

The Explanation of Amour-Propre

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Rousseau's thought is marked by an optimism and a pessimism that each evoke, at least in the right mood, a feeling of recognition difficult to suppress. We have an innate capacity for virtue, and with it freedom and happiness. Yet our present social conditions instill in us a restless craving for superiority, which leads to vice, and with it bondage and misery. As Rousseau famously encapsulates the idea: "man is naturally good and . . . it is from these institutions alone that men become wicked" (LM 575/OC L.1136).¹ However this dictum is understood, it entails at least what we might call the "thesis of possible goodness": that while human psychology is such that men become wicked under the conditions in which we now find them, nevertheless men would be, or have been, good under other conditions.

The defense of the thesis faces an obvious problem. Almost all that we know of human nature is as it is expressed under conditions relevantly similar to those that currently prevail. So what evidence do we have that it would express itself differently under different conditions? Rousseau's answer is to construct hypothetical histories of the species, in the second *Discourse*, and of the individual, in *Emile*. These histories aim to describe a possible psychology such that (i) if men had it, it would explain why, in conditions like those that currently prevail, men are bad and (ii) would imply that men, under other conditions, would be good, and (iii) it can

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1. Works of Rousseau that are frequently cited have been identified by abbreviations that are listed at the end of the article.

plausibly be said, on the basis of whatever observation and introspection is available to us, to be the psychology that we actually have.

Even setting aside the matter of plausibility, it is surprisingly difficult, or at least surprisingly complicated, to articulate even a *possible* psychology that would explain why men are bad in the ways that Rousseau says they are, while allowing that they might ever be good in the ways that he says they can be. Spell out principles that would permit men to be good, and it becomes a mystery why men should ever have become bad. Spell out principles that explain why men are bad, and it seems impossible that they could ever be otherwise. Interpretations of Rousseau, even several to which I am deeply indebted, have not fully engaged, I think, with the complications.² This is what I try to do here.

To that end, I attempt a positive reconstruction. I formulate psychological principles that would explain why, in conditions like those that Rousseau finds men in, they are bad in the way he observes; that would imply that men, under other conditions, would be good in the way he imagines; and that I believe are at least consistent with what Rousseau otherwise says on the subject. Whether these principles can be said to be Rousseau's in any further sense is harder to say. To be sure, he never explicitly articulated them. And whatever positive textual support can be found for them no doubt requires emphasizing some parts of his discussion to the neglect of others and taking in one way expressions that might reasonably be taken in another. But this may not matter for my main aim, which is simply to bring out the necessary difficulty and complexity of any defense of Rousseau's thesis of possible goodness. I suspect that this is where much of the interest of his work lies in any event: in the depth of the tension between his optimism and his pessimism that is revealed by his struggles to reconcile them.

In section 1, I interpret the thesis of possible goodness as the claim that, under present conditions, amour-propre—a concern for how one compares to others—becomes “inflamed”—very roughly, becomes a concern for *superiority* over others—whereas in other conditions, amour-propre would be “healthy”—would be a concern for *equality* with others. In section 2, I suggest that Rousseau's project is to describe certain basic desires (although the word ‘desire’ may connote something overly narrow, as we will see) such that in combination with certain beliefs, liable to arise under present conditions, inflamed amour-propre results as a kind

2. I have in mind foremost the work of Nicholas Dent, Joshua Cohen, John Rawls, and Frederick Neuhouser cited in the references below.

of derived desire, whereas in combination with other beliefs, which would arise under other conditions, healthy amour-propre would result. To a first approximation, the basic desires are Preservative *Amour de Soi*—a concern for one's well-being—and the Concern for Evaluation—a concern, which we must further specify, that others evaluate one in a particular way. The question is then what beliefs combine with these desires to produce inflamed, or alternately healthy, amour-propre. In section 3, I explain why some answers from the existing literature seem inadequate. In section 4, I suggest that, for Rousseau, the source of the trouble seems to be Dependence on Opinion—a tendency to look to others' evaluations for the source of one's value—and, specifically, Social Self-Evaluation—the belief that the source of one's value is Social Advantage—superiority in goods, such as wealth and political power, that depend on convention and consent. The question is then how Social Self-Evaluation leads to inflamed amour-propre. In section 5, I examine a suggestion, drawn from the literature, that inflamed amour-propre arises from the combination of Social Self-Evaluation with the Concern for Accurate Evaluation—in practice, a desire that others value one at the rate one values oneself. Although this provides an explanation of certain phenomena associated with inflamed amour-propre, it does not explain its central characteristics. Surprisingly, the resulting psychology tends to individual contentment and social concord. In section 6, I offer two compatible, but singly sufficient, alternative explanations of how inflamed amour-propre might arise from Social Self-Evaluation. The first replaces Preservative *Amour de Soi* with Progressive *Amour de Soi*—a concern to develop, to actualize what gives one value. The second supplements the Concern for Accurate Evaluation with the Concern for Higher Accurate Evaluation—a desire that one will be evaluated more highly and that this evaluation will be accurate. In section 7, I explain how these desires lead to healthy amour-propre when Social Self-Evaluation is replaced by Evaluative Knowledge—knowledge that one's true value is one's natural value, measured by one's humanity and natural virtues.

1. Amour-Propre

Commentators generally agree that men become wicked principally through some relation between present conditions and amour-propre: a special kind of self-concern, specifically, for how one compares to others. On a common reading, present conditions produce amour-propre,

and amour-propre itself makes men wicked. Men would be good, therefore, only under conditions that did not produce amour-propre at all.³ But this seems untenable. For one thing, Rousseau suggests that society makes amour-propre inevitable. So if amour-propre itself makes men wicked, then it would seem that men could be good only by withdrawing from, or never having entered, society. But Rousseau denies that withdrawal from society is possible or desirable (2D 150–51, 203–4; SC 53/OC 3.152–53, 207–8, 364). Thus, this reading threatens to deprive the thesis of possible goodness of any practical interest. At most, the thesis would exonerate our nature (by showing that *it* is not responsible for our wickedness) while leaving us no prospect of reform.⁴ Moreover, Rousseau seems to say precisely that man *can* be good in society (E 255/OC 4.550–51) and, accordingly, that amour-propre can take a good, as well as a bad, form (E 235, 243/OC 4.523–24).

Some suggest that Rousseau holds that this good form can be realized only by somehow identifying one's individual "self" with a collective "self," so that one's amour-propre is transformed into a concern for how the collective compares with its rivals.⁵ But much of the work on Rousseau of the last few decades—led by Nicholas Dent's landmark 1989 study and elaborated in different ways by John Rawls, Joshua Cohen, and Frederick Neuhouser—suggests a different view, which seems to me both more faithful to the texts and more interesting in its own right.⁶ On this view, amour-propre, understood exclusively as a kind of *individual*, rather than collective, self-concern, can take not only a bad, or what Dent calls an "excessive" or "inflamed," form but also a good, or "natural" or "healthy," form. So understood, the thesis of possible goodness is that human psychology is such that under present conditions, amour-propre becomes

3. See, for example, Allan Bloom's introduction to his translation of *Emile*, E 10.

4. However, Judith Shklar, *Men and Citizens* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969) reads Rousseau as having such limited ambitions.

5. See Rogers D. Masters, *The Political Philosophy of Rousseau* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), 42; Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, 19; and David Gauthier, *The Sentiment of Existence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), chap. 3.

6. Nicholas Dent, *Rousseau: An Introduction to His Psychological, Social, and Political Theory* (New York: Blackwell, 1989); Dent, *A Rousseau Dictionary* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992); Dent, *Rousseau* (London: Routledge, 2005); John Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*, ed. Samuel Freeman (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); Joshua Cohen, "The Natural Goodness of Humanity," in *Reclaiming the History of Ethics: Essays for John Rawls*, ed. Andrews Reath, Barbara Herman, and Christine Korsgaard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 102–39; and Frederick Neuhouser, *Rousseau's Theodicy of Self-Love: Evil, Rationality, and the Drive for Recognition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

inflamed, whereas under other possible social conditions, amour-propre would be healthy.

Generically, as I have said, amour-propre is a concern for how one compares to others. Perhaps all forms of self-concern, such as concern for one's health, are desires that one's actual condition compare well with certain *possible* conditions, which *someone*, oneself or another, might enjoy. But amour-propre is a "comparative" desire, whereas the desire for health is "absolute," in the stricter sense that it is a desire that one's actual condition compare well with the *actual* conditions of *others*.

In commentary, amour-propre is often described, more specifically, as a desire to be *evaluated by others* as having a certain value *in comparison with others*.⁷ Sometimes Rousseau does describe it this way. But, at other times, he describes amour-propre only as a desire to *have* a certain value in comparison with others, rather than a desire to be *evaluated* in a certain way in comparison with others (E 235, 243, 296; RJJ 175/OC 4.523–24, 534–35, 608; OC 1.886). Of course, it is possible that these descriptions are elliptical; Rousseau just omits the "in the eyes of others" that he intends to follow "to have value relative to others." But it is also possible that, by 'amour-propre', Rousseau means *both* forms of concern for how one compares to others: concern for others' *appraisals* of one's value relative to others and concern for one's *value* relative to others (regardless of their appraisals of it).⁸ I will work with this second understanding of amour-propre:

Generic amour-propre: A desire to have, and to be evaluated by others as having, a certain value in comparison with others.

There is at least a methodological reason for this. If we can explain the thesis of possible goodness on the second understanding, then we will have also explained the thesis of possible goodness on the former one. The converse, by contrast, is not obviously true.

