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Metaphysics of Child Abandonment and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Unorthodox Advocacy of the Family in *Émile, ou De l' education*

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Abstract: *Historians of philosophy have long grappled with the contradiction, presented by Rousseau, the "family man". On one hand, he is accepted as having the ability to make even those uninclined to sentimentality, swoon at the image of family life he portrays in such works as La nouvelle Héloïse. On the other hand, he was a derelict father, who abandoned every child he ever begot; and even offered up a philosophical justification, which he famously presented in his 1782 Les Confessions. The article proposes a way to untangle what seems to be a glaring contradiction in these two characterizations, a contradiction that detractors of Rousseau like Voltaire and Edmund Burke were consistent in exploiting. The resolution comes as two different conceptions of parenting: one, Rousseau witnessed, cavorting amongst the ranks of the Parisian salonnières; the other, he discovered after his retreat to the countryside. Émile was a (fictional) child, whom Rousseau did raise until adulthood, a child, on whose education, Rousseau built his entire family-based metaphysics.*

Key Words: *History of Family; Metaphysics; Jean-Jacques Rousseau; Karl Marx; Cosmopolitanism, Geopolitics; History of Science*

1. Introduction: One centre; two criticisms - Rousseau and Marx on the Peripheries

If Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Karl Marx began their projects of social rehabilitation from the position of the family, both their conceptions took as their centre something outside the normative (and biological) definition of the term. The families used by both as unifying principles for their theoretical deployments were very much not based on families at all - but surrogate ones. In *La nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), Wolmar can be seen as a father figure to a motely of foster children, all coming to his bucolic homestead (Clarens Estates), escapees from the city, all with their own stories of excess and neglect. The characters, Julie and Saint-Preux, are respectively comparable to the "harlot" and "addict" of an eighteenth-century moral tale of urbanity where desires are excessive and thus pathological; and the temptations of the city, the abetting influence. In *Émile, ou de l' éducation* (1762), the family compact is really one outside biological ties to mother and father. Émile remains under the tutelage of a wise tutor (Rousseau), who guides his upbringing all the way till manhood where Rousseau comes to straddle several relational motifs in the young man's life: friend, father, brother and teacher. In the case of Marx, he also seeks an enclave outside biological ties. In *Die deutsche ideologie* (1846) Marx develops his critique of the nuclear family this way:

> With the division of labour [... comes] the family and separation of society into individual families opposed to one another […] and indeed the unequal distribution […] of labour and its product, hence property: the nucleus, the first form, of which lies the family, where wife and children are the slaves of the husband […]. (p. 123)

Marx even tolerates social change wrought by English imperialism in places like India as long as it can uproot what traditional culture has existed that restricts social mobility and binds individuals to false distinctions established by family names, i.e., castes. Marx envisioned the proletariat to be a proper conception of family, one he described in aphorism IV in *Thesen über Feuerbach* (1845) as mobilizable and

"earthly", a materialized form of the "holy family". He describes its origin as ascent, beginning in metaphysical abstraction, moving up to "criticism in theory" [through Hegel] and finally ending in "revolution in practice" through the political teleology Marx laid out in Communism. (p. 108) For Rousseau and Marx, family was the theoretical cornerstone for how they built the framework of their social critiques.

Despite the similarities, Rousseau and Marx negotiate very differently the wider conception of family emerging from the slippage from its natural (biological) confines into more general *moral* imperatives. However, in "Between Rousseau and Marx" (1949) Nathan Rotenschreich downplays any difference, chalking it up to being only a matter of scale. In his words, Rousseau was bound to a much narrower space in how he articulated his position: the "formal" and "constitutional"; while Marx had more room to manoeuvre in choosing his starting point in the "historical" and "sociological". (p. 717) Rotenshreich considers both theorists to be applying dialectics in their respective developments of "General Will". This conflation of both philosophers' approaches has an even earlier historical precedence. In *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (1880) Friedrich Engels gives a panegyric to German dialecticians - most notably G.F.W. Hegel - who were able to tame the exuberant manner French metaphysicians of the Enlightenment school had investigated the natural world. He asserts:

> Nature is the proof of dialectics, and *it must be said for modern science that it has furnished this proof with very rich materials increasing daily* […] Nature works dialectically and not metaphysically, that she does not move in the eternal oneness of a perpetually recurring circle, but goes through a real historical evolution. (p. 518-19) (Emphasis added)

Engels (1880) goes on to list some *philosophes* departing from this metaphysical tradition, highlighting Rousseau as one and proclaiming his *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les homes* (1755) to be a work of vanguard dialecticism. This essay will offer a robust challenge to Engels' position on this point; and perforce challenge

