

IF ROUSSEAU WERE RICH: ANOTHER MODEL OF THE GOOD LIFE

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Abstract: This article examines the conclusion of Book 4 of Rousseau's *Emile*, which consists of a description of how Rousseau would choose to live if he were rich, and seeks to situate it within Rousseau's thought more broadly. This important passage, which has gone virtually unnoticed in the literature, offers an evocative account of a life of leisure and simple pleasures, enjoyed in the country with a few select friends — a life of happiness that Rousseau claims virtually anyone can afford, whether rich or not. The passage thus provides a guide to 'the art of living', demonstrating that true happiness requires moderation, decency towards others, and above all the avoidance of vanity. The model of the good life outlined here diverges in crucial respects from the other model human types in Rousseau's corpus, including the natural man of the *Discourse on Inequality*, the citizen of *The Social Contract*, the solitary dreamer of *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, and Emile himself.

Rousseau is, to put it mildly, not known for his sympathetic attitude towards the rich. Indeed, his denunciation of the vanity, greed and viciousness of the wealthy is so harsh and persistent, and his praise for groups presumed to have the opposite qualities — primitive savages, dutiful citizens, humble peasants — is so frequent and fulsome, that Judith Shklar once dubbed him 'the Homer of the losers'.³ It comes as something of a surprise, then, that he devotes an important passage of his magnum opus, *Emile*, to describing how he would live if he himself were a rich man.⁴ Less surprising is that he insists, in this passage, that he would live very differently to how most rich people do.

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³ Judith N. Shklar, 'Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Equality', *Daedalus*, 107 (1978), pp. 13–25, at p. 24. For an overview of the manifold ills that Rousseau attributes to wealth throughout his corpus, see John C. O'Neal, 'Rousseau's Theory of Wealth', *History of European Ideas*, 7 (1986), pp. 453–67.

⁴ See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile, or On Education*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York, 1979 [1762]), pp. 345–55. All in-text citations are to this volume. Interestingly, this seems to have been one of the last passages added to *Emile*, and it may not have been originally intended for inclusion in this work. The earliest known draft of the passage is found on the verso side of the final pages of a manuscript of *Julie, or the New Heloise*, which was published in 1761, one year before *Emile*. The passage is absent from the early 'Favre manuscript' of *Emile* — as one would expect, given that the manuscript covers roughly the same ground as the first three Books of the finished work — but it appears in all of the later, fuller versions. See Pierre Burgelin's editorial note in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile, ou de l'éducation*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel

Rather than devote himself to ostentatious luxury, he would instead choose a life of moderation, leisure and simple pleasures — a life of *true* happiness, as opposed to the outward appearance of happiness. In fact, his pleasures would be so simple that nearly everyone can afford them: he concludes the passage by suggesting that the kind of life he describes here is actually within the reach of almost all, that ‘whoever enjoys health and does not lack the necessities is rich enough if he roots the goods of opinion out of his heart’ (p. 354). In other words, this passage constitutes a guide to ‘the art of living’, explaining what true happiness entails and how it might be attained — and the ideal that it depicts turns out to differ in significant respects from the other prominent ideals of Rousseau’s writings.

Given the continual profusion of scholarly commentary on Rousseau, it is remarkable that *any* passage in his corpus could have gone virtually unnoticed in the literature to this point, much less a particularly striking one in the work that Rousseau consistently described as ‘the best of my writings, as well as the most important’,⁵ but this does indeed seem to be the case with respect to the ‘rich man’ passage of *Emile*.⁶ The present article seeks to fill this void by examining the meaning and import of the passage as well as its status in Rousseau’s thought more broadly. The first section situates the ‘rich man’ passage within the educational project of *Emile* and describes the passage itself. Section II compares the way of life depicted in the passage with some of the other model human types in Rousseau’s corpus — namely, the natural man of the *Discourse on Inequality*, the citizen of *The Social Contract*, the solitary

Raymond, Vol. 4 (Paris, 1969), p. 1622, note (a) to p. 678; and Peter D. Jimack, *La genèse et la rédaction de l'Émile de J.-J. Rousseau: Étude sur l'histoire de l'ouvrage jusqu'à sa parution* (Geneva, 1960), pp. 229–30.

⁵ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions*, in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, Vol. 5, ed. Christopher Kelly, Roger D. Masters and Peter G. Stillman (Hanover NH, 1995 [1770]), p. 480. For similar statements, see *ibid.*, pp. 473, 475; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Letter to Beaumont*, in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, Vol. 9, ed. Christopher Kelly and Eve Grace (Hanover NH, 2001 [1763]), pp. 46–7; and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques: Dialogues*, in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, Vol. 1, ed. Roger D. Masters and Christopher Kelly (Hanover NH, 1990 [1776]), p. 23.