Despite other differences, Dent and those who follow his lead (myself among them) agree that, whatever else may be true of inflamed amour-propre, it *entails* a concern to compare as *morally superior* to others, whereas, whatever else may be true of healthy amour-propre, it is *incompatible* with a concern to compare as morally superior to others and

7. See, in particular, Neuhouser, *Rousseau's Theodicy*, chap. 1, and "Rousseau on the Relation between Reason and Self-Love (*Amour propre*)," *Internationales Jahrbuch des Deutschen Idealismus* 1 (2003): 221–39.

8. Laurence D. Cooper, *Rousseau, Nature, and the Problem of the Good Life* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1999), 137–50, also questions whether amour-propre is always a desire for evaluation.

instead *entails* a concern to compare as a *moral equal* to others.⁹ By “*moral equality/superiority*,” I mean “*equality/superiority of basic worth or standing*” or “*equal/superior entitlement to respect*.” It may help to think of it in this way: Most modern theories of morality claim that there is a kind of worth or claim to respect that all human, or rational, or sentient beings possess equally and unconditionally, whether or not some merit more disapproval for their vices, more blame for their misdeeds, or less esteem for their traits or achievements that have no direct connection to morality, such as their beauty, skill, or intelligence. For our purposes, “*basic worth or standing*” and “*entitlement to respect*” is *this* but *viewed in abstraction* from the claims of equality, unconditionality, and independence from variable attributes of these kinds. If one has trouble effecting this abstraction, it may help to think of how things are viewed by theories of natural slavery, or caste systems, where slaves or outcasts, in virtue of variable attributes, are accorded less, or no, basic standing or respect.

So, on our understanding, we have:

Healthy amour-propre: A desire to have, and to be evaluated by all others as having, a certain value in comparison with all others, including at least *moral equality*;

and:

Inflamed amour-propre: A desire to have, and to be evaluated by all others as having, a certain value in comparison with all others, including at least ever greater *moral superiority*.

9. Neuhouser, *Rousseau's Theodicy*, chap. 2, argues, and I agree, that healthy amour-propre is compatible with, and even entails, a desire for *other* kinds of superiority. See sec. 7 below. Even so, I may be taking some risk of reading Kantian assumptions back into Rousseau. What seems clear is that Rousseau holds that reason and freedom are distinctive of humanity (2D 141/OC 3.141–42; SC 53/OC 3.364), that human beings are naturally equal along some important dimension (however naturally unequal they may be in other respects) (E 41/OC 4.251), that natural equality should play a central role in our moral responses to one another (E 222–23/OC 4.504–5), and that amour-propre involves a desire for respect, whatever other kinds of evaluation it craves. 2D 166/OC 3.170. However, it is consistent with these fixed points that, for example, the morally relevant natural equality might be equality not of reason and freedom (as I claim in sec. 7.1) but of need, that this might be a basis not for respect but instead for compassion, and that the basis for respect might instead be unequal natural virtue. It may also be that many of the evils of inflamed amour-propre could be avoided without any positive recognition of equality. Much improvement would come simply from refocusing human striving on the development of natural virtues, as sec. 7 indicates. I am indebted to David Owens for pressing me on these points.

Several features are worthy of note. First, amour-propre, in both of these forms at least, is *general*: the desire is to be equal or superior to *all* others and to be evaluated as such by *all* others. Second, under current conditions, inflamed amour-propre is *pervasive*. In particular, it doesn't simply afflict the highborn or the rich.¹⁰ Third, inflamed amour-propre cannot be satisfied. One reason for this is that others, whether their amour-propre is healthy or inflamed, will not be content to evaluate one, or to allow one to be evaluated by others, as superior to *themselves* (E 213–14; RJJ 113/ OC 4.493, OC 1.806). However, the tenor of Rousseau's discussion seems to suggest that inflamed amour-propre is, moreover, a desire for *ever greater* superiority. Being simply *somewhat* better than others will scarcely satisfy it. Inflamed amour-propre instills in us an aversion for "everything that by being something prevents us from being everything" (RJJ 112/OC 1.806). So understood, inflamed amour-propre is not only *unsatisfiable* in practice but also *insatiable* in principle.¹¹

Fourth, inflamed amour-propre expresses itself in *Competition for Social Advantage*: unremitting, zero-sum competition for *greater social value* than others, where social value is measured by *social goods*. Social goods exist only by "convention" and "consent": only because of the attitudes of others. Social goods include property, political power (power to get others to do one's bidding), social class, fame, and so on. Some (but perhaps not all) of these goods, such as social class, are "positional," in the sense that their value is determined by their ranking relative to alternatives.¹² With respect to these goods, there simply is no distinction between social value and social advantage.

Fifth, inflamed amour-propre is at least associated with (although it may not consist in) a *disposition* to *vices of pride*—petulance, imperious rage—and *vices of shame*—obsequiousness, servility. These are best

10. See, for example, Rousseau's description of "the Citizen," the Uriah Heep of modest rank and means, who "courts the great whom he hates, and the rich whom he despises." 2D 187/OC 3.192. See also Dent, *Rousseau: An Introduction*, 60; and Dent, *Rousseau*, 55.

11. This may seem to be contradicted on the very next page by the example of the deluded "fools consumed by amour-propre" who "since they think themselves securely in first place, they are always very content with their lot." RJJ 113/OC 1.807. In the context, however, "content with their lot" seems to mean "not jealous of others." The absence of jealousy is compatible with the insatiability of amour-propre. One can desire ever greater superiority over others, while not preferring the condition of any other to one's own, because one believes that every such condition is inferior.

12. The notion of a "positional good" comes from Fred Hirsch, *Social Limits to Growth* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976).

understood as distortions of the healthy tendency to object, or to stand up for oneself, when one has not been evaluated as a moral equal. The vices of pride consist in believing oneself superior and objecting, even when others have evaluated one as an equal, because they have not evaluated one as superior. The vices of shame consist in believing oneself inferior and so failing to object when others have not evaluated one as an equal. It might at first seem that vices of *shame* not only are not associated with but also are incompatible with inflamed amour-propre. But this is not so. Even if one sees it as one's *due* to be evaluated as inferior, one may still *crave* to be evaluated as superior.¹³ The vices of pride and shame, unlike inflamed amour-propre, are not pervasive (some will have vices of pride, others vices of shame), or general (the demand is not that one be evaluated as superior to *everyone* else but that one be evaluated as superior to those to whom one believes one is superior), or, in general, insatiable (evaluating someone at the price that he believes he has suffices).

Sixth, inflamed amour-propre leaves us *vicious*, by any common-sense measure. We refuse to accept moral equality or to moderate our claims accordingly. We are given to the hostile or debasing vices of pride and shame. And we are locked in zero-sum Competition for Social Advantage, where our gain must be another's loss and another's gain must be our loss. We are thus inclined to be uncharitable, deceitful, and so on. Seventh, it leaves us *miserable* because it saddles us with both desires for evaluation that we can never satisfy and desires for social goods that have no real worth and are divorced from the true sources of pleasure. Eighth, inflamed amour-propre leaves one *unfree*, no matter how high one's station. Even if one ostensibly commands others, one still craves something—evaluation—that only others can provide. One must seek to be and do whatever elicits favorable evaluations from others (E 244/OC 4.536). Finally, insofar as we are afflicted with inflamed amour-propre, we

13. Although less often discussed—it seems, for example, to escape the otherwise thorough catalog in Neuhouser, *Rousseau's Theodicy*, chap. 3—this aspect of the psychology of inflamed amour-propre is a recurring idea in Rousseau. For some exceptions, see Dent, *Rousseau: An Introduction*, 18, 26, 57; and Rawls, *Lectures*, 204. The disfavored in the second *Discourse* feel not only “envy” toward the favored—a desire to enjoy what they enjoy—but also “shame” before them—a sense that they are somehow appropriately disfavored. 2D 166/OC 3.170. “So much contempt debases them. They become cowardly, fearful, and fawning and fall as far below themselves as they had previously been raised above themselves.” E 88/OC 4.315. “What is viler than an impoverished rich man who, remembering the contempt owed to poverty, feels himself to have become the lowest of men?” E 194/OC 4.468.

are *alienated*. In a way that will be touched on again below, we are estranged from our true nature and source of value.

2. Basic Desires

Rousseau tells us that which form someone's amour-propre will take depends on: "what position he will feel he has among men, and what kinds of obstacles he may believe he has to overcome to reach the position he wants to occupy" (E 235, see also 243/OC 4.523–24, 534–35). This suggests the following explanatory schema. Current conditions lead to certain beliefs about "position" and "obstacles." Those beliefs, interacting with certain more basic desires, produce inflamed amour-propre as a kind of derived desire. Other conditions would lead to different beliefs. These different beliefs, interacting with the same desires, would produce healthy amour-propre as a kind of derived desire.

The question is then what these more basic desires and beliefs are. Let's start with a provisional view of the relevant desires. They must be, or arise out of, *amour de soi*, the desire from which Rousseau says that amour-propre arises (E 92, 212–13/OC 4.322, 491). *Amour de soi* is a generic concern for oneself, which need not involve exclusively, or indeed at all, a concern either for how one compares with others or for how others evaluate one. It is at least a desire to survive, although some suggest that it is a desire to fare well more broadly.¹⁴

Preservative Amour de Soi: The desire, not necessarily self-conscious, for one's own well-being.

In its *prereflective* form, *Preservative Amour de Soi* is simply an instinctive desire for certain things that in fact tend to promote one's well-being. With reflection, however, comes a conception of one's well-being and what promotes it. In its *reflective* form, *Preservative Amour de Soi* is a desire for what one *believes* serves one's well-being.

Even in its reflective form, *Preservative Amour de Soi* need not involve any concern for, or even awareness of, others' *evaluations* of one. With a further stage of reflection, however, one acquires this awareness. One learns that there is a further "dimension," so to speak, in which things can fare better or worse: not only in *nature* but also *in the eyes of others*.