Rotenschreich's comparison of Rousseau and Marx, as well. Specifically, this essay will demonstrate that it is this same kind of "rich material increasing daily" that Engel speaks about - present in only more mature form in the accumulating knowledge of natural and social sciences of his and Marx' day - that had originally inspired Rousseau's resounding "no" to the question: "Has the Restoration of Arts and Sciences had a Purifying Effect upon Moral?" (1750). This question was the theme of that Academy of Dijon-sponsored essay competition that helped first trumpet Rousseau's entry into the circles of the cultural elites and would be the basis for *Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité*. Rousseau may have very well called the source of alienation in human relations the very point, from which Marx and Engels would attempt their rehabilitation of workers, whose labour was lost to them in the marketplace. In Rousseau's view, this alienation would have persisted even had Marx shifted the focus to the "sensuous external world" after far removal in the abstractions of religious reasoning. In *Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie* (1843), Marx argues that self-alienation in sacred form is the very point of departure of criticizing all secular forms of alienation such as those supported in law and economics. Rousseau would not have conceived of the "holy family" to be the alienated state Marx praises Feuerbach for identifying and refuting in his materialist critique of religion. Rather, Rousseau would have taken the "holy family" as an acceptable conceptualization of proper human relations. Rousseau would have argued that Marx' "earthly" orientation perpetuates the problem of alienation - and does not solve it at all. Although Rousseau - just as Marx would later do - railed against the pernicious influence of such institutions as the bourgeois family unit and private property; he (1755) was not searching for a dialectical solution despite the appearance of such:

> […] as the strongest regarded their might, and the most wretched regarded their need as giving them kind of right to the possessions of others, equivalent, according to them, to the right of property, the elimination of equality was followed by the most terrible disorder. (p. 120)

Marx had a post-Hegelian foundation, on which to work, one, in which natural history (1844) could "subsume" the science of man. (p. 91) Not only did Rousseau's position predate this epistemological possibility but he also vociferously criticized the creep of its inchoate formation, the one he perceived taking hold in his own time. This led to quarrels between him and many of his contemporaries, who were setting such a *positive* course for the development of natural and human sciences. D'Alembert, Voltaire and Hume count as important rivals to Rousseau on this front. In his musings about the formation of human societies in *Discours sur l'origin de l'inégalité*, Rousseau gives what amounts to an anti-anthropological retort against the impact of how *positive* laws, derived from natural and human sciences, came to be seen as "moderating" understanding of human interactions, replacing what "natural compassion" had done before. (p. 122) This subtlety is lost upon Engels, who fails to see that Rousseau did not take the separation of individual from individual and society from society as a natural state as Marx would do when basing his philosophical position of communism on the bedrock Hegel laid out in *Phänomenologie des geistes* (1807). Marx saw criticism as the way forward to suture the separation that Hegel's dialectics purportedly exposed. At the outset of this article, as an initial stage of accounting for the critical orientation both Rousseau and Marx share - an orientation aimed at the cosmopolitan centres they both sought to transform - it is worth establishing what makes both philosophers' starting points differ. This difference will be shown to be the respective absence and presence of a Hegelian foundation. At the root of Rousseau's metaphysics and Marx' dialectics is a fundamentally different outlook on the world and humankind's place therein.

Several problems emerge for the modern reader when engaging with Rousseau's presentation of the natural world, problems that do not necessarily show up in Hegel's. The discrepancy reveals the consanguinity modern readers have with Hegel due to both a closer historical proximity and a shared epistemological starting-point for engaging with the world, one that is foundationally modern. It was the French Revolution that was historically proximal; and from it came the

original need for dialectics, a need based on a particular taming of contradictions. In *Masses, Class, Ideas: Studies on Politics and Philosophy Before and After Marx* (1994), Étienne Balibar reveals how an entirely new mechanism grounded on a contradiction was introduced into human relations as a result of the Revolution:

> The equation of freedom and equality is indispensable to the modern "subjective" recasting of right, but is powerless to guarantee its institutional stability. A mediation is required, but it takes the antithetical form of "fraternity" (or community) and "property". (p. 50)

The articles of the *Declaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen* were the opening volley in establishing *positive* social membership and introducing those necessary contrarian forces Balibar introduces here. *Phänomenologie des geistes* is really Hegel's own negotiation of these forces with the addition of an ethnic component where the particularity of his German ancestry grinds against enthusiasm for the universalist program, coming in the form of a foreign occupier, Napoleon. Hegel's conception of "consciousness" would come to reflect a new epistemological beginning for humankind, one emerging from *positive* bodies, whose liberty would begin to be enshrined in successive articles of law; and whose physical and social constitutions were increasingly describable by confident *positive* sciences. Hegel (1807) gives a solipsistic basis to this relationship as one of "a relation purely of itself to itself" with "relations to an other […] be[ing] eliminated". (p. 238) He saw this disjunction as a deeper principle in nature:

> The original determinateness of the nature is, therefore, only a simple principle, a transparent universal element, in which the individuality remains as free and self-identical as it is unimpeded in unfolding its different moments, and in its realization is simply in a reciprocal relation with itself […]. (p. 238)

The only naturalness Rousseau acknowledges in this human isolation-cum-"consciousness" is its malignancy as something appearing like a cancerous outgrowth of human societies. Rousseau's criticism of the

cultural centre was aimed at the latent *positivism*, underpinning the greatest of those scientific (and artistic) achievements of his age. And it is at this point where Rousseau and Marx really differ in their criticism. Marx expands on the intellectual scaffolding Hegel built off from the Revolution when he declared science to be "the crown of a world of Spirit". (p. 7) What's more, he intensifies this course by laying low the lofty *positivism* of Hegel's abstraction and making materialism the centre of focus where the *material world* is the site of investment; *politics*, its mode. And as Engel reflects (1883) on Marx' legacy during the "Speech at the Graveside of Karl Marx" materialism is the marriage of this site and mode: "Science was […] a historically dynamic, revolutionary force" and Marx uncovered its "special law of motion" (*material world*): the dialectic of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat (*politics*), respectively. (p. 604) If Rousseau criticized the natural and human sciences of the cultural centre; Marx very much embraced both for his own philosophical ends and his theoretical starting point was really the cosmopolitanism, inherent in Hegel's conception of "Spirit". Rousseau (1755) would have objected to such a formulation, arguing in *Discours sur l'origin de l'inégalité* that "few great cosmopolitan souls [can] break through the imaginary barriers that separates peoples" (p. 122). The cosmopolitanism he confronted in his age had its own group of advocates - chief amongst them was Jean Le Rond d'Alembert.

