogic strategy designed to win his pupil’s consent. More on this below. Cf. Reisert (2003, 104–5).

CHAPTER 7
1. RRF refers to Burke (1993).
2. Rousseau’s French reads, “On pourrait, sur ce qui précède, ajouter a l’acquis a l’état civil la liberté morale qui seul rend l’homme vraiment maître de lui.”
3. CGP refers to Rousseau (1997c).
6. I cannot find this hypothesis in Aristotle, and it would—as Rousseau knew—have been a very odd position to take for a philosopher who insisted on the distinctness of all animal species. Though Rousseau, too, affirms the eternality of species, it is he and not Aristotle who provides many of the resources for thinking through the question of whether human beings evolved from some quadrupedal species (e.g., DI 183–86).

CHAPTER 8
1. For an excellent, and nontechnical, introduction, see Riker (1988).
2. Condorcet actually presupposed a relatively high degree of voter competence: the probability of each individual voter reaching a correct independent decision must be at least 0.5 in order for the law of large numbers to work. If the probability of a correct evaluation is less than 0.5 then average voter competence actually decreases. See, for example, Waldron, in Estlund et al. (1989, 1322–23).
3. Rousseau singles out as his opponent William Warburton, bishop of Gloucester (1668–1779), who penned The Alliance between Church and State and Divine Legation of Moses.
4. LCT refers to Locke (2010).