14. See, for example, Neuhouser, *Rousseau's Theodicy*, 30 n. 3.

One's concern to fare well in nature "extends," in some sense,¹⁵ to this new interpersonal dimension. The result is the:

Concern for Evaluation: The desire that others evaluate one in a particular way (which will need to be further specified).

15. In what sense? It is not as though Preservative *Amour de Soi*, together with some suitable instrumental or constitutive belief, produces the Concern for Evaluation as a derived *instrumental* or *constitutive* desire. Faring well in the eyes of others is not constitutive of faring well in nature. And even if faring well in the eyes of others is sometimes instrumental to faring well in nature (because, for example, if others hold one in high esteem, they may be more ready to give one material aid), our concern to fare well in the eyes of others is not purely instrumental. What then is the explanatory connection between our concern to fare well in nature and our concern to fare well in the eyes of others? It is an instance of a neglected phenomenon, I think, in which the fitting response to something is similar to—or "resonates" with—the fitting response to its counterpart in another dimension of importance, while reflecting the distinctive and irreducible importance of the particular dimension to which it belongs. For example, our concern for our personal projects—for example, our particular efforts to contribute to knowledge—resonates with our appreciation of the broader values—such as, knowledge itself—that they promote or honor. We care about our *own efforts to contribute* to knowledge only insofar as we think that *knowledge* itself is something to be cared about by anyone. Nevertheless, we do not care about our contributions to knowledge merely as means to, or constituents of, knowledge itself. Instead, our concern for our own contributions reflects the distinctive importance of their being *ours*, an importance that resonates with, but cannot be reduced to, the importance of knowledge for anyone. We do not see ourselves, for example, as having precisely the same reasons to further, or care about the success of, others' efforts to contribute to knowledge as we have to further, or care about the success of, our own efforts. Similarly, we do not care about faring well in the eyes of others merely as a means to, or constituent of, faring well in nature. Instead, our concern to fare well in the eyes of others reflects the distinctive importance to us of how other *minds* regard us, an importance that resonates with, although it cannot be reduced to, the importance of what merely happens to us. For further discussion, see my "Which Relationships Justify Partiality? The Case of Parents and Children," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* (forthcoming), and "Which Relationships Justify Partiality? General Considerations and Problem Cases," in *Partiality and Impartiality: Morality, Special Relationships and the Wider World*, ed. Brian Feltham and John Cottingham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

It is a further question what triggers this "extension": what causes it to occur, when it does, in the individual or the species? The answer, I think, is simply the acquisition, by the individual or the species, of the cognitive resources to be aware of being evaluated. Once this awareness is in place, one's concern to fare well in nature naturally extends to this new dimension, how one fares in the eyes of others. Or, in my terms: as soon as one is capable of attitudes toward how one fares in the eyes of others, one will have attitudes that resonate with one's attitudes toward how one fares in nature. This "extension" may no more call for further explanation than does the "extension" of desire to a new object in the instrumental case: for example, the fact that, once one becomes aware that bears are dangerous, one's concern to fare well in nature naturally produces a derived desire to avoid bears.

Neuhausser, *Rousseau's Theodicy*, 140–49, offers a more elaborate explanation, interesting in its own right, which hinges on the infant's need for the love of a caregiver. This

Preservative *Amour de Soi* and the Concern for Evaluation are not merely desires in the philosopher's sense: dispositions to do what one believes will bring about their objects. Rousseau has a richer conception. First, desires encourage *wishful thinking*: a tendency, in the absence of settled knowledge to the contrary, to view the world as favorable to their own satisfaction.¹⁶ Second, desires involve *feelings of satisfaction* when one believes that their objects have been achieved and feelings of dissatisfaction when one believes that their objects have not been achieved.

In particular, the "dissatisfaction" that one feels when one believes that one's Concern for Evaluation is not fulfilled—when one believes that others do not evaluate one in the relevant way—takes a distinctively interpersonal or communicative form, which befits the "new dimension" of faring better or worse in the eyes of others. One views oneself as having a valid demand against others that they evaluate one in this way, and one reacts by objecting, with resentment and the like, when one believes that they do not (2D 166/OC 3.170). The sort of dissatisfaction that one feels when brute nature resists the satisfaction of one's Preservative *Amour de Soi*, by contrast, lacks this interpersonal or communicative register. It is mere anxiety and pain, which finds no expression in demands or objections (RSW 72/OC 1.1078).

To flesh out the Concern for Evaluation, we will eventually need to specify the "particular way" in which one wants to be evaluated. For the

explanation is suggested to Neuhausser partly by the fact that, in both the second *Discourse* and *Emile*, Rousseau implicates love in the genesis of amour-propre. E 214–15; 2D 165–66/OC 4.494, OC 3.169–70. However, I suspect that, for Rousseau, the role of love in these passages is only that of a spur to engage in the sort of reflection by which the cognitive resources necessary for amour-propre are acquired. Love gets one to think, for the first time, about how others evaluate one and about how one compares with others. "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.*" E 214, my emphasis/OC 4.494. The aim of this passage, in particular, is to explain why, once *Emile* reaches adolescence, the tutor can no longer prevent him from developing amour-propre because he can no longer prevent him from acquiring the necessary cognitive capacities. "This species of passion, not having its germ in children's hearts, cannot be born in them of itself; it is we alone who put it there, and it never takes root except by our fault. But this is no longer the case with the young man's heart. Whatever we may do, these passions will be born in spite of us." E 215/OC 4.494. Hitherto, *Emile* had no desire that would inevitably lead him to compare himself with others or to think about how others evaluated him. With the flowering of sexual desire, however, such comparisons become unavoidable.

16. "The intensity of my desires lends to their object a possibility it is wanting." J 26/OC 2.33.

moment, notice the basic dilemma. On the one hand, if we say that one desires to be evaluated by others as *ever more morally superior to others*, this would seem to make inflamed amour-propre *unavoidable*. On the other hand, if we say that one desires to be evaluated by others as *a moral equal*, this would seem to make inflamed amour-propre *impossible*. Somehow the Concern for Evaluation needs to be sensitive to what one believes. Only then will it have the right sort of plasticity, such that it will contribute to inflamed amour-propre when combined with certain beliefs but will contribute to healthy amour-propre when combined with other beliefs.

3. Some Explanations Considered

3.1. *Infantile Paranoia*

So what are these beliefs, these beliefs about “obstacles” and “position,” which, interacting with Preservative *Amour de Soi* and/or the Concern for Evaluation, produce healthy or inflamed amour-propre as derived desires? Dent suggests that amour-propre becomes inflamed by:

Paranoia: The belief that other wills seek to destroy one and will do so unless one controls or destroys them first.

Certain kinds of treatment provoke this Paranoia in infants, which then persists, although presumably not fully consciously, into adulthood.¹⁷

Perhaps the most serious problem with this account is that it does not explain inflamed amour-propre. Granted, Paranoia and Preservative *Amour de Soi* would produce a desire to *control or destroy* others. But a desire to control or destroy others is not itself a desire to be, or to be evaluated as, superior to them. It might be suggested that one desires being, and being evaluated as being, superior to others only insofar as it is a means to controlling or destroying others. But this seems implausible. Given the choice between destroying someone and being evaluated by him or her as superior, one imagines that inflamed amour-propre, from Rousseau’s descriptions, would choose the latter.

Second, as Dent acknowledges, this account gives no place to the second *Discourse* or to the idea that social inequality plays an important

17. Dent, *Rousseau: An Introduction*, 29, 71–79; Dent, *A Rousseau Dictionary*, 34–35; Dent, *Rousseau*, 87–88. See also Christopher Bertram, *Rousseau and the “Social Contract”* (London: Routledge, 2004), 27–28; and Timothy O’Hagan, *Rousseau* (London: Routledge, 1999), 167. Dent, *Rousseau: An Introduction*, 50–51, discusses a different explanation, which he believes is at work in the first *Discourse*. He also suggests elements of the explanation addressed in sec. 5, below.

role in the genesis of inflamed amour-propre.¹⁸ Third, it is not even clear in *Emile* that those afflicted with inflamed amour-propre perceive foreign wills as threats to their survival. This is never said, in so many words, in passages on the treatment of infants in book 1. Moreover, very little of Emile's subsequent education seems to aim at preventing him from acquiring Paranoia.¹⁹

Finally, if this account were correct, it is hard to see how Emile's education could hope to make him much different from other men. According to this account, others are driven to control or destroy their neighbors because they, first, are subject to Paranoia and, second, desire their own preservation. Presumably, Emile ought to learn that among those they seek to control or destroy is himself. Thus, he ought to believe the content of Paranoia not as a delusion but instead as a clear-eyed assessment of his situation. Emile also ought to, and no doubt does, desire his own preservation. So why shouldn't Emile be driven, just like they, to control or destroy others? Taken literally and carried to its logical conclusion, this account seems to leave Emile no way out.

3.2. Egalitarian Defensiveness

Elsewhere Dent, as well as Rawls and Cohen, suggests that an explanation of inflamed amour-propre can be found in Kant's description of the "pre-disposition to humanity," which indeed bears the imprint of Rousseau's thought:

Out of this self-love springs the inclination *to acquire worth in the opinion of others*. This is originally a desire merely for *equality*, to allow no one superiority above oneself, bound up with a constant care lest others strive to attain such superiority; but from this arises gradually the unjustifiable craving to win it for oneself over others.²⁰

18. Dent, *Rousseau: An Introduction*, 79.

19. It is true that the tutor is supposed to limit Emile's encounters with other people until he reaches adolescence. But there are other possible reasons for this stricture, besides avoiding the kinds of interactions that might give rise to Paranoia. One such reason, to which we will return below, is to preserve Emile from their "opinions" and "prejudices," so that he can learn the true sources of value.

20. Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, trans. Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1934), bk. 1, sec. 1. The passage is quoted in this connection by Cohen, "The Natural Goodness of Humanity," 134–35 n. 24; Dent, *A Rousseau Dictionary*, 35–36; Dent, *Rousseau*, 105–6; Dent, "Rousseau on *Amour-Propre*," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, suppl. no. 72 (1998): 57–73, at 65; and Rawls, *Lectures*, 199–200.

The basic picture seems to be this:

- (i) One begins wanting only to be evaluated as a moral equal.
- (ii) However, one believes that others seek to be evaluated as morally superior to one.
- (iii) One also believes that being evaluated as morally superior to others is a necessary (or particularly effective) means to prevent them from being evaluated as morally superior to one.
- (iv) Thus, one desires to be evaluated as morally superior to others as a means to being evaluated as a moral equal.

The initial problem is that desire (iv), to be evaluated as morally superior as a means to being evaluated as morally equal, is strictly speaking incoherent. Being evaluated as morally superior is incompatible with being evaluated as morally equal. To make sense of the explanation, we might ignore Kant's phrase "merely for *equality*" and revise (i) and (iv) as:

- (i') One begins wanting only not to be evaluated as morally inferior to anyone, but without any desire, specifically, to be evaluated as a moral equal.
- (iv') Thus, one desires to be evaluated as morally superior to others as a means to not being evaluated as morally inferior to anyone.

But it is not clear how this would explain healthy amour-propre. Suppose one is assured that no one else seeks to be evaluated as morally superior to oneself. Then one would not believe that one *had* to be evaluated as morally superior to others in order to prevent them from being evaluated as morally superior to oneself. One would be *equally* content with being evaluated as a moral equal. But being indifferent between being evaluated as an equal and as a superior is not the same as desiring, as healthy amour-propre desires, to be evaluated as an equal. Presumably, this is why Kant in fact describes the desire as "for equality" and not simply "to allow no one superiority above oneself."

In any event, on either version, (ii) is mysterious. Why does one believe that others seek to be evaluated as morally superior to oneself? Because others *do* seek to be evaluated as morally superior? But that presupposes what we sought to explain.

3.3. *Social Means to Evaluation*

Cohen suggests that under circumstances of "socioeconomic inequality without any institutionally acknowledged equality of worth," "the natural strategy for winning recognition from others—even for those who might be prepared to accept the egalitarian conception of worth—is to

win advantage.” The remedy is to establish some stable, public affirmation of equality, which would provide an alternative strategy for winning evaluation.²¹ Cohen’s suggestion, at least in this passage, appears to be as follows. Different social conditions produce different beliefs about the *available means* for achieving evaluation. When one believes that the only way to win evaluation is through social advantage, one’s Concern for Evaluation will lead one to pursue advantage. When one believes that civic equality already provides one with evaluation, one will feel no need to take those means.

The difficulty is that evaluation is not like attention or celebrity, although Cohen’s term, “recognition,” obscures this somewhat. Children often want attention as such, for example, without caring what *kind* of attention it is or what it is attention *for*: whether it comes in the form of scolding or praise. But one rarely, if ever, seeks evaluation as such, without regard for whether it is evaluation of a certain *kind* or evaluation *for* or *as* something. And even if one did desire only *some* evaluation, *some* comparison with others, it matters not what—even if one sought evaluation in the way a child seeks attention—one could satisfy that desire just as easily by conspicuously groveling before as by conspicuously lording over.

So the question is what kind of evaluation the Concern for Evaluation seeks. If it seeks evaluation *as morally superior*, then it is hard to see how civic equality could satisfy it. And, even if it somehow could, one would still not have healthy amour-propre since, by hypothesis, one would still desire to be evaluated as morally superior. If one seeks evaluation only *as a moral equal* (or noninferior) and seeks social advantage only as a means to this, then, although one would Compete for Social Advantage, one would not actually have inflamed amour-propre since one would not desire to be evaluated as morally superior.

Neuhouser likewise suggests that inflamed amour-propre can be avoided by providing people with alternative means for winning evaluation.²² However, he argues that these must include means for evaluation *as superior* in some respect. This might suggest the following view. The Concern for Evaluation is a desire to be evaluated as *superior* but only in *some* respect. It can be satisfied even if one is not evaluated as superior in some respect, so long as one is evaluated as superior in some other respect. If we believe that the *only* way to be evaluated as superior involves both

21. Cohen, “The Natural Goodness of Humanity,” 121. See also 123, and Rawls, *Lectures*, 206.

22. See Neuhouser, *Rousseau’s Theodicy*, chap. 5.

moral superiority and social advantage, then this desire will express itself in inflamed amour-propre and Competition for Social Advantage. But it is not clear how this account of the Concern for Evaluation could explain healthy amour-propre, which involves the desire to be evaluated as a moral equal. The suggestion would seem to be that we might, under other conditions, believe that there are ways to be evaluated as superior that involve neither social advantage nor evaluation as morally superior. And this might well relieve some of the pressure to seek social advantage or to seek evaluation as morally superior. But it still would not give us healthy amour-propre, for a reason seen in the last section. To have a desire that *need not* be satisfied by being evaluated as morally *superior* is not to have a desire that *is* satisfied precisely by being evaluated as morally *equal*.²³

4. Dependence on Opinion

In any event, there is further reason to doubt the preceding explanations. They appeal to beliefs that either are true (such as beliefs about the available means for winning evaluation) or that, while false, are not derived from the beliefs of others (such as Paranoia). Yet Rousseau repeatedly suggests, particularly when he pauses to take stock, that the source of the trouble is *false* belief derived from the “opinions,”²⁴ “prejudices,” “errors,” and “whims” (*fantaisie*) of others (see E 237; RJJ 22/OC 4.525, OC 1.687). A—perhaps the—main goal of Emile’s education is to “preserve him” from these (E 171, 443, 446/OC 4.435, 815, 820) and the effects that they work on his “imagination.”

Everything surrounding [your pupil] influences his imagination. The torrent of prejudices carries him away. To restrain him, he must be pushed in the opposite direction. Sentiment must enchain imagination, and reason silence the opinion of men. (E 219/OC 4.500–501)

Although I want to form the man of nature, the object is not, for all that, to make him a savage and to relegate him to the depths of the woods. It

23. We cannot respond by reformulating the Concern for Evaluation as a desire to be evaluated as *morally* equal, but in some other respect superior. For then we rule out inflamed amour-propre, which involves a desire to be evaluated as morally superior.

24. Rousseau uses ‘*opinion*’ sometimes to mean “evaluation” (as at E 214/OC 4.493) and sometimes (as when he speaks of “errors” of opinion or pairs it with “prejudice”) to mean “belief” (usually ill founded and false). It is the latter uses that I have in mind here, although, as I explain below, many of the beliefs in question are about evaluation. The source of the trouble is, as it were, opinion (in the sense of belief) about opinion (in the sense of evaluation).

The Explanation of Amour-Propre

suffices that, enclosed in a social whirlpool, he not let himself get carried away by either the passions or opinions of men, that he see with his own eyes, that he feel with his own heart, that no authority govern him beyond that of his own reason. (E 255/OC 4.550–51)

In particular, Emile is to learn to *value things* according to their *real worth*, rather than according to the imaginary or fantastical worth assigned to them by others' prejudices.

Whim and convention count for nothing in it. What is more useful to him, he takes more seriously; never deviating from this way of evaluating, he grants nothing to opinion. (E 207/OC 4.487, see also RJJ 213/OC 1.933)

And the most important error from which he must be preserved, it appears, is that of valuing *himself* according to the scale that others use to evaluate people. Emile's education succeeds insofar as "he values nothing according to the price set by opinion," and so cares "little about being esteemed by [others]" (E 338/OC 4.669) at the price set on *him* by opinion. That is, insofar as he escapes:

Dependence on Opinion: The belief that others' evaluations reveal where one's value lies, where this belief is not based on any independent evidence that others' evaluations are reliable: more precisely, the belief that one's nature is such that the scale appropriate for measuring one's value is the scale, whatever it happens to be, that others use to evaluate people.²⁵

By contrast, "sociable man," as he is described at the crescendo of the second *Discourse*, derives his sense of what he is, and so where his value lies, only from how others evaluate him.

This, indeed, is the genuine cause of all these differences: the Savage lives within himself; sociable man, always outside himself, is capable of living only in the opinion of others and, so to speak, derives *the sentiment of his own existence* solely from their judgment . . . in a word, forever asking of others *what we are*, without ever daring to ask it of ourselves. (2D 187, my emphasis, see also E 215/OC 3.193, OC 4.494)

25. In repudiating Dependence on Opinion, Rousseau need not be taken to repudiate all reliance on others' judgments, which seems not only unreasonable but also at odds with much of Rousseau's thought. Consider, for example, the citizen's epistemic deference to the majority. SC 124/OC 3.441. Epistemic deference can differ from Dependence on Opinion, first, in attaching to judgments about subject matters other than one's self-worth and, second, in being based on some independent evidence of the reliability of the judgments deferred to (such as that the majority has the characteristics of the general will).

Although other commentators do not assign it as central a role, they often note that Rousseau attributes Dependence on Opinion, or something like it, to social man. It is what explains, for example, why we are *alienated* from ourselves, why we mistake the source of our own worth.²⁶

Why should people Depend on Opinion? At least part of the explanation is:

Evaluative Deference: If one believes that enough others evaluate something on a certain basis, then, in the absence of settled knowledge to the contrary, one will come to evaluate it on that basis.