One of the problems with reading Rousseau is that he did not present a systematic model of the world, one with the kind of *positive* scaffolding, with which modern readers would be familiar. His criticism is notable for its use of *sensibilité*, an approach less interested in laying down ironclad, objective argumentation; and more interested in using feeling and imagination to capture the *moral* force, uniting all objects in the world. This emphasis on relationality will be described in this paper as an orientation towards thinking in *negativity.* (Such a terminology will be clarified by the time the last sentence in his article is written.) The contemporary of Rousseau, Jean Le Rond d'Alembert, in *Discours Préliminaire de l'Encyclopédie de Diderot* (1751) even suggests the possibility of such a *negative* force in the world:

> […] since there is no connection between each sensation and the object that occasion it, or at least the object to which we relate it, it does not seem that any possible passage from one to the other can be found through reasoning. Only a kind of instinct, sure than reason itself, can compel us to leap so great a gap. (p. 8-9)

D'Alembert asserts the possibility of such a force but not before excluding it from what he introduced as the proper purview of science in *Discours Préliminaire,* the preface to that encyclopaedic project that sought to catalogue all human knowledge in the arts and sciences of his day. Although he left it to "enlightened metaphysicians" to grapple with this force, in his entry for "métaphysique", he would discredit their efforts, calling their work a "despicable science", and in so doing, establishing a limit to what discussions of knowledge would be deemed acceptable and unacceptable. This is a relevant point to make here because when d'Alembert set off to write the *Discours Préliminaire* to a project that actually had Rousseau as one of its contributors; d'Alembert felt the need to justify Rousseau's involvement, downplaying the vice Rousseau had earlier attributed to the arts and sciences in his award-winning essay. D'Alembert argued that any truth to the assertion that arts and sciences be wellsprings of vice be more a matter of another cause, one unrelated to the natural virtue, coming from the "cultivation of the mind". (p. 103-04) D'Alembert's epistemology would cast its shadow down upon the whole project of the arts and sciences beyond the Revolution and well into the Modern age. The esteem given *positive* knowledge - derived from reason and experience and aimed predominately at human utility - has its basis in cosmopolitanism. This form of knowledge is by and large judged by today's producers to be of a similar merit, centrality and authority.

Hegel bequeathed from d'Alembert a similar cosmopolitan orientation. In the "Preface" to *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Hegel describes sciences (and the arts) as only as valuable as they are "intelligible" and "equally accessible to everyone". (p. 7) According to him, human activity consisted of what could be worked on for some practical use - or in his words "articulated" - so as to extend

consciousness into that sweeping stream that he called "World History". Hegel was really following an earlier trend, established by the *idéologues*, in whose company d'Alembert can be considered a member. These intellectuals formed the backbone of the scientification, or *positiv*ication, of society in the run-up to the French Revolution. Some key tenets of the group included beliefs in the direct correspondence between ideas of the mind and objects in the world - very much in line with the empiricism set by Locke - and the Baconian emphasis on utility as the proper basis for human activity. These lines of reasoning made both humankind and their activities formative and predictable and thus open to scientific inquiry. Étienne Bonnet, abbé de Condillac confirms this point in *Essai Sur L'Origine des Connaissances Humaines* (1798) when he states:

> Concluons qu'il n'y a point d'idées qui ne soient acquises [par exterior]: les premières viennent immédiatement des sens; les autres sont dues à l'expérience, et se multiplient à proportion qu'on est plus capable de réfléchir. (p. 23)

It is these kinds of assumptions that permeated Hegel's investigation of science and world society. Rousseau worried about the social cost of such a mass and materialist manner of knowledge production and first expressed this concern in the follow-up to his award-winning essay, his book, *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* (1750). For him, knowledge built from utility amounts to individuals being drawn into systems of formation based solely on practical application (and Condillac would add to this system the originary mechanism: the avoidance of pain; pursuit of pleasure). This is the basis of Rousseau's concern for what he (1750) saw was the insurmountable artifice in human relations where arts and sciences were as good as they were able to respectively "mould[] behaviour and t[each] passions to speak in an artificial language" (p. 4) and be black holes of human investment interested more in utility than greater moral concerns: "being the effect of idleness, they generate idleness in their turn; and an irreparable loss of time is the first prejudice which they must necessarily cause to society". (p. 9) Rousseau belonged

to that group of intellects, the *physiocrats*, who resisted the triumphal march of utility and progress, many of whom sought refuge in the peripheries, outside the cosmopolitan centres where these two developments were beginning to take hold on a mass scale. For someone like Turgot, it was an economic journey to find what Foucault calls in *Les Mots et les choses* (1966) a value that neither increases nor has a producer requiring remuneration: "the Author of nature, the Producer of all goods and all wealth". (p. 211) For someone like Tissot, it was what Anne C. Vila (1998) calls a hygienic journey to discover that salve of virtue, which counteracts the corruption of the city, corroding both moral and physical bodies. In all these cases, there is something distinctly immaterial, or *negative*, in the conceptualization. *Immaterial* is here not indicative of that nebulous region of the spirit, or soul, built into the dualism of Cartesian mechanics. (This conception has its own deep-seated *positivism* in the need for an initial bifurcation between soul and matter.) *Immaterial* is rather an emphasis on relationality, such that the *positive* designations, holding objects in the world in sharp contour, become blurred and tilted towards a requirement for less and less dependence on reasoned articulation for understanding. This *negative* conception is distinctly non-cosmopolitan; and found itself to be a potent counter-force in the Enlightenment in its retreat into the countryside. It also turns out to be the basis of Rousseau's metaphysics of family.