⁶ A search of the English-language and French-language literature yielded only two sustained discussions of the passage: a Marxist reading from over three decades ago and an essay in a literary journal that focuses on the style of the passage rather than on its philosophical substance. See Francis Imbert, ‘Éléments pour une théorie du changement chez J.-J. Rousseau: “Si j’étais riche . . .”’, *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 87 (1982), pp. 82–103; and Laurence Mall, ‘Les luxes de l’autoportrait par hypothèse: La digression “si j’étais riche . . .” dans l’*Émile*’, *Poétique*, 112 (1997), pp. 387–407. Shorter discussions of the passage too are fairly rare; the handful that I have located are cited later in this essay (see notes 11, 12, 15, 34, 35 and 59). Interestingly, Immanuel Kant seems to have taken special notice of this passage, as he paraphrases it (without citation) in his notes on the *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*. See Immanuel Kant, *Notes and Fragments*, ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge, 2005), p. 5. I am grateful to Matthew Mendham for calling this latter passage to my attention.

dreamer of *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, and Emile himself — and shows that it diverges from each of these models in important respects. The final section discusses the role played in this way of life by amour-propre, the comparative form of self-love to which Rousseau typically attributes so many ills, and considers what, ultimately, Rousseau may have sought to accomplish through the passage.

I

Emile is a treatise on education, but by education Rousseau means far more than conventional book learning; in fact, for much of the work he means nearly the *opposite* of book learning, which he deems generally useless and even harmful for children (see pp. 116, 168, 184). Rather, by education Rousseau means the formation of character in the broadest sense (see p. 42). In Books 1–3, Emile is given an extremely practical, hands-on upbringing that is designed to render him tough and able to bear suffering, to keep his desires within moderate limits, and to give him a sense of independence and self-sufficiency. Thus, throughout these early Books Emile retains many of the characteristics of the healthy natural man described in Part 1 of Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality*, with the notable exception that he is a generally social being rather than a primarily solitary one. The pre-adolescent Emile at the end of Book 3 is, Rousseau says, 'a savage made to inhabit cities' (p. 205).

Book 4 begins with a 'moment of crisis', one that constitutes a kind of 'second birth' — namely, puberty (pp. 211–12). Rousseau proclaims that the onset of puberty is so momentous that the education 'takes on true importance' only at this point, whereas the earlier education was 'only . . . a child's game' (p. 212). Over the course of Books 4 and 5, the governor Jean-Jacques seeks to channel Emile's 'nascent passions' towards a series of beneficial ends. Initially, in the first section of Book 4, he channels these passions towards a sense of pity or humanity; he takes advantage of the other-directedness of the sexual passions to induce Emile to care about others for the first time, and thereby to make him a truly *moral* being (see pp. 219–20, 235). Next, in the middle section of Book 4 — that is, the famous Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar — Emile's passions are directed towards a belief in God and a kind of natural religion; the governor uses the love of beauty that is connected to the sexual passions to encourage Emile to love the beauty of nature and its Author.⁷ Finally, in the last section of Book 4 and in Book 5, Jean-Jacques steers Emile's passions towards a sense of romantic love, and ultimately towards family life.

It is during this turn to love that Rousseau pauses to tell the reader how he would live if he were rich. The immediate context is a discussion of taste, or

⁷ It is important to note, however, that the vicar's profession is told to Jean-Jacques, the tutor, rather than to Emile himself (see p. 260). In fact, we are given only the briefest of hints as to what Emile's own religious education will look like (see pp. 260, 313–14).

‘what delights . . . the human heart’ (p. 340). Emile’s education up to this point had been largely restricted to what is useful in and of itself (see p. 179) — that is, useful to Robinson Crusoe on his island (see pp. 184–5) — but the turn to love requires that he begin to care about pleasing others, and to be capable of judging those who seek to please him (see pp. 337, 341). It is only now that Emile becomes a cultivated individual, familiar with literature, the theatre, the fine arts and the social graces. The development of taste might appear to be trivial, irrelevant, or even detrimental with respect to the stated goal of raising a child according to nature rather than social convention (see pp. 38–42), but Rousseau believes otherwise, for at least two reasons. First, Emile is taught not *fashion* but *taste* — that is, what pleases people rather than what stands out, what is beautiful rather than what is expensive (see pp. 340–1) — and Rousseau holds that true taste *comes from* nature (see p. 341). Second, Rousseau suggests that a cultivated sense of taste will help to raise Emile above opinion even further (see p. 344). This is one reason why Emile is brought to Paris — that overly sophisticated ‘abyss of the human species’ (p. 59; see also p. 355) — to learn taste: Jean-Jacques wants to help Emile see that the Parisians do not truly know how to enjoy themselves, that their delicacy and refinement are aimed at ostentation rather than real pleasure (see p. 342).⁸ It is through a sense of taste and not through riches, Rousseau says, ‘that we learn to fill life with the good things within our reach in all the truth they can have for us’ (p. 344).

At this juncture, Rousseau unexpectedly turns the narrative away from Emile and towards himself, much as he had earlier in Book 4 in the Profession of Faith.⁹ The reason he gives for doing so is that when it comes to taste his own example ‘is more evident and closer to the morals of the reader’ than Emile’s ‘pure and healthy heart’ is (p. 344). He then spends ten consecutive pages — the remainder of Book 4 — contemplating how he would live if he were rich. The account begins with a typical Rousseauan censure of the morals of the rich: he proclaims that ‘if I were rich, I would have done everything

⁸ Another reason for the trip to Paris is that while the taste there is corrupt, it is also subtle and complex, and Emile can learn from this subtlety and complexity as long as he does not remain there long enough to have his own taste corrupted. Conversations in Paris will help Emile to ‘perfect the instrument which judges, while avoiding using it as they [the Parisians] do’ (p. 342).