Rousseau posits such a tendency, as is indicated by his frequent calls for the tutor's vigilance against it:

It is bad to know what [men] think when one does not know whether what they think is true or false. Teach him, therefore, in the first place what things are in themselves, and you can teach him afterward what they are in our eyes. It is thus that he will know how to compare the opinion to the truth. . . . But if you begin by instructing him in public opinion before teaching him to appraise it, rest assured that, whatever you may do, it will become his, and you will no longer be able to destroy it. (E 187, see also 111–12/OC 4.458, 350)

What effect Dependence on Opinion has depends on the scale of value that one believes that others apply. If one accepts:

Social Evaluation: The belief that others evaluate people on the scale of social advantage,

then Dependence on Opinion will lead one to:

Social Self-Evaluation: The evaluation of oneself according to one's social advantage.

5. The Concern for Accurate Evaluation and the Vices of Pride and Shame

How might Social Self-Evaluation explain inflamed amour-propre? At this point, we need to specify the sort of evaluation that the Concern for Evaluation desires. We saw earlier that, in order for the Concern for Evaluation to have the necessary plasticity, this desired evaluation needs to be sensitive

26. See Dent, *Rousseau: An Introduction*, 31–32; Neuhouser, *Rousseau's Theodicy*, 82–83; Bertram, *Rousseau and the "Social Contract,"* 25; Gauthier, *The Sentiment of Existence*, chaps. 1–2; and O'Hagan, *Rousseau*, 165.

to one's beliefs. In this vein, Cohen suggests the:

Concern for Accurate Evaluation: The desire to be evaluated according to one's true value. If one believes that one has a certain value, then this desire will lead one to desire, of the value that one believes one has, that others evaluate one as having that value. Hence, we can think of this desire, for most intents and purposes, as a desire to be evaluated as having the value that one believes one has.²⁷

Cohen even identifies this desire with generic amour-propre.

The Concern for Accurate Evaluation will dispose one at least to do what one believes will *bring it about* that others evaluate one as one evaluates oneself. But there is more to it than that. As we saw earlier, the “dissatisfaction” that one feels when one believes that others do not evaluate one as one evaluates oneself takes the form of resentment: a demand that they evaluate one appropriately.

It is clear how the Concern for Accurate Evaluation might explain healthy amour-propre, when it combines with the belief that one is morally equal to others. And it may seem, at first, to be able to explain inflamed amour-propre as well. Cohen suggests that Social Self-Evaluation combines with the Concern for Accurate Evaluation to produce the:

Concern for Accurate Social Evaluation: The desire, of the social advantage that one believes one has, that others value one according to it.²⁸

If one believes that one has social advantage, then one will desire that others evaluate one as superior. And this, it seems, just is inflamed amour-propre. This account therefore predicts that amour-propre will become inflamed by the experience of social advantage. This fits the second *Discourse* (2D 171/OC 3.175), as Cohen notes. It also suggests an interpretation of the much-discussed “dominion” passage of *Emile*, which seems to say that a child's amour-propre first becomes inflamed by its experience of being obeyed.

As soon as they can consider the people who surround them as instruments depending on them to be set in motion, they make use of those people to follow their inclination and to supplement their own weakness. This is how they become difficult, tyrannical, imperious, wicked, unmanageable—a development which does not come from a natural spirit of domination but which rather gives one to them, for it does not require long experience to

27. Cohen, “The Natural Goodness of Humanity,” 109.

28. See *ibid.*, 109–10. He seems not to relate this explanation to, or even to distinguish it from, the appeal, described in sec. 3.3, to beliefs about available means for winning evaluation.

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. . . . [T]he desire to command is not extinguished with the need that gave birth to it. Dominion awakens and flatters amour-propre. (E 67–68/OC 4.289)

According to the present interpretation, the child comes to believe that its power to command, a kind of social advantage, reflects its superior value, and this is what “awakens and flatters” its amour-propre.²⁹

Because it results from the Concern for Accurate Evaluation, the Concern for Accurate Social Evaluation will dispose one, first, to do what one believes will *bring it about* that others evaluate one according to one's social advantage and, second, to see oneself as having a *claim* to it, and so to react with *resentment* when one believes that this claim is not met. The Concern for Accurate Social Evaluation therefore straightforwardly

29. See Dent, *Rousseau: An Introduction*, 29, 57, 71; and Dent, *Rousseau*, 87, 100. However, Dent does not believe that the infant's inflated self-conception and its corresponding demand to be treated as superior constitute a freestanding explanation of inflamed amour-propre. Instead, they help to explain Paranoia, described in sec. 3.1. When the infant's inflated demands are not met, it interprets this as hostility.

The infant's primary mistake, I suspect, is not to value itself *more highly* because of its power to command but instead, more fundamentally, to sense its value, high or low, as *depending* on its power to command: a kind of Social Self-Evaluation. To explain: an important topic of book 1 is how the infant acquires “the sentiment of its existence,” which, I have suggested, may be understood as a sense of its nature. E 61/OC 4.279–80. Indeed, the last paragraph of book 1, which reviews how far the infant has come, closes with the observation that, at the start, it did “not even sense his own existence,” as if to suggest that the acquisition of this sense was one of the main achievements. E 74/OC 4.298. Earlier in book 1, Rousseau stresses that the sentiment of one's existence comes through action: “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.” E 42/OC 4.253. This suggests that one of the principal functions of the “active principle” (E 67/OC 4.289), which Rousseau introduces just before to the crucial passage, is to give the infant that sentiment. The active principle, as Rousseau describes it, leads the infant to act so as to bring about changes: it doesn't really matter how, so long as it produces changes that the infant can recognize. The infant derives the first sentiment of its existence by experiencing producing these changes. It senses its nature as being whatever is responsible for producing them. When the effects that the infant experiences are due to its own physical activity, it senses its existence to lie in its natural powers: an incipient form of Evaluative Knowledge, which, in a way to be explained in sec. 7, leads to healthy amour-propre. However, when the effects that the infant experiences are due to its commanding, or believing that it commands, others, then it senses its existence to lie in its ability to command others: an incipient form of Social Self-Evaluation, which, in a way to be described in sec. 6, inflames amour-propre. More fundamentally, in deriving its sense of its own nature from the responses it elicits, the infant is, in a primitive way, coming to Depend on Opinion. This would explain why Rousseau's discussion concludes: “thus [*ainsi*: possibly, “in this way”] prejudices and opinion take their first roots.” E 68/OC 4.290.

explains the vices of shame. If I believe that I am socially *disadvantaged*, then my Concern for Accurate Social Evaluation can be satisfied *even if* the socially advantaged do *not* treat me as an equal.

One might wonder, however, how the Concern for Accurate Social Evaluation could explain the vices of pride. How could I ever believe that my Concern for Accurate Social Evaluation was *not* satisfied? Given Concern for Accurate Social Evaluation, I want others to value me according to my social advantage. But given Social Evaluation, it would seem, I believe that others *do* value me according to my social advantage. Strictly speaking, however, I believe that others value me according to the social advantage that they *believe* that I enjoy. And I might believe that someone undervalues me because he falsely believes that I have less social advantage than I have—that he does not appreciate my rank, realize my political power, and so on. So I am liable to respond with the vices of pride.

So far, so good. But why should I seek to satisfy Concern for Accurate Social Evaluation by Competition for Social Advantage? If I believe that others realize my social advantage, then I believe that my Concern for Accurate Social Evaluation is satisfied. And if I believe that others do not realize my social advantage, then what my Concern for Accurate Social Evaluation disposes me to do is, first, to express my indignation, and, second, to get them to realize my social advantage, by pulling rank, for example, or making a display of wealth. But what my Concern for Accurate Social Evaluation does *not* dispose me to do is to acquire *further* social advantage. Surprisingly, the tendency of the Concern for Accurate Social Evaluation is to leave everyone content with whatever social advantage (or disadvantage) he or she has. It can be satisfied. Instead of fueling conflict, it is in fact a force for stability.

One might suggest explaining Competition for Social Advantage by abandoning Social Self-Evaluation, and so Concern for Accurate Social Evaluation, and assuming instead:

Asymmetric Self-Evaluation: One believes that any social advantage one enjoys over others reflects one's superiority to those others but that no social disadvantage that one suffers reflects any inferiority.

On this view, social equality is a stable equilibrium, from which no one desires to depart. Now, suppose that, for whatever reason, social inequality emerges. At this point, according to Asymmetric Self-Evaluation, the advantaged will evaluate the disadvantaged as inferior. The disadvantaged, according to Asymmetric Self-Evaluation and Concern for Accurate Evaluation, will want the advantaged not to evaluate them as

inferior. The disadvantaged realize that they can achieve this by depriving the (currently) advantaged of their advantages. Now, it is not clear why the (currently) disadvantaged should desire to go beyond this and acquire advantage for themselves. And if they succeeded in restoring social equality, this would be an equilibrium, from which no one would want to depart.³⁰ But provided that they haven't yet restored equality, the desire of the disadvantaged to deprive the advantaged of their advantages would be enough for conflict, provided that the advantaged wanted to keep their advantages. Yet it is unclear why the advantaged *should* want to keep their advantages. After all, according to Asymmetric Self-Evaluation, those advantages do not actually succeed in getting the disadvantaged to evaluate them as superior.

At any rate, even if Asymmetric Self-Evaluation could explain Competition for Social Advantage, it would fail, where Concern for Accurate Social Evaluation succeeded, in explaining the vices of shame since no one undervalues himself or herself. Moreover, neither Asymmetric Self-Evaluation nor Concern for Accurate Social Evaluation explains the pervasiveness, generality, and insatiability of inflamed amour-propre. Each explains only why the *advantaged* desire to be valued as superior to others, not why *all* desire to be valued as superior to others; only why the advantaged desire to be valued as superior *to the disadvantaged*, not why they desire to be valued as superior to *everyone*; and only why the advantaged desire to be valued only as being as superior to others *as they are advantaged relative to others*, not why they desire to be valued as *ever more* superior to others. While Concern for Accurate Social Evaluation is part of the story and provides the explanation of the vices of pride and shame, it is not, I think, the whole account.