Although Marx can be seen moving in the direction of the *peripheries* - to the countryside where emaciated peasants toil; to the city limits where the marginalized worker hovel; it is clear by now that his orientation was more towards the *centre*. Marx' project was one of ending the bourgeoisie's stranglehold on progress so that all may partake in the utility it promised. The historical conditions, under which Marx wrote - and the theoretical basis he inherited from Hegel - create too great a chasm for alignment to be drawn with Rousseau. When Rousseau first arrived at Mme d'Epinay's Hermitage on the 9th of April, 1756, his retreat to the peripheries was both geographical and epistemological. Not only did he flee the physical and cultural space of the cosmopolitan centre but he also rejected the progress that he had only begun criticizing as an intellectual living in Paris - criticizing first to great acclaim but then

to increasing hostility as the tattered relations with his former friends from the city indicate. One friend-turned-enemy, Voltaire, had this polemic to say against Rousseau and it concerned his family life. Voltaire accused Rousseau of bringing a life of misery to his long term partner, Thérèse, who begat the majority of Rousseau's children, and Thérèse's mother, who was forced to contend with the chaotic lifestyle this peregrine philosopher and perpetual refugee brought, to the detriment of her own health. Let this statement be a reminder that family, as stated by Zaretsky/ Scott (2009), was an issue, front-and-centre in the clash between these rival epistemologies:

> Jean-Jacques Rousseau was a charlatan who drags with him, from village to village, from mountain to mountain, the wretched woman whose mother he killed and whose children he exposed at the gates of an asylum, rejecting a charitable person who wanted to take care of them, abjuring all natural feelings even as he casts off those of honour and religion. (p. 69)

2. The Metaphysics of Child Abandonment

In *Les Confessions*, Rousseau seems of two minds about being a derelict father. In the narration of the time spent at the soirées of Madame la Selle, he admits being implicated in the customs of what was then the culture of the Salon. Although he (1782) lacked the "boldness" someone like Old de Graville had to narrate risqué stories with the "gallantry" to cover over any "indecency", he could be at least the subject of dinner table chatter where "ordinary topics" as "honourable people injured, husbands deceived, women seduced, secret accouchements" were certain to please. (p. 332) In her study of eighteen-century salon life, Amelia Gere Mason confirms incisively that materialist philosophy and science had always been delivered in such a manner: in forms of salacious wit or furtive coquetry, following legacies of the likes of Montesquieu, Helvetius and Fontenelle, who had enshrined erotic play as a grounding "materialist" principle for both discourses. Mason (2008) sees this tradition carried over to the "original and aggressive thought of men like

Voltaire, Rousseau, d'Alembert and Diderot" (p. 169); and perceives what appears to be a prelude on a much smaller scale of that now familiar dialectic of the Revolution. She speaks of the "cardinal doctrine" for salon life being that inherently contradictory pairing: "freedom and equality", manifest respectively as either romantic articulations aimed at self-distinction (i.e., wit) or caustic satire meant to level any established distinctions in society that may interfere with this freedom (i.e., coquetry). (p. 169) However, Rousseau parts company with his fellow *salonnières* when pointing out that although he may have followed the "principles" of this group, he was by no means an adherent of their "morals": "I […] gradually adopted, thank Heaven! not the morals, but the principles, which I found established". (p. 332). This is a significant move because, while admitting to following along with the *positive* principles of his company, Rousseau claims to have always preserved his *moral* rectitude. What Rousseau means by this *moral* defence needs explaining. Morality is not that prescriptive form as obeisance to *principles* that would have meant he was being very disingenuous in washing himself clean of his obvious sexual and parental indiscretions. His was a morality based on virtue, conceived as a powerful force of metaphysics, resembling the relational quality Peter Cryle identifies (2004) in virtue as the erotic potential in the "play of feminine resistance". (p. 56-57) For Cryle, virtue is very much not the boorish prudery, captured in the French terms: "bégueules" or "devotes" where sexual conduct is bound to precepts and prejudices, which can only ever be inauthentic. This distinction is important as it allows for the contradiction of Rousseau, the "family man/ derelict father" to find resolution. With "virtue" it now makes sense to argue that Rousseau (1782) is being consistent in sending his wife and mother-in-law on those frequent visits to the Foundling Hospital:

> I will be content with a general statement that in handing my children over for the State to educate, for lack of means to bring them up myself, by destining them to become workers and peasants *instead of adventures, and fortune-hunters*, I thought I was acting as a citizen and a father, and looked upon myself as a member of Plato's Republic. (p. 322)