⁹ There is some uncertainty as to whether it is Rousseau the author or Jean-Jacques the tutor who relates this vignette. While it is fairly clear that the Profession of Faith should be read as having been recounted to Jean-Jacques rather than to Rousseau himself (see, for instance, the reference to ‘my Emile’ on p. 314), there are no similar indications in the ‘rich man’ passage. In addition, at one point the narrator of the ‘rich man’ passage mentions ‘the happy time of my youth’ (p. 351), and the context contains a clear allusion to Les Charmettes, the country house near Chambéry where Rousseau stayed with Mme de Warens on and off during his twenties (see note 14). Thus, this seems to be one of the many instances in which the author/narrator distinction is blurred, if not eliminated altogether.

necessary to become so', and that he would thus be 'insolent and low, sensitive and delicate toward myself alone, pitiless and hard toward everyone else . . . I would make my fortune the instrument of my pleasures, with which I would be wholly occupied' (p. 345). Soon, however, Rousseau switches course abruptly and claims that in fact he would be very different from other rich people, above all 'by being sensual and voluptuous rather than proud and vain and by devoting myself to indolent luxury far more than to ostentatious luxury' (p. 345).¹⁰ In other words, he would have far better taste than most rich people. He then goes on to offer a long and evocative description of the life he would lead as a rich man, a life of leisure and simple pleasures, enjoyed in the country with a few select friends. As Jonathan Marks writes, Rousseau gives the whole passage 'the full, effusive pastoral treatment — complete with peasants, country celebrations, and rustic songs'.¹¹

Although the way of life Rousseau describes in this passage is explicitly *not* one of virtue, or of subordinating his inclinations to his duties (see p. 350), it is very much one of moderation and decency.¹² He says that the 'first use' he would make of his riches would be to buy 'leisure and freedom, to which I would add health, if it were for sale. But since it is purchased only with temperance and since there is no true pleasure in life without health, I would be temperate out of sensuality' (p. 345). This kind of self-interested moderation would also extend to his relations with others: 'I would want my fortune to provide ease everywhere and never to create a feeling of inequality', Rousseau insists, because the most agreeable relationships are those based on 'mutual attachment, agreement of tastes, suitableness of characters', and not coloured by vanity or interest (p. 348). Since 'exclusive pleasures are the death of pleasure', he would share most of his belongings and entertainments with those around him (p. 354). While much of his time would be spent in 'gaiety, rustic labors, and frolicsome games' with friends, he would not be entirely indifferent to the potential suffering of others, because a sense of compassion would (once again) add to his own pleasure:

If some peasant returning to work with his tools on his shoulder passed near us, I would gladden his heart with some good talk and a drink of good wine,

¹⁰ This distinction is reminiscent of Rousseau's political fragments, where he contrasts 'the luxury of magnificence' whose only intent is 'to attract the glances and admiration of others' with 'the luxury . . . of softness', of which Rousseau says 'there are only a few voluptuaries who know how to savor it and confer on it all the sweetness and all the simplicity of which it is susceptible'. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Political Fragments*, in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, Vol. 4, ed. Judith R. Bush, Roger D. Masters and Christopher Kelly (Hanover NH, 1994), p. 36. The Rousseau of the 'rich man' passage in *Emile* is clearly one of those 'few voluptuaries'.

¹¹ Jonathan Marks, *Perfection and Disharmony in the Thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 71.

¹² For a similar point, see Joseph R. Reiser, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: A Friend of Virtue* (Ithaca NY, 2003), p. 176.

which would make him bear his poverty more gaily; and I would also have the pleasure of feeling deep in my vitals an emotion of sympathy, secretly saying to myself, 'I am still a man' (p. 352).¹³

In all of these ways, Rousseau's good taste would serve as a substitute for virtue.

The most striking aspect of the narrative is that Rousseau spends the majority of it detailing the myriad things he would *not* want to buy with his riches, rather than those he *would* buy. For instance, he would not want to live in a palace, for he would feel like a prisoner within its walls, as if he had banished himself from the rest of his surroundings (see p. 347). Instead, he would want 'a little rustic house — a white house with green shutters — on the slope of some agreeable, well-shaded hill . . . in some distant province where one sees little money and many commodities, and where abundance and poverty reign' (p. 351).¹⁴ Nor would he have any desire for extensive lands, as there is no need to own property to use it well: 'I make myself at home on any open pieces of land that please me. I give them names. I make one my park, another my terrace, and so I am their master' (p. 354). Likewise, he would have few possessions and simple furnishings, because he recognizes how little real pleasure is gained from these things (see p. 346). In particular, he would want 'neither gallery nor library, especially if I liked reading and knew something about paintings. I would then know that such collections are never complete and that the absence of what is lacking causes more chagrin than having nothing at all' (p. 347). He would also avoid expensive and showy clothing; rather, he would seek to dress 'in such a way that in every rank I appeared to be in my place, and that I did not stand out in any . . . In this way I would be more the master of my conduct, and I would put the pleasures of all stations always within my reach' (p. 348).