6. Progressive *Amour de Soi* and the Concern for Higher Accurate Evaluation

6.1. Progressive *Amour de Soi*

The upshot is, it seems, that we need to enrich the psychological principles to which we have so far appealed. There are two compatible possibilities, but each one on its own is sufficient to explain inflamed amour-propre.

The first possibility is to enrich our account of *amour de soi*.

30. "What if the formerly advantaged will continue to cling to their inflated self-conception anyway?" If so, then the disadvantaged have no reason to try to deprive them of their advantages in the first place since doing so won't achieve what the disadvantaged want: to be evaluated as equals. So Competition for Social Advantage becomes mysterious.

Rousseau emphasizes that man is unique in having “the faculty of perfecting [himself]” (2D 141/OC 3.142). He is not only, like other animals, vulnerable to deterioration but also, unlike them, capable of improvement. Now, while Rousseau speaks of a *faculty* of self-perfection, he never explicitly identifies any special *drive* to exercise it. And the mere fact that humanity actually exercises the faculty does not mean that there is any drive to do so. Nevertheless, it seems worth exploring as an interpretive conjecture that *amour de soi* encompasses a drive, not necessarily self-conscious, for self-perfection.

Put abstractly, the underlying thought is as follows. Every animal’s nature defines a scale of actualization or deterioration, which is, in turn, a scale of value, of better or worse. Since, for other animals, the scale allows no room for progress, their basic drive is simply not to regress. And since the scale allows them little room for regress short of death, this amounts to little more than a drive to stay alive. Since man has the capacity for progress, by contrast, man’s basic drive is not only to preserve himself from regression down the scale but also to progress up it. The suggestion, then, is to posit for human beings:

Progressive Amour de Soi: The desire, not necessarily self-conscious, to maintain and improve one’s position on the scale of value determined by one’s nature.³¹

The drive for self-preservation and the drive for self-perfection would then be two sides of the same coin: the drive not to regress and the drive to progress, on the scale of value.

One might object that Rousseau tends to describe humanity’s efforts to perfect itself as pulling it down, rather than as raising it up, the scale of value. By actualizing himself, in other words, man only makes himself worse. However, Rousseau’s descriptions of man’s perfection are not uniformly negative but instead ambivalent. The faculty of self-perfection causes man’s “enlightenment and his errors, his virtues and his vices” (2D 141, see also 184/OC 3.142, 189).

We should . . . be wary of our Prejudices until it has been established, Scale in hand, whether there are more virtues than vices among civilized men, or whether their vices are more advantageous than their vices are detrimental, or whether the progress of their knowledge is sufficient com-

31. Compare Joshua Cohen, *Rousseau: A Free Community of Equals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); and Rawls, *Lectures*, 217–18, who suggest that Rousseau’s view includes or implies an interest in self-development.

pensation for the harms they do one another in proportion as they learn of the good they should do. (2D 150–51/OC 3.152–53)

Again, put abstractly, the underlying thought seems to be that man progresses along several different dimensions. While progress in all dimensions is progress overall, progress in one dimension may not be. For example, the development of reason, progress in one dimension, may, by making distancing rationalizations possible, weaken the force of “pity” (2D 153/OC 3.155–56), resulting in regress in another dimension. No doubt, Rousseau emphasizes the possibilities for, and actuality of, stagnation and regress because they are so surprising and provocative. But he is also clear about the possibilities for overall progress (see, for example, SC 53/OC 3.364).

Prior to reflection, man has no conception of what his nature is, let alone a conception of what might preserve or further actualize that nature. So, in its *unreflective* form, Progressive *Amour de Soi* is simply the desire for what, unbeknownst to one, in fact preserves and realizes one’s nature. With *reflection*, however, comes a gradually more articulate conception of one’s nature and of what preserving and actualizing it requires. In its reflective form, then, Progressive *Amour de Soi* is a desire of that which one *believes* preserves and realizes one’s nature.³² What one desires now depends on what one believes about one’s nature and the avenues for improvement that this nature makes possible. With this comes the risk of error.

In particular, Dependence on Opinion leads Progressive *Amour de Soi* to be a desire to climb whatever scale others use to evaluate people. Now, in general,

Principle of Epistemic Desire: If one desires an epistemically uncertain state of affairs, then one desires evidence that it obtains.

If I am tested for a disease, for example, I desire that the test come up negative. Provided that others are aware of one’s relevant traits, the only reliable evidence that one occupies a favorable position on whatever scale it is that they use is that they evaluate one highly. Hence, Progressive *Amour*

32. If reflective, then Progressive *Amour de Soi* involves *awareness* of one’s position on a scale of better and worse, and so it must involve some comparison. However, it need not involve comparison with *other people*, so it need not yet be amour-propre. Rousseau would be hard pressed to explain how savage man could acquire a conception of a scale of better or worse without experience of actual instances at different positions on the scale. But these instances can be provided by his own condition at other times, or by other animals. 2D 162/OC 3.166.

de Soi becomes a desire that others evaluate one as highly as possible, as evidence that one has climbed as high as possible up the scale of value.

This desire is not yet inflamed amour-propre (or even amour-propre at all) because it is not comparative. It is a desire to be evaluated by others as highly as possible but not necessarily to be valued by others as highly as possible *in comparison* with others (or to be valued in any other way *in comparison* with them). Nor does this desire have the insatiability of inflamed amour-propre. It is a desire to be evaluated as highly as the scale permits, not necessarily to be evaluated ever more highly. For all that has been said, the desire is satiable. However, under a regime of Social Evaluation, in which evaluation goes hand in hand with social advantage, the desire becomes a desire that others evaluate one *ever more highly in comparison with others*. First, to have as much social advantage as possible is to have as much social advantage as possible *in comparison with others*. Second, social advantage, understood as the ratio of one person's social value to another's, has no upper bound. So the scale is infinite; it permits one to be evaluated *ever more highly*.

6.2. *The Concern for Higher Accurate Evaluation*

The second possibility is to enrich our account of the Concern for Evaluation with the:

Concern for Higher Accurate Evaluation: The desire that others evaluate one both accurately and as highly as possible.

Whereas the Concern for *Accurate* Evaluation is indifferent between a condition in which one has lower value and is accurately evaluated and a condition in which one has higher value and is accurately evaluated, the Concern for *Higher Accurate* Evaluation prefers the latter. This difference has two implications. First, one will be motivated to bring it about that one is more highly and accurately evaluated in the future, which may require that one increase one's value. Second, one will feel dissatisfied even when one believes that one has been accurately evaluated, so long as one believes that it was possible to have achieved a higher accurate evaluation, by having increased one's value. This means, in turn, that the Concern for Higher Accurate Evaluation cannot, whereas the Concern for Accurate Evaluation can, explain the vices of pride and shame, which stem from a desire that *is* felt to be satisfied so long as one is evaluated as highly as one evaluates oneself. If we accept the Concern for Higher Accurate Evaluation, therefore, the need to explain the vices of pride and shame is

a reason to accept it as a supplement to, rather than as a replacement for, the Concern for Accurate Evaluation. The Concern for Evaluation, on this view, would comprise two distinct desires: the desire to be accurately evaluated, and the desire to win higher evaluations, but only on the condition that they are accurate.

Given Social Evaluation, one believes that one will be more *highly* evaluated if and only if one's social advantage is greater. Given Social Self-Evaluation, one believes that a higher evaluation of oneself will be *accurate* if and only if one's social advantage is greater. Hence, one desires greater social advantage as a means to higher accurate evaluation. Because of the nature of social advantage, as noted earlier, the desired evaluations of oneself will be evaluations of oneself as ever more valuable in comparison with others.³³

On the first account, which appeals to Progressive *Amour de Soi*, one desires higher value in its own right. One derivatively desires higher evaluations as evidence of this value. On the second account, which appeals to the Concern for Higher Accurate Evaluation, one desires higher accurate evaluations in their own right. One derivatively desires higher value as a constituent of such evaluations: only by having greater value can one make the higher evaluations accurate.

6.3. *The Role and Origin of Social Evaluation*

On both accounts, Social Self-Evaluation—which is born, in turn, from Dependence on Opinion and Social Evaluation—is crucial in inflaming amour-propre. This accords with the hypothetical history recounted in the second *Discourse*. In the “happiest and most lasting epoch,” we find men living in families, in settled dwellings, with limited property, and some small-scale governance.

Everyone began to look at everyone else and to wish to be looked at himself, and public esteem acquired a price. The one who sang or danced best; the handsomest, the strongest, the most skillful, or the most eloquent came to be the most highly regarded, and this was the first step at once

33. On the earlier account, Dependence on Opinion was crucial. Without it, one would not see others' evaluations of oneself as evidence of one's value. On this second account, by contrast, Dependence on Opinion is less crucial. It would be enough if one somehow independently arrived at Social Self-Evaluation. However, Dependence on Opinion (along with Social Evaluation, which must be assumed anyway) provides the most plausible explanation, both on its own terms and as a matter of interpretation, of how Social Self-Evaluation arises.

toward inequality and vice: from these first preferences arose vanity and contempt on the one hand, shame and envy on the other; and the fermentation caused by these new leavens eventually produced compounds fatal to happiness and innocence. (2D 166/OC 3.169–70)

On both accounts, people in the “happiest and most lasting epoch” already desire higher evaluations: either as evidence of their value (assuming that Dependence on Opinion already prevails in this state) or for their own sake (so long as they are believed to be accurate). But, if only because there are few, if any, social goods, there is little, if any, Social Evaluation. Opinion instead places value on qualities that depend largely on one’s native endowment. These qualities include, first, those qualities of “beauty” and “merit” that make one sexually desirable and, second, those qualities, such as relative strength and skill, that make one a productive partner in the occasional, small-scale cooperative ventures that arise. Since these qualities depend on one’s natural endowment, advantages in them are limited in extent, and there is little anyone can do to alter them. Thus, the desire for higher evaluations has little outlet. It is only when metallurgy and agriculture arrive on the scene, followed by private property and the division of labor, that there arises the possibility of vast differences in social value—at this point, wealth. Now, if people come to evaluate others on the basis of social advantage, then there is a way to win ever higher evaluations, which leads straight to Competition for Social Advantage.