The key elements in this statement - the ones that circle back to the *positivity* seen grounding the *principles*, to which Rousseau admits acquiescing during his 1742-1756 stay in Paris - are "adventurers" and "fortune-hunters". Both imply a narrow focus on a *principle* of individual esteem, an increased attention to "articulations" that are singular in their utility, e.g., autobiographical anecdotes, profits and scientific facts. Only ten years earlier Diderot (1772) raised a similar issue when he seized (in fiction) Bougainville's seat on the captain's deck and took his own metaphysical journey to the New World. Diderot was uninterested in doing the activities Bougainville had done on his journeys, activities like opening up new markets for trade, discovering new facts for science (especially in cartography) and helping found colonies for France, for example, Îsles Malouines (now the Falkland Islands). Diderot (1772) lists what objects he left behind on his version of the journey, objects that had originally accompanied Bougainville in his exploration of the South Pacific:

> Bougainville a le goût des amusements de la société. Il aime les femmes, les spectacles, les repas délicats. Il se prête au tourbillon du monde d'aussi bonne grâce qu'aux inconstances de l'élément sur lequel il a été ballotté. Il est aimable et gai. C'est un véritable Français, lesté d'un bord d'un Traité de calcul différentiel et intégral, et de l'autre d'un Voyage autour du globe. (p. 6)

These are those now familiar *objects* of *positive* commitment to *principles* seen springing out of a materialist philosophy and science. Despite acquiescing to the same "goût des amusements de la société" that Diderot resisted in his South Pacific voyage Rousseau also left something behind when setting off on his metaphysical voyage: his children. But Émile is the (fictional) child he discovered while at the Hermitage of Marshall de Luxembourg in Montmorency in 1759. Understanding who Émile is requires a presentation of Rousseau's family-based metaphysics, which has already been given a preliminary outline in the previous section. Ultimately, in the countryside, Rousseau discovered his *negative*

conception of metaphysics, countering the *positive* one that he witnessed growing out of the cosmopolitanism of pre-Revolutionary France.

Most accounts of Rousseau's metaphysics begin with mistaken conceptions of *positivity* and *negativity*. This is just as true today as it was when Rousseau was still a germane topic of discussion in world affairs. R.P. Locke (2006) cites Edmund Burke, who suggests Rousseau had only "vanity" as his guide for the excesses of his thoughts and feelings. Vanity has already been featured as a *positive* principle of the Salon; and Burke - as Hegel would later do - intuits its isolating effect amidst the Revolution:

> I cannot stand forward, and give praise or blame to any thing which relates to human actions, and human concerns, on a simple view of the object as it stands stripped of every *relation*, in all the nakedness and solitude of metaphysical abstraction. (paragraph 2.1.12)

Notably, it is the very notion of *relationality*, framed in this article as *negativity* that Burke (through Stanlis) (2009) denies Rousseau and even gives the usual accusation about Rousseau, the family man: he is "a lover of his kind; but hater of his kindred". (p. 618) Other authors, more recently have offered less polemical analyses of Rousseau's metaphysics that also reverse what this article has established as the grounds of *positivity* and *negativity*. A useful device for maintaining one's proper bearing vis-à-vis Rousseau's metaphysics is the reminder of his deep antipathy for the notion of necessity, that inevitable chain of causation naturally emerging whenever *objects* are handled *positively* as either materials or concepts. This antipathy comes through in Jonathan I. Israel comparison of Rousseau and Spinoza. Israel (2001) references Rousseau's own words in this refutation of the necessity, bequeathed to metaphysics by philosophers like Spinoza:

> 'No doubt I am not free not to desire my own welfare,' concedes Rousseau, attacking the doctrine of necessity laid down by Spinoza, Collins, and his former friend, 'but does it follow that I am not my own master because I cannot be other than myself?'. It

> is not the word freedom that is meaningless,' he concludes, the word necessity. (p. 719)

Israel then goes on to characterize what it is for Rousseau that ensures *freedom* while circumventing the *equality* that necessarily relegates individuals to the materialist constraints of causation and hence restricts freedom. Israel (2001) raises the belief in the two substances: "man is animated [as a body] by an immaterial substance [i.e., soul] (p. 719) as Rousseau's manner of negotiating the two extremes. However, unlike the mechanics of Descartes (and Spinoza's of another variety) that in establishing the *positive* architecture of body and soul allows for some remote causal interfacing; Rousseau is working rather with relations in the pure sense of the word: *immateriality*, the utter dissolution of *material* into pure *negativity*. Rousseau's *immateriality* is in this way markedly distinct from the mechanism, appearing in both dualistic and some other monistic forms in cosmology (like Spinoza's). By maintaining the *positivity* inherent in the "two substances" that he attributes to Rousseau's metaphysics, Israel makes no headway in formulating just what it is that is "negative" in Rousseau's conception. This problem appears in other modern handlings of Rousseau's metaphysics, as well.