While Rousseau's days would often revolve around feasts with his friends, he holds that they would have no need for exotic foods or luxurious banquets, as 'exercise and the active life . . . are the premier chefs of the world, and delicate ragouts are quite ridiculous to people who have been breathless since sunrise' (p. 352). In this as in everything else, he would stay close to nature — for instance, by eating locally grown foods when in season (see pp. 345–6) — in order to better indulge his senses. 'The dining room', he says, 'would be everywhere — in the garden, in a boat, under a tree, or sometimes near a distant spring, on the cool, green grass, beneath clumps of elder and hazel' (p. 352). Neither during these meals nor in the rest of his life would he want to depend on servants, because 'no one ever serves us so well as ourselves' (p. 347), and in any case doing his own household tasks would allow him to

¹³ Consider also Rousseau's objections to exclusive hunting grounds, and the misery they create for others and thus also for their possessors (see p. 353).

¹⁴ This is a clear allusion to *Les Charmettes* (see note 9). Rousseau describes the happy time he spent there in Books 5 and 6 of his *Confessions*.

take some 'agreeable exercise' and to prevent the boredom of an overly sedentary life (p. 346). He and his companions 'would be our own valets in order to be our own masters' (p. 352). Nor, finally, would Rousseau seek to use his wealth to enhance his romantic or sexual opportunities, for he would realize that true love is not for sale — indeed, that it is 'infallibly killed by money' (p. 349) — and that it would be foolish and unseemly for him to 'expose my gray beard to the mocking disdain of young girls' (p. 350). He might satisfy his passions from time to time, he tells us, but at his age 'I would not make an occupation of my weakness'. Rather, 'I would find as good a match as was possible for me, and I would leave it at that' (p. 350).¹⁵

The moral of the story should be obvious by this point, but Rousseau concludes by articulating it for the reader just in case:

Someone will doubtless object that such entertainments are within the reach of all men and that one does not need to be rich to enjoy them. This is precisely what I wanted to get at. One has pleasure when one wants to have it. It is only opinion that makes everything difficult and drives happiness away from us. It is a hundred times easier to be happy than to appear to be happy. The man who has taste and is truly voluptuous has nothing to do with riches. It suffices for him to be free and master of himself. Whoever enjoys health and does not lack the necessities is rich enough if he roots the goods of opinion out of his heart (p. 354).

This, then, is the lesson — or the promise — of the education in taste that Rousseau offers the reader in this passage: anyone who possesses genuine taste and knows how to follow it will rise above opinion and will attain not just pleasure but happiness, with no need for riches. The only requirements other than taste itself, it seems, are health and 'the necessities'. Put another way, this passage constitutes a sort of manual for how to perfect or purify the hedonistic life, demonstrating that the pursuit of *real* pleasure requires moderation, decency towards others, and above all the avoidance of vanity. Or, as Rousseau himself puts it,

this is a kind of essay on true taste in the choice of agreeable leisure. This is the spirit in which a person enjoys himself. All the rest is only illusion,

¹⁵ In his discussion of the clothes that he would wear as a rich man, Rousseau writes: 'It is said that there are women who close their doors on embroidered cuffs and receive no one who does not wear lace. I would go and spend my day elsewhere.' He does admit, however, that 'if these women were young and pretty, I could sometimes put on lace in order to spend — at the very most — the night there' (p. 348). As Allan Bloom writes: 'This fantasy [i.e. the entire 'rich man' passage] belongs to a middle-aged man, and the sexual life treated in it is appropriate to that age . . . He does not renounce sex, but for the sake of his own self-awareness, he will not take it seriously. This is part of good taste and shows how good taste can supplement or substitute for morality . . . As the Savoyard Vicar presents otherworldly overcoming of the body's lusts, Rousseau presents himself as the practitioner of a worldly overcoming.' Allan Bloom, *Love and Friendship* (New York, 1993), pp. 96–7.

chimera, foolish vanity. Whoever deviates from these rules, however rich he may be, will find that his gold will buy him nothing but manure and will never know the value of life (p. 354).

II

The way of life described in the ‘rich man’ passage is clearly a highly idealized one, but this should not be particularly surprising, as Rousseau’s writings virtually overflow with such idealizations. A comparison of the lifestyle and character of the idealized Rousseau who narrates this passage (whom I will sometimes call ‘rich Rousseau’ for the sake of brevity) with some of the other model human types in Rousseau’s corpus will help to clarify the meaning and import of the passage, and to situate it within Rousseau’s thought more broadly.