Yet why should men begin to evaluate one another on the basis of social advantage? Why, even with the advent of forge and plow, don’t they persist in evaluating one another solely for grace and voice? One possibility is that the socially disadvantaged initially defer to and attend to the socially advantaged not because they believe that the advantaged have greater value but instead for instrumental reasons. Private property and the division of labor increasingly force the disadvantaged to rely on the cooperation of the advantaged in order to meet their material needs. This initially self-interested deference and attention to the wealthy, like the initially self-interested deference and attention paid earlier to those with the natural skills valuable in cooperation, comes to be mistaken for a higher evaluation. Once enough people make this mistake, Evaluative Deference ensures that it becomes widespread.

A second compatible but darker possibility is that Progressive *Amour de Soi* and the Concern for Higher Accurate Evaluation, so to speak, want it to be true that the scale of value is social advantage. This is because, first, this scale is infinite, and, second, it is always possible, however unlikely

it may be, for one to climb higher on it. One is never limited by one's natural endowment in the value or accurate evaluations that one can attain. "The real world has its limits; the imaginary world is infinite" (E 81/OC 4.305). As we suggested earlier, these desires encourage wishful thinking: a tendency, in the absence of settled knowledge to the contrary, to see the world in terms that are hospitable to their satisfaction. "That dangerous amour-propre which always wants to carry man above his sphere" (E 296/OC 4.608) may encourage one to see the world as admitting such a possibility. Thus, "inequality readily spreads among ambitious and pusillanimous souls, ever ready to take their chance on fortune" (2D 183/OC 3.188).

7. Healthy Amour-Propre

7.1. Evaluative Knowledge

If amour-propre is inflamed by the illusion that one's value depends on one's social advantage, then healthy amour-propre would seem to lie in *independent* knowledge of one's true value, as consisting in something *other than social advantage*.

This is, then, the summary of the whole of human wisdom in the use of the passions: (1) To have a sense of the true relations of man, with respect to the species as well as the individual. (2) To order all the affections of the soul according to these relations. (E 219/OC 4.501)

This may be the sense in which, as Rousseau writes in the preceding paragraph, "reason" is to "silence the opinion of men," and "sentiment"—perhaps here the sentiment of one's existence, the awareness of one's nature—is to "enchain imagination," which fabricates a chimerical nature based on social advantage. Later in *Emile*:

Do not expect lengthy precepts of morality from me. I have only one precept to give you, and it comprehends all the others. Be a man. Restrain your heart within the limits of its condition. Study and know these limits. However narrow they may be, a man is not unhappy as long as he closes himself up within them. He is unhappy only when he wants to go out beyond them. He is unhappy only when in his senseless desires, he puts in the rank of the possible what is not possible. He is unhappy when he forgets his human estate in order to forge for himself imaginary estates. (E 445–46/OC 4.819)

In place of Social Self-Evaluation, therefore, we have:

Evaluative Knowledge: The true, settled belief, justified by one's own reflection, that the scale of value appropriate to one's nature is the scale of *natural value*, which consists in:

- (i) *standing as a human being*, which is based on the possession of reason and freedom, and which in turn is the basis of moral value; and
- (ii) *natural virtues*, abilities that have value independent of convention and consent, such as strength, courage, wisdom, as well as more familiar moral virtues, such as generosity.

Evaluative Knowledge, in conjunction with our enriched principles, produces the:

Natural Evaluative Desires, comprising the
Desire for Evaluation as Human: that others (accurately) evaluate one as having standing as a human being; and the
Desire for Evaluation of Virtue: that others accurately evaluate whatever natural virtues one has, and then that these evaluations be as high as possible;

and the:

Natural Nonevaluative Desires, comprising the
Desire for Human Standing: to maintain human standing; and the
Desire for Progress in Virtue: to maintain and develop one's natural virtues as far as nature permits.

Assuming the psychology of 6.1, Progressive *Amour de Soi* produces the Natural Nonevaluative Desires and the Concern for Accurate Evaluation produces the Natural Evaluative Desires. Assuming the psychology of 6.2, the Concerns for Accurate and Higher Accurate Evaluation produce the Natural Evaluative Desires directly, and the Concern for Higher Accurate Evaluation produces the Natural Nonevaluative Desires instrumentally, as means to make the higher evaluations accurate.

How do these desires express themselves? The Desire for Progress in Virtue has a practical outlet since there are things that one can do to improve one's natural virtues. But these do not lead us to worsen the condition of others. The fact that someone else's natural virtues are lost or go uncultivated does nothing to improve mine. So, there is no drive for anything like Competition for Social Advantage.

The Desire for Human Standing, by contrast, has no further practical outlet beyond our efforts at self-preservation. True, if Rousseau's hypothetical history is read literally, then full humanity—requiring freedom

(of the sort described in SC 53/OC 3.364) and reason—was a hard-won achievement for our species. It took eons for *Homo sapiens* to distinguish itself not merely in potentiality but also in actuality from mere beasts. But now we, as a species, have freedom and reason. So there is now nothing that any of us individually can do—apart from failing to preserve ourselves—to lose our human standing. (None of us can even contract it away [SC 44–46/OC 3.355–57].) Hence, the Desire for Human Standing expresses itself only as a sense of satisfaction, contentment at one’s place in the order of nature. In the words of the Savoyard vicar, “I am content with the place in which God has put me. I see nothing, except for Him, that is better than my species. And if I had to choose my place in the order of beings, what more could I choose than to be a man?” (E 278/OC 4.582).³⁴

Notice that so long as Progressive *Amour de Soi* is, or the Concern for Higher Accurate Evaluation leads to, only a desire to maintain and improve one’s position on the scale of value determined by *one’s nature*, and so long as one *knows* what one’s nature is, the Desire for Human Standing will not be a desire to occupy, *per impossible*, a position *off* the scale determined by one’s nature. It will not be a desire to be a creature of even greater worth than a human being, which might be a source of dissatisfaction, even if it had no practical effect. “A king wants to be a God only when he believes he is no longer a man,” and so “puts in the rank of the possible what is not possible” (E 445–46/OC 4.819).

7.2. *Why Are These Comparative Desires?*

Recall that amour-propre, in all its forms, is a concern for *comparative* value and evaluation. However, the desires that flow from Evaluative Knowledge seem to be desires for *absolute* value and evaluation. So how can they be said to constitute healthy amour-propre?

Despite their “absolute” formulation, the Desires for Human Standing and for Evaluation as Human—that one be valued as having, and have, human standing—are equivalent to comparative desires: namely, that one be valued as having, and have, equal standing, as a human being, with other human beings. So there is no problem with these desires.

But why should the absolute Desires for Evaluation of Virtue—that one be accurately evaluated for one’s natural virtues (such as they are, or as highly as possible)—or for Progress in Virtue—that one develop one’s

34. Compare savage man’s prideful comparisons of himself with lower animals. 2D 162/OC 3.166.

natural virtues as far as nature permits—entail any comparative desires? Why, for example, should awareness of someone with superior natural virtues lead one to feel any dissatisfaction? Their having superior natural virtue does not somehow make it the case that one's own virtues are less developed than they otherwise would be.

This might prompt one to revise the Concern for Higher Accurate Evaluation, so that one desires not only higher evaluation but also higher *comparative* evaluation: not higher in absolute terms but instead *relative* to the *actual* condition of others. If this were the desire, however, then one would be motivated not only to improve one's own natural virtues but also to prevent others from improving their natural virtues, or even to undermine these virtues. This would introduce a kind of competition for natural advantage, with a temptation to evils similar to, although perhaps not as extensive as, Competition for Social Advantage.

A more plausible answer, I think, lies in the Principle of Epistemic Desire. The Desire for Progress in Virtue is a desire that one improve one's natural virtues as far as one's nature permits, or, to put it negatively, that one's nature permit *less* improvement. But it is epistemically uncertain how much more improvement one's nature permits.

Hence we know, or can know, the first point from which each of us starts But who knows the other limit? . . . I know of no philosopher who has yet been so bold as to say: this is the limit of what man can attain and beyond which he cannot go. We do not know what our nature permits us to be. None of us has measured the distance which can exist between one man and another. (E 62/OC 4.281)

Therefore, one desires evidence that one's nature permits less improvement. The best evidence for this, and perhaps the only evidence, is that one's natural virtues compare more favorably, or at least less unfavorably, to the natural virtues of others. If another's natural virtues are superior to one's own, for example, then that is evidence, given at least some rough equality of potential, that one still has room to develop one's own. As the passage above continues: "What soul is so base that he has never been warmed by this idea and does not sometime in his pride say to himself: 'How many men I have already surpassed! How many I can still reach! Why should my equal go farther than I?'" This is how the absolute desire that one develop one's natural virtues as far as one's nature permits produces the comparative desire that one's natural virtues be superior to others. Notice that this desire does not involve any desire to worsen the condition of others, and so is nothing like Competition for Social Advantage.