Rousseau is even partly to blame for confusing readers as to what is meant by *positivity* and *negativity* in his metaphysics. The title to his never completed work, *Morale sensitive, ou Le Matérialisme du sage*, and references to physical analogies like magnetism in discussions of metaphysics in what is available in the sketch of this unfinished work have the effect of falsely eliciting an anticipation of discussions of *positive* materialism. (Rousseau does the same thing with his use of the term: "sensitive", which elicits discussions about the materiality of nerves in that *positive* science of sensitivity, the precursor to modern Neurology.) Vila (1998) gets caught up in this confusion in her analysis. Her interpretation of Rousseau's *amour de soi-même* and *amour propre* fails to properly orientate what *positive* and *negative* actually are in Rousseau's metaphysics. *Positivity*, the magnetic attractions of bodies; *negativity*, the repulsions is how she summarizes Rousseau's applications

in *Dialogues, ou Rousseau Juge de Jean-Jacques* (1772-1776). She then goes on to overlay these terminologies upon human relations. Interpreting Rousseau, she describes *amour de soi-même* as the *positive* orientation towards others: "an instinctive urge to 'extend one's being and one's enjoyment'"; while *amour propre* is a "'degenerated' mode of self-love that prompts human beings to reflect and compare themselves constantly with their fellows" - which she calls *negative*. (p. 185) A conceptualization like the one developed in this essay would actually have these terms reversed. Rousseau's *negativity* and *positivity* should be conceptualized using a theory of "materialism" where *objects* are staggered in such a way that some have a deeply *distal* configuration - and others, a *proximal* one. For the *proximal* kinds, they are ones where the more *positively* they develop; the more *proximal* they arrive - with individualisms of bodies and particularities of say "comparisons" being what Roussea considered the lamented end-points. According to Vila, *negative* is "comparison", emerging from two *positive* objects in close *proximity*. This is incorrect. The proper meaning of *negativity* is a recession towards pure relations such that there is enough distance that *positive* - or *proximal* - *objects* are not able to emerge, whether it be on small scales in the Salon or en masse in communities after the French Revolution. Again it is a too literal (or too *positive*) a reading of such terminologies as these ancient forms of science: sympathies and antipathies, which creates this imprecision in modern interpretation. Without digressing into a topic, which is really outside the purview of this essay, let it simply be stated that in early studies of natural phenomena like magnetism there were competing modes of inquiry that often became confused in the fogginess of the epistemological adjustment that saw metaphysics yielded more and more to more *positive* modern approaches.

Perhaps, it is Rousseau's reflection on anthropology that offers the needed reprise from the *proximity* of what a discipline of social science otherwise is when handled using modern *positive* techniques. Rousseau's "anti-anthropological" position in *Discour sur l'origin de l'inégalité* was highlighted earlier on in order to set the ground for his alternative vision. His anthropology was built with *distance* in mind - not *proximity* and

children played an important theoretical role in his explication.[1] Here is what Rousseau, the father, (1755) avoided in sending his children to the Foundling Hospital:

> No individual was recognized as the father of several children until such time as they lived in families together and settled around him. The goods of the father, of which he is truly the master, are the ties which keep his children dependent on him, and he may choose to give them a share of his estate only to the extent that they have deserved it from him by constant deference to his will. (p. 126)

Children in metaphysical *distance* relate to parents much differently. According to Rousseau, children of ancient tribes had been born in steep *negative* decline to the whole of the community, that is, children did not belong to only one set of natural parents. Rather, the only due owed was the "respect" children had for their parents for having given them life. Nursing and raising the progeny of tribes were both privileges and obligations for all - equally. The common dialectic of rights and duties, infused in political discourses on citizenry post-Revolution, would not have existed. It is on this point that Émile is for Rousseau his answer to what Plato was intimating in his *Republic*. This again is a reminder to the reader of the significance of Plato's place in Rousseau's original justification of child abandonment, presented in *Les Confessions*. What remains now to do is develop Émile's position alongside a trajectory beginning not in the cosmopolitan bustle of Paris but in the remote Hermitage of Montmorency. So far, Rousseau's metaphysical journey has

[1] In the section "Anthropological Sleep" in *Les mots et les chose* (1966), Foucault argues that it is this wish to capture "distance" that spurns Modern science to do something that it had long since disabused from its proper manner of inquiry: the reintroduction of transcendence. He describes the reversal this way: '[…] the transcendental function is doubled over so that it covers with its dominating network the inert, grey space of empiricity; inversely, empirical content are given life, gradually pull themselves upright, and are immediately subsumed in a discourse which carries their transcendental presumption *into the distance'* (p. 372) (Emphasis added).

a much different trajectory to that one building in his age towards the eventual arrival of Hegel and the cosmopolitanism he theorizes about after the Revolution. This distinction has been drawn out using the geographical analogy of city centre and rural periphery. As it turns out, Rousseau's more global statement concerning his children (in life and fiction) extends beyond this analogy - and into the domain of geopolitics.

3. Émile: a Son for the World

More than setting Émile beyond the outskirts of the metropolis, Rousseau is determined to place him even further out of reach of those agricultural practices that would set the course for the eventual development of civilization proper: domestication. In his opening statement in *Émile, ou De l' education* Rousseau (1762) establishes those now familiar *positive* practices - or in his words "[… the p]rejudices, authority, necessity [… of] social institutions [, that] stifle nature":

> Everything is good as it leaves the hands of the Author of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man. He 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. (p. 37)