The natural man of the *Discourse on Inequality* serves as a kind of benchmark for all of the human types in Rousseau’s writings. This is so, of course, because of Rousseau’s central doctrine of ‘the natural goodness of man’ — that is, his claim that in the state of nature people were innocent, self-sufficient and happy, while most civilized peoples are corrupt, dependent and miserable.¹⁶ At first glance, the inhabitants of the state of nature could hardly be more different from the Rousseau of the ‘rich man’ passage. Whereas rich Rousseau is a highly cultivated individual — even if one with a rustic sense of taste — the natural man of the *Second Discourse* is so primitive that he lacks nearly all of (what we tend to think of as) the distinctive traits of humanity, including language, reason, memory, foresight, imagination, vanity, love and a sense of morality. Whereas rich Rousseau lives in the country in the society of his friends, natural man wanders the forests as a solitary being (except for the occasional bout of sex).¹⁷

Despite these enormous differences, however, rich Rousseau shares a number of natural man’s key attributes. To begin with, both are guided principally by a kind of healthy selfishness, or amour de soi; they seek their own well-being — the fulfilment of their needs and desires — without much (if any) concern for the opinions of others. As we know from the *Discourse on Inequality* — and, indeed, from earlier in *Emile* (see pp. 212–13) — this non-comparative form of self-love is entirely salutary and occasions no conflict or

¹⁶ For a persuasive argument that the natural goodness of man constitutes the unifying principle of Rousseau’s thought, see Arthur M. Melzer, *The Natural Goodness of Man: On the System of Rousseau’s Thought* (Chicago, 1990). For some of Rousseau’s own statements to this effect, see Jean-Jacques Rousseau, letter to M. de Malesherbes, 12 January 1762, in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, Vol. 5, ed. Christopher Kelly, Roger D. Masters and Peter G. Stillman (Hanover NH, 1995), p. 575; Rousseau, *Letter to Beaumont*, p. 28; and Rousseau, *Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques*, pp. 212–13.

¹⁷ See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men*, in *The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings*, ed. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge, 1997 [1755]), pp. 143–5, 157.

strife among people.¹⁸ Hence, Rousseau proclaims that in the meals he would have with his friends as a rich man, ‘each of us, openly preferring himself to everyone else, would find it good that all the others similarly preferred themselves to him’ (p. 352). Also like natural man, rich Rousseau’s primary objective is the enjoyment of leisure and freedom; recall that the purchase of these goods is the ‘first use’ he would make of his riches (p. 345). Further, the needs and desires of both of these individuals are sufficiently modest that they each find them fairly easy to fulfil, more or less immediately. (Rousseau’s vision of himself and his friends finding ‘the dessert . . . hang[ing] from the trees’ after their meals is reminiscent of the fecundity that he ascribes to the state of nature (p. 352).) Finally, both natural man and rich Rousseau are good but not virtuous: neither is willing to put the interests of others ahead of his own out of a sense of duty or obligation (see p. 350), but both are averse to seeing others suffer due to a sense of pity or sympathy (see p. 352).¹⁹ Like many of Rousseau’s other model human types, then, rich Rousseau manages to retain many of the beneficial qualities of natural man, even in his more developed state.

The Rousseau of the ‘rich man’ passage shares far fewer similarities with another prominent model in Rousseau’s writings, the citizen of *The Social Contract* (a work that was published almost simultaneously with *Emile*). Whereas rich Rousseau seeks to ‘stay as close as possible to nature, in order to indulge the senses I received from nature’ (p. 345), the true citizen is *denatured*, purged of his natural self-interest, to the point that he ‘gives himself entirely’ to the community, ‘without reservation’.²⁰ In stark contrast to rich Rousseau and his friends, each of whom ‘openly prefer[s] himself to everyone else’ (p. 352), Rousseau claims that the utmost desire and ‘principal business’ of the citizen is to serve the public.²¹ It is true that the Rousseau of the ‘rich man’ passage is not selfish in the ordinary sense of the term — he refrains from parading his riches (see pp. 345, 348), he generally shares his possessions with others (see pp. 348, 353–4), and he is kind to those less fortunate than him (see pp. 352–3) — but his devotion to pleasure and ‘indolent luxury’ (p. 345) is a far cry from the austere virtue of the citizen. Likewise, whereas

¹⁸ See *ibid.*, p. 218.

¹⁹ On natural man’s amour de soi, see *ibid.*, pp. 127, 218. On his enjoyment of leisure and freedom, see *ibid.*, pp. 158–9, 187. On the easy and immediate satisfaction of his desires, see *ibid.*, pp. 134, 142. On the fecundity of the state of nature, see *ibid.*, p. 134. Finally, on natural man’s goodness without virtue, see *ibid.*, pp. 127, 150–4.

²⁰ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Of the Social Contract*, in *The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings*, ed. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge, 1997 [1762]), p. 50; see also p. 69.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 113. Here I am in disagreement with Laurence Mall, who reads the line from the ‘rich man’ passage about each ‘openly preferring himself to everyone else’ and ‘find[ing] it good that all the others similarly preferred themselves to him’ as expressing a principle (‘the interest of each preserved by all’) that she claims underlies the general will of *The Social Contract*. See Mall, ‘Les luxes de l’autoportrait par hypothèse’, p. 395.

the citizen is passionately dedicated to his *patrie* or fatherland, the life of rich Rousseau seems distinctly apolitical: he mentions no obligations to the state, and in his relations with his companions, 'pleasure and friendship would alone make the law' (p. 349). Indeed, while rich Rousseau generally speaks of his 'country abode' as a fixed location (pp. 351, 353), on occasion he appears to be something of a cosmopolitan soul who simply goes wherever the spirit moves him — hence his motto '*ubi bene, ibi patria*', or 'where there is something good, there is my fatherland' (p. 347). In discussing how to make the most of the seasons, for instance, he suggests that rather than 'seek summer in winter and winter in summer', as most people do, he would 'go to spend the summer at Naples and the winter at Petersburg — now inhaling a gentle breeze while reclining in the cool grottoes of Tarentum, now enjoying the illuminations of an ice palace, out of breath and exhausted by the pleasures of the ball' (p. 346; see also p. 345). While rich Rousseau is a social being, then, in some respects he bears a greater resemblance to the solitary natural man than he does to the devoted citizen.