Worsening the natural virtues of others provides me with no evidence that mine are developed.

This desire makes even healthy amour-propre a desire for superiority in certain respects: namely, one's natural virtues.

[Emile] will concern himself with their opinions only insofar as it relates immediately to his person, and he will not worry about arbitrary evaluations whose only law is fashion or prejudice. He will have the pride to want to do everything he does well, even to do it better than another. He will want to be the swiftest at running, the strongest at wrestling, the most competent at working, the most adroit at games of skill. But he will hardly seek advantages which are not clear in themselves and which need to be established by another's judgment, such as being more intelligent [*d'avoir plus d'esprit*: possibly, "being wittier than"] than someone else, talking better, being more learned, etc.; still less will he seek those advantages which are not at all connected with one's person, such as being of nobler birth, being esteemed richer, more influential, or more respected, or making an impression by greater pomp. (E 339/OC 4.670–71)

Given Evaluative Knowledge, however, one knows that one's natural virtues are not the basis of one's moral worth. So the desire for superiority in natural virtue is not a desire for superiority in moral value. Hence, this is consistent with our understanding of healthy amour-propre.³⁵

35. There are those, such as Shklar, *Men and Citizens*, who argue that the search for remedies, or prophylactics, in Rousseau's thought is misplaced. This may be so, but, if the foregoing is correct, it is not compelled by his account of healthy amour-propre. There is, first, the possibility of *individual education*: to lead individuals to acquire Evaluative Knowledge and to preserve them from Dependence on Opinion and Social Self-Evaluation. This appears to be the aim of *Emile*: to instill an independent sense of what is of value, grounded enough to weather the prejudices that the pupil must eventually confront. There is, second, the possibility of *institutional reform*: to structure social value so as to match, as far as possible, natural value. The social world envisioned by the *Social Contract* seems largely to achieve this by ensuring strictly equal (ultimate) political power and roughly equal wealth and awarding public distinctions on the basis of virtue. SC 94/OC 3.408. At the very least, this mirroring of the natural in the civic serves as a failsafe. Even if Dependence on Opinion is not extirpated, its practical effects will mimic those of Evaluative Knowledge. We will end up in a situation like the "happiest and most lasting epoch," where people evaluate themselves in whatever currency opinion coins, but, as it happens, this currency is closely bound to natural value. More hopefully and more stably, however, such a social world might serve as public education, offering a different path to Evaluative Knowledge. By experiencing one another as equals, we come to understand how and why we really are. For this point, see Cohen, "The Natural Goodness of Humanity."

7.3. *Should Amour-Propre Care about Accuracy?*

On the accounts that I have offered, inflamed amour-propre, no less than healthy amour-propre, wants *accurate* evaluations of oneself: that is, evaluations by judges who are both qualified and acquainted with one's relevant characteristics. Only such evaluations can satisfy the desire for *evidence* that one's value has increased, or the desire for *accurate* evaluation. However, due to Dependence on Opinion, one has no standard independent of others' evaluations by which to assess their qualifications. And due to Social Evaluation, the characteristics with which others must be acquainted—wealth, rank, and so on—are superficial, in the colloquial sense. With Evaluative Knowledge, by contrast, one has an independent standard of evaluation, and the relevant characteristics to be evaluated are deeper. Hence, the Desires for Evaluation as Human and for Evaluation of Virtue are satisfied only by evaluations from qualified judges, who know what one is really like.

[Emile] values men's judgments too little to value their prejudices, and he does not care to be esteemed before being known. (E 335/OC 4.665)

[Emile] will not precisely say to himself, 'I rejoice because they approve of me', but rather, 'I rejoice because they approve of what I have done that is good. I rejoice that the people who honor me do themselves honor. So long as they judge so soundly, it will be a fine thing to obtain their esteem'. (E 339/OC 4.671, see also RSW 71/OC 1.1077)

A rule prior to opinion exists for the whole human species. It is to the inflexible direction of this rule that all the others ought to be related. This rule judges prejudice itself, and only insofar as the esteem of men accords with it ought this esteem to be authoritative for us. (E 382/OC 4.730)

One may worry, however, that this does not draw the contrast between inflamed and healthy amour-propre sharply enough. Inflamed amour-propre, it might be said, does not even care whether the evaluations that it seeks are accurate. After all, Rousseau suggests that those with inflamed amour-propre deliberately seek to deceive others about their attributes. Indeed, this very falseness is one of the vices of inflamed amour-propre (1D 8; 2D 170–71, 187; RJJ 214/OC 3.8–9, 175, 193, OC 1.936).

However, it does not follow from the fact that those with inflamed amour-propre deliberately seek to deceive others about certain of their attributes that they do not care whether the evaluations that they fundamentally crave are accurate. They may deliberately seek to deceive

others about certain attributes only as means to actually acquiring other attributes that they believe others evaluate highly. They may feign attributes that are not social advantages in order to acquire social advantages—as when the subordinate feigns loyalty in order to win rank, or the author feigns originality in order to win fame—or they may feign certain social advantages in order to acquire other social advantages—as when the swindler feigns nobility in order to gain wealth. Why, on this view, does inflamed amour-propre lead to such deception, whereas healthy amour-propre does not? Because inflamed amour-propre seeks social advantage, whereas healthy amour-propre seeks only human standing and natural virtue. While social advantage *can* be won by deception, human standing and natural virtue cannot.

In any event, it is hard to see how inflamed amour-propre could desire inaccurate evaluations (except as means to accurate evaluations). A desire for inaccurate evaluations cannot be explained by appeal to *amour de soi* and the Principle of Evidential Desire. One cannot see what one takes to be inaccurate evaluations as providing evidence of value. So we would have to rely instead on the Concern for Evaluation. Since healthy amour-propre is clearly a desire exclusively for accurate evaluations, the Concern for Evaluation would have to take the following form. It would have to desire evaluations of a certain character *X*, such that one might, under certain conditions, believe that even inaccurate evaluations have *X*—leading (perhaps in conjunction with other beliefs) to inflamed amour-propre—but also such that one might come to believe, under other conditions, that only accurate evaluations have *X*—leading to healthy amour-propre. It is obscure what character *X* would be.

8. Conclusion

By way of a summary, consider the explanation that this account offers of Rousseau's description of not only inflamed but also healthy amour-propre as a desire "to be in the first position."

The first glance he casts on his fellows leads him to compare himself with them. And the first sentiment aroused in him by this comparison is the desire to be in the first position. This is the point where love of self [*amour de soi*] turns into amour-propre and where begin to arise all the passions which depend on this one. But to decide whether among these passions the dominant ones in his character will be humane and gentle or cruel and malignant, whether they will be passions of beneficence and commiseration or of envy and covetousness, we must know what position he will

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feel he has among men, and what kinds of obstacles he may believe he has to overcome to reach the position he wants to occupy. (E 235, see also RJJ 112/OC 4.523–24, OC 1.806)

Both forms of amour-propre, on this account, stem either from Progressive *Amour de Soi* or the Concern for Higher Accurate Evaluation. Each of these is, or entails, an absolute desire to climb as far up the scale of value as one's nature permits. Whether this desire will take a healthy or inflamed form depends, as we have seen, on what one believes about what "positions" the scale of value that corresponds to one's nature allows and about what "obstacles" stand in the way of reaching them. When combined with Social Self-Evaluation—the belief that this scale of value is social advantage—it becomes the desire to acquire ever more social advantage. This is a comparative desire to be "in the first position" because the scale of social advantage is inherently comparative. By contrast, when combined with Evaluative Knowledge—that the scale of value is natural value—this desire entails both a desire to have human standing and to develop one's natural virtues as far as one's nature allows. These also are, or entail, comparative desires to be "in the first position." Having human standing is just equivalent to not having inferior standing, with respect to one's humanity, with other human beings. So the desire for human standing is equivalent to not having inferior position, with respect to one's humanity, with other human beings. And the superior virtues of others provide evidence that one's own virtues can be further developed. Hence, the desire to develop one's virtues as far as one's nature allows entails, via the Principle of Evidential Desire, a desire not to have inferior position in one's natural virtues in comparison to others.

An involved story, to be sure. The thesis of possible goodness is sustained only by an unexpectedly complicated apparatus, composed of many moving parts. But I believe it comes with the territory. I don't foreclose a reconstruction of Rousseau's defense of the thesis of possible goodness that might be truer to the texts, or more plausible as a portrait of how we actually are. I do doubt, however, that a defense of the thesis could be considerably less complex. Nothing simpler, I suspect, could hold together Rousseau's optimism with his pessimism. But then this is part of the point, or at least the lesson, of his work: that hopes such as his for what we might be strain against despair such as his at what we now are.

Abbreviations

Works by Rousseau frequently cited have been identified by the following abbreviations:

- 1D *Discourse on Sciences and the Arts*, in *The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings*, ed. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
- 2D *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men*, in *The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings*, ed. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
- E *Emile*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979).
- J *Julie or the New Heloise*, in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, vol. 6, trans. Philip Stewart and Jean Vaché (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1997).
- LM *Letters to Malesherbes*, in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, vol. 5, ed. Christopher Kelly, Roger D. Masters, and Peter G. Stillman, trans. Christopher Kelly (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1995).
- OC *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1959–95).
- RJJ *Rousseau: Judge of Jean-Jacques: Dialogues*, in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, vol. 1, ed. Roger D. Masters and Christopher Kelly, trans. Judith R. Bush, Christopher Kelly, and Roger D. Masters (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1990).
- RSW *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, vol. 8, ed. Christopher Kelly, trans. Charles Butterworth, Alexandra Cook, and Terence E. Marshall (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2000).
- SC *The Social Contract*, in *The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings*, ed. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).