Against the dependence on nature that domestication produces, Rousseau teaches Émile independence such that he is experientially engaged with nature and thus able to develop the proper sufficiency in his mental faculties and physical vigour. According to Rousseau, dependence diverts human investment into the world from its originary bond and leads this relationship along a path away from what was intended. Rousseau introduces geopolitics in this argument when he uses the examples of the healthy Spartans and the fine Athenians. He (1762) argues that the former "govern[] without precepts and do[] everything by doing nothing" (p. 119). They are able to be self-sufficient even if it means lacking the finesse the Athenians would come to exemplify. He

sides with the Spartans, proclaiming: "[y]ou will never get to the point of producing wise men if you do not in the first place produce rascals". (p. 119) A rascal in youth, Émile would grow up with the sufficient wisdom to discern how it was that the inheritors of Athenian sophistication ultimately led to their demise. In Book IV of *Émile* Rousseau recounts another geopolitical tale, the Greek epic made famous by Michel de Montaigne in his essay "De L'inégalité qui est entre nous" (1580). Rousseau, citing Montaigne, (1762) tells how King Pyrrhus, during a consultation with the shrewd advisor, Cyneas, saw no shortage of limits to his quest for empire: "master Italy", "cross into Gaul and Spain", "subjugate Africa", to which Cyneas asked: "And in the end (?)". "The world and then I can rest", replied Pyrrhus. (p. 298) Cyneas then gives these penetrating words of advice:

> Then tell me, Sire, if that is what you want, what is keeping you from doing it at once? Why do you not place yourself now where you say you aspire to be, and spare yourself all the toil and risk that you are putting between you and it? (p. 298)

In the place of Cyneus Rousseau substitutes Émile, who, like his predecessor, questions the merits of such campaigns of self-distinction; and raises once again the problem of the *positive* articulations of those breeds of "adventurers " and "fortune-hunters", discussed earlier, including amongst them those now familiar seducers, materialists, explorers and scientists etc. Émile is impressed neither by the "exploits of so great a captain" nor the "intrigues of a statesman"; and (1762) even offers up a description of what a *positive* increment pursued looks like: "fateful *tile* that will terminate his life and his projects by a dishonourable death". (p. 242) Raised to be independent in nature, Émile has a *negative* endowment seen in the *distal* position Cyneas recommends King Pyrrhus take when he suggests His Majesty place himself where he aspires to be instead of investing efforts to transect the distant lying betwixt. Being dependent on nature is how Rousseau (1762) describes the over-weaned child of more "civilized" societies, children, kept away from the "hard blows" of nature by [their] doting mother[s] (p. 47) thus weakening them

and leading them away from what was their "originary constitution". Rousseau mentioned over-swaddling, coming with access to a finer quality of linens; over-feeding with richer foods rather than breast-feeding or - if a contemporary example may be excused - over-inoculating with new advancements in immunology. This dependence comes with the strengthening of *positive* ties prioritizing the welfare of families and individuals; independence is rather the *negative* decline into the vicissitudes of nature. Rousseau describes the vicissitudes this way:

> Teething puts them in a fever; sharp colics give them convulsions; long coughs suffocate them; worms torment them; plethora corrupts their blood; various leavens ferment in it and cause perilous eruptions. Half the children born perish before the eighth year. The tests passed, the child has gained strength. (p. 47)

(The pneumatological tone of this citation even captures a *negative* conception of the child-subject that moves beyond the *positivity* coming in the form of an individually-bounded Émile.) If King Pyrrhus' identity be concentrated in either the success or failure of his "adventures" and "fortune-seeking" on the battlefield; Cyneas offers an alternative basis for deriving identity, the *negativity* of imagination. Imagination here appears to share consanguinity with *sensibilité* used by Rousseau to "captur[e…] the moral force uniting all objects of the world" (See p. 7). The *positive* inclinations Pyrrhus has for his Greek empire stand in stark contrast to the Spartans and by now it is clear that it is more than just a matter of the contingencies of cultural tastes. The social-political experience of Ancient Greece would have been a very germane backdrop for making sense of what Rousseau witnessed in French (or, better, Western) society in the period just prior to the French Revolution. To this world-historical perspective, Rousseau offers up his reflection in a political tract, inserted between Book IV and Book V of *Émile*: "La Profession de Foi du vicaire savoyard".

This document is a highly advanced lesson that Rousseau gives to Émile, who has finally developed the sufficient maturity to be able to comprehend in the most global of terms of what his upbringing and

education have come to entail. The lesson was Rousseau's most comprehensive geopolitical statement to date and the culmination of his interrogation of the cosmopolitan centre that he had come to despise in his flight from Paris. In the following citation, Rousseau gives what amounts to a reversal of the conundrum of *universality* and *particularity*, set amidst the Revolution and given theoretical scaffolding by Hegel, that scaffolding Marx would later hypostasize into the materialist foundation of Movement (both physical and political). Rousseau (1862) captures the reversal this way:

> There is not a being in the universe that cannot in some respect be regarded as the common center around which all the others are ordered, in such a way that they are all reciprocally ends and means relative to one another. The mind is confused and gets lost in this infinity of relations, not a single one of which is either confused or lost in the crowd. (p. 276)

Rousseau takes the *particularity* of an individual embedded in his or her sociocultural reality to be the *negative* beginning of the *universality* of all relations where it is the *universality* for which the mind strives, which ends up as narrow *particularities*, i.e., the *positive* knowledge Rousseau calls a "cover [of] nonsense [full of] abstractions, coordinations, general principles and symbolic terms". (p. 276) Rousseau then presents a *reductio ad absurdum* to illustrate how it was that u*niversality* could be conceivably built using *positive* scaffolding, one that he recognized was emerging in all the cosmopolitan projects of his time. *Universal* truth claims coming in the form of scientific assertions backed by empirical evidence - and the concomitant imperial campaigns supported by the kinds of *objects* Diderot had gutted when he fictionally hijacked Bougainville's ship (See p. 10) - are all *positive* requirements in need of what Rousseau calls "verification of the proofs". (p. 306) Rousseau goes on to argue that, if such a *positive* landscape were to stand, it would necessarily need to be peopled by those of equally *positive* engagement:

> […] if there is only one true religion and every man is obliged to follow it under the threat of damnation, one's life must be spend in studying them all, in going deeper into them, in comparing them, in roaming around the country where each is established. (p. 306)

Rousseau then presents a global dystopia where all the regimes of social life: "trades, the arts, the human sciences, and all the civil occupations" (p. 306) fall into disarray while peregrine (*positive*) truth-seekers never stay in one place long enough for civil society to ever take hold. Rousseau then presents the argument that precipitated his exile, the condemnation of his *Émile* and its public burning in 1762: "if the son of a Christian does well in following his father's religion without a profound and impartial examination" (p. 306), how about the son of a Turk? Rousseau then aggravates controversy even more when he goes on to reject the singularity of miracles as the basis for the truth of the Christian religion: why would God chose to communicate with humankind using a means requiring "attestation" ("fact-checking") and - if not feasible - "men's credulity". (p. 298) From this line of reasoning he then graduates to the issue of more serious concern: Christ's death and resurrection. Rousseau sees in Christ's death the precursory one of Socrates', the gadfly of Athens, whose famous demonstration of the Oracles' pronouncement that he (Socrates) be the wisest man in the world was achieved by the admission of his own ignorance. Laying low knowledge this way was too much for many amongst the Athenian elites, who prided themselves on their *positive* knowledge. This stirred claims that Socrates was traitorous and led to his execution by poisoning. Building on this, Rousseau (1762) calls Christ's sacrifice an index of a "pure [or full] morality" against what was only a partial one for Socrates, whose sacrifice was limited to the *positivity* of what was then the imagined boundary of Greece: "if the life and death of Socrates are those of a wise man, the life and death of Jesus are those of a god". (p. 308) Significantly, Jesus' death was a "moral" one and needed not even be supported by the narrative of the resurrection, which would have required a miracle and perforce some kind of *positive* explanation to verify it. Christ's death was significant principally for its epistemological humility

- not the evidence of a resurrection that it left behind. It took a lifetime of preparation for Émile to have received and understood this message with practical geopolitical implications. And it required that he be raised in the peripheries in a much different manner than his cohorts in the city.

4. Conclusion

What is clear by now is that to have Émile's perspective, one needs a different formation - one conceived of an entirely new kind of *moral* learning where knowledge is grounded in what has been presented in this paper as *negativity* of *morals* - not in the *positivity* of *principles*. Metaphysical and moral reflections on the state of geopolitics by contemporaries of Marx such as Dhawn Martin, who (2011) claims the proper model for social and political pluralism be "conviviality":

> [it] hinges on […] vulnerability as openness towards multiply others. It entails a 'yielding generously… towards diversity as a universal and cosmopolitan project in which everyone participates' (p. 285)

have very little in common with the ancient meanings of these terminologies. For this reason Rousseau's presentation of Émile is entirely unique and highly relevant for consideration today. As a child, Émile is really the counter concept for the *proximities* coming in enquires into those perennial concerns in the history of human affairs. The range is deep and diverse and can be set on a scale like that one established in this paper as *negative* to *positive*. In *De la démocratie en Amérique*, Alex de Tocqueville (1838) describes the manner feudal systems, supporting landed aristocracies, enshrined children in laws of primogeniture as the *fons et origo* of tribal and familial continuity: "its origin, its glory; its power; its virtue […] perpetuated in an imperishable memorial of the past and a sure pledge of the future". (p. 67) With the emergence of free markets, however, it was in the education of middle class children where the hope of inheritance lay. De Tocqueville even suggests as much when he presents epistemological dispositions converging with market

orientations, like what has already been shown in "articulations" for Hegel; and "fortune-seeking", Diderot:

> Now, from the moment that you divest the landowner of that interest in the preservation of his estate which he derives from association, from tradition, and from family pride, you may be certain that sooner or later he will dispose of it; for there is a strong pecuniary interest in favor of selling, as floating capital produces higher interest than real property, and is more readily available to gratify the passions of the moment. (p. 68)

With the example of Émile, it can now be stated that even though *positivity* has been assigned a relatively modern fixture, Montaigne's telling of the tale of King Pyrrhus - and Rousseau retelling – both show that it has come in different forms in the past - and that it has a *negative* counterpart. And in more recent times this form of *positivity* can be said to be even more saturated although a full description of any difference in degrees is outside the purview of this paper. It is because of *both* the ubiquity of the concept: *proximity* - conceptualized as the basis of cosmopolitanism - *and* the temporal *proximity* to its influence - streaming out from the Revolutionary age where cosmopolitanism was universalized as an inchoate form of globalization - that the *moral* tone of Rousseau's argument has been lost. If metaphysics and morality are to be introduced into contemporary discussions of human affairs, they ought to be so with proper historical awarement, i.e., proper awareness of what these words meant for Rousseau and his ilk. A good point at which to start would be at *negativity* and *distance*, developing as contrasting antipodes to *positivity* and *proximity*, *negativity* and *distance* developing in the peripheries of cosmopolitan centers like Paris in the mid-eighteen century.

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