Perhaps the model in Rousseau's corpus that bears the greatest likeness to the Rousseau of the 'rich man' passage is the Rousseau who narrates *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, the solitary dreamer. The similarities here are obvious, starting with the fact that both are *Rousseau* in some sense, or versions of the author himself.²² Both of these Rousseaus enjoy lives of leisure and simple, innocent pleasures, seeking to stay as close to nature as they can. They both have an idyllic retreat from civilization: rich Rousseau has his rustic country house, and the solitary dreamer has Saint Peter's Island, the small island in the middle of Lake Bienne where the historical Rousseau stayed for around six weeks in 1765, at the height of the controversies over his writings.²³ Just as the solitary dreamer finds his truest happiness through reposing in the present moment, without concern for the past or the future, rich Rousseau's 'only constant practice' is to devote himself 'entirely to each hour and to each thing that he does', and to 'take each day by itself as though it were independent of the day before and the day after' (p. 351; see also p. 347).

²² Certain aspects of Rousseau's other autobiographical writings are also reminiscent of the 'rich man' passage. For instance, in his *Confessions* Rousseau proclaims that 'none of my dominant tastes consists in things that can be bought. I require only pure pleasures, and money poisons them all'. Rousseau, *The Confessions*, p. 30. Similarly, in the *Dialogues*, the character named 'Rousseau' declares that 'the man who is not dominated by amour-propre and who does not go seeking his happiness far from himself is the only one who knows heedlessness and sweet leisure, and J.J. is that man as far as I can determine . . . Free from the chains of fortune, he enjoys with moderation all the real goods it offers . . . By possessing more, he would enjoy far less'. Rousseau, *Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques*, pp. 144–6. On the whole, however, it is the Rousseau of the *Reveries* who most closely resembles rich Rousseau.

²³ See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, trans. Charles E. Butterworth (Indianapolis, 1992 [1778]), fifth walk.

Moreover, like natural man, both rich Rousseau and the solitary dreamer are good but not virtuous, deriving pleasure from the well-being of others but averse to acting out of a sense of duty.²⁴

Yet there are also important differences between the two Rousseaus. Most obviously, while rich Rousseau spends his days in the company of others, the Rousseau of the *Reveries* is a *solitary* walker. Indeed, he describes himself as ‘alone on earth’ — if not physically, then at least morally and intellectually — and claims to have no ‘real relations or true society’ with anyone else.²⁵ As a result, their daily activities too are quite divergent: whereas rich Rousseau devotes his time to ‘throngs of diverse entertainments’ with his friends (p. 351), the solitary dreamer’s happiest moments are spent alone, lying on his back in a boat, drifting on Lake Bièvre in idle, tranquil reverie.²⁶ The latter Rousseau asserts that his ‘first and . . . principal enjoyment’ is ‘the precious *far niente*’ (doing nothing),²⁷ while rich Rousseau prefers to live more actively, holding that ‘boredom begins with too sedentary a life’ (p. 346; see also p. 350). Connected with this difference is a further one: although rich Rousseau is certainly a thoughtful individual — presumably, that is why he has such good taste — he does not seem to possess the deep sense of introspection that pervades the *Reveries*. Among other things, as Laurence Mall notes, the Rousseau of the ‘rich man’ passage is not a writer.²⁸

Moreover, although Rousseau the solitary dreamer is good in the sense that he takes pleasure in the well-being of others, rich Rousseau actually *does* more good for others — for instance, by cheering up the local peasants (see p. 352), sharing his possessions and entertainments with his friends and neighbours (see pp. 351–3), and the like. The solitary dreamer, by contrast, claims to be *unable* to benefit other people, both because he interacts so little with them and because his ‘enemies’ somehow conspire to ensure that all of

²⁴ On the solitary dreamer reposing in the present moment, see *ibid.*, pp. 68–9. On his goodness without virtue, see *ibid.*, sixth walk.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 6.

²⁶ See *ibid.*, p. 66; and Rousseau, *The Confessions*, p. 539.

²⁷ Rousseau, *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, p. 64. It should be noted, however, that the Rousseau of the *Reveries* does spend a good deal of his time on St Peter’s Island botanizing, in part because it serves as a pleasant distraction and thereby wards off boredom. See *ibid.*, pp. 64–5.

²⁸ See Mall, ‘Les luxes de l’autoportrait par hypothèse’, p. 403. On the other hand, the Rousseau of the *Reveries* does not seem to be a philosopher in the traditional sense, either. He seems less concerned with the pursuit of knowledge or philosophical understanding than with dreaming and communing with nature; hence, he writes ‘reveries’ or ‘walks’ rather than discourses or treatises. He also expresses delight that on St Peter’s Island he was able to leave his books packed up in boxes and that no one there was interested in having serious conversations on serious topics. In fact, at one point he asserts that ‘reverie relaxes and amuses me; reflection tires and saddens me. Thinking always was a painful and charmless occupation for me’. Rousseau, *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, p. 91; see also p. 64.

his efforts are turned against him. Thus, he holds that ‘the only good which might henceforth be within my power is to abstain from acting, from fear of doing evil without wanting to and without knowing it’.²⁹ The Rousseau of the *Reveries* in fact attributes his isolation itself to his ‘enemies’. He opens the work by depicting himself as an unwilling outcast from society — ‘the most sociable and the most loving of humans’ who has, for some inscrutable reason, been ‘proscribed from society by a unanimous agreement’.³⁰ He then goes on to describe, at some length, how he unexpectedly found happiness in his solitude. During the time of his apparent prosperity, when his writings had made him the toast of high French society, he was often miserable inside, whereas now, in his apparent adversity, he is content.³¹ The fact remains, however, that this situation was imposed on him from the outside: it ‘is not the work of my wisdom; it is that of my enemies’.³² Here we see another difference between the two Rousseaus, namely that whereas rich Rousseau self-consciously chooses his way of life, the solitary dreamer does not; rich Rousseau’s happiness comes from his taste, while the solitary dreamer’s comes (ironically) from his persecutions. In all, then, the ‘rich man’ passage offers a model similar to that of the *Reveries* — a life of leisure, simplicity and staying close to nature — but with several important twists, above all the idea that it is possible to pursue such a life without the need for solitary withdrawal.³³

Finally, what about Emile, the hero of the work in which the ‘rich man’ passage appears? Once again, there are a number of clear parallels with rich Rousseau. In fact, Rousseau himself draws attention to these parallels: immediately after explaining the moral of the ‘rich man’ passage — that good taste is more necessary to happiness than riches — he observes, ‘Emile will not know all this better than I do, but since he has a purer and healthier heart, he will feel it even more keenly, and all his observations in society will only confirm it for him’ (p. 354). In other words, thanks to the extreme care that Jean-Jacques has taken in raising him, Emile will know without even really reflecting on it that he would not obtain true pleasure from having a palace, fancy clothes and meals, or numerous servants (see also pp. 190–1, 472).³⁴ He feels nothing but pity for ‘rich fools, martyrs to their display’ (p. 244). Like rich Rousseau, Emile’s desires are generally limited to those he can easily fulfil (see pp. 80, 244), and he too acts as a sort of benefactor towards those who

²⁹ Rousseau, *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, p. 75; see also pp. 6, 79–80.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

³¹ See *ibid.*, p. 110. Indeed, Rousseau states that he is ‘a hundred times happier in my solitude than I could ever be living among [others]’. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 117.

³³ Another key difference between rich Rousseau and Rousseau the solitary dreamer concerns the role that amour-propre plays in their lives; this issue will be discussed in the next section.

³⁴ On this point, see also Yves Vargas, *Introduction à l’Emile de Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (Paris, 1995), p. 291.

live in the vicinity of his simple country abode (see pp. 435–6, 474).³⁵ Also like rich Rousseau, interestingly enough, Emile is rich: we are told near the outset of the work that Jean-Jacques would choose to educate a pupil with means, mostly in order to save him from the fate of being raised as most wealthy children are (see p. 52). Much of the education that Jean-Jacques imparts to Emile is designed to help him surmount the pitfalls and prejudices that so often attend the life of the rich. Indeed, one of the key motives behind Emile's education in taste — the immediate context of the 'rich man' passage — is 'to see to it that he does not one day seek in his riches the means for being happy' (p. 344). This lesson seems to sink in, as Emile later shows himself to be willing, even eager, to renounce his money and possessions if circumstances demand it (see pp. 422, 472). Thus, Emile too becomes a rich man who is vastly unlike other rich men: indifferent to his riches, moderate in his desires, and benevolent towards others.

Once again, however, the differences are both numerous and significant. Recall that in Book 4 Emile's passions are directed towards three chief ends: a sense of pity or humanity, a belief in God and natural religion, and romantic love. Rich Rousseau too has a sense of pity or humanity, but the latter two ends are conspicuously absent from the 'rich man' passage. There is no mention of God or any kind of higher power in the passage, and religious belief and practice seem to play no role in rich Rousseau's life. Similarly, while rich Rousseau discusses whether and how he will indulge his sexual desires (see pp. 348, 350), he does not seem to experience the kind of deep romantic love that Emile feels for Sophie, and there is certainly no indication that he will have a wife or children; instead, his affections are directed towards his friends (see pp. 348–9). This constitutes an enormous departure from Emile, as the adult Emile is in many ways a 'family man' above all else (see pp. 479–80). Further, Emile's love for Sophie leads to his first feelings of emotional vulnerability and weakness, and this forces him to learn to subordinate his inclinations to his duties (see pp. 443–6). In other words, whereas the younger Emile had (like rich Rousseau) simply followed his healthy natural inclinations, in the end he must 'command [his] heart' in order to 'become [his] own master' (p. 445). Very roughly speaking, rich Rousseau adopts an Epicurean path to happiness, while Emile's is in large part Stoic. In all of these ways, the Rousseau of the 'rich man' passage represents a model quite different from that of Emile, within *Emile* itself.

All told, then, the 'rich man' passage offers a depiction of an 'exemplary life' (to borrow a term from Christopher Kelly) that is substantially different

³⁵ Peter Jimack suggests that the adult Emile and the Rousseau of the 'rich man' passage both exemplify 'the ideal . . . of the country gentleman devoting a good part of his wealth, time and energy to succouring the unfortunate and generally bringing joy and even perhaps prosperity to the neighbourhood'. Peter Jimack, *Rousseau, Emile* (London, 1983), p. 24.

from the other prominent exemplary lives of Rousseau's corpus.³⁶ In his admirable study of Rousseau and 'the good life', Laurence Cooper argues that the four model human types to whom I have compared rich Rousseau in this section — natural man, the citizen, the solitary dreamer and Emile — are, along with the corrupt bourgeois who constitutes the negative pole of Rousseau's thought, 'the fundamental alternatives that are or have been available to humanity. They represent the set of basic responses to the question of how to live'.³⁷ While this sort of view is common in the Rousseau literature, I have tried to show that the Rousseau of the 'rich man' passage represents an important, and too often overlooked, alternative to *all* of these basic human types in Rousseau's thought.

What are we to make of this alternative model of the good life? Given that Rousseau opens the 'rich man' passage by describing his sense of taste as 'closer to the morals of the reader' than is Emile's 'pure and healthy heart' (p. 344), Jonathan Marks suggests that we have 'reason to suspect Rousseau's self-presentation' in the passage and that it represents 'a compromise with the weakness of his readers and the sad conditions of his time'.³⁸ Judged from the standpoint of virtue, or the subordination of inclination to duty, there is much truth to such a claim. However, this passage casts some doubt on whether virtue is in fact Rousseau's main criterion for judging the worth of a way of life. Those interpreters who push Rousseau in a Kantian direction by emphasizing the role of virtue in his thought generally try to explain away Rousseau's self-presentation in his autobiographical works — that is, his explicit and repeated insistence that he himself is not virtuous — by pointing to his claim that he is *unable* to act virtuously because of his peculiar circumstances, above all his relative isolation and the machinations of his 'enemies'.³⁹ In other words, according to the Kantian reading the fact that Rousseau fails to practice what he preaches with respect to virtue shows only that he is unfortunate, that the virtuous life is (alas) beyond his reach, not that he has any doubts

³⁶ See Christopher Kelly, *Rousseau's Exemplary Life: The Confessions as Political Philosophy* (Ithaca NY, 1987).

³⁷ Laurence D. Cooper, *Rousseau, Nature, and the Problem of the Good Life* (University Park PA, 1999), pp. 51–2. Cooper makes only one fleeting reference to the 'rich man' passage, where he dismisses it as a 'daydream'. See *ibid.*, p. 179.

³⁸ Marks, *Perfection and Disharmony in the Thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, p. 71.

³⁹ Despite the comment quoted above, Marks should not be counted among those who push Rousseau in a Kantian direction. In fact, he explicitly disavows this reading: see *ibid.*, pp. 4–5, 57–64, 69, 115. The classic Kantian reading is that of Ernst Cassirer, although Cassirer has had numerous followers over the last several decades in this regard. See Ernst Cassirer, *The Question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, trans. Peter Gay (Bloomington IN, 1963); and Ernst Cassirer, *Rousseau, Kant, Goethe: Two Essays*, trans. James Gutmann, Paul Oskar Kristeller and John Herman Randall, Jr. (Princeton, 1963). On Rousseau's claim that he was unable to act virtuously because of his circumstances, see note 29, above.

about what he preaches. Yet the Rousseau of the 'rich man' passage has plenty of contact with others, no apparent enemies, and ample resources at his disposal, but he still chooses not to act against his inclinations out of a sense of duty, or to devote himself to his *patrie*. Again, he is good rather than virtuous, and in fact his good taste acts as a *substitute* for virtue. In terms of the 'man or citizen' dichotomy that is so frequently applied to Rousseau's thought, then, 'rich Rousseau' falls squarely in the 'man' category.⁴⁰

Even further, the narrator of the 'rich man' passage may constitute the highest or most impressive form of 'man' to be found anywhere in Rousseau's corpus.⁴¹ While natural man is certainly the *purest* form of 'man', he is also the most primitive: he is barely distinguishable from the (other) animals, and his healthy attributes are wholly unconscious and unreflective. Emile, for his part, ends up falling somewhere between the ideals of 'man' and 'citizen', insofar as he must eventually conquer his inclinations in the name of duty. Despite his sense of self-sufficiency, moreover, Emile in fact remains in a constant state of dependence throughout the book, first on his governor Jean-Jacques (during childhood and adolescence) and then on Sophie (after his marriage) (see p. 479). Rousseau the solitary dreamer is a highly developed individual who falls unambiguously in the 'man' category, but we have seen that he admits to being incapable of doing any good for others and that he attributes his solitude — and hence his happiness — not to his wisdom but to the persecution of his enemies. The Rousseau of the 'rich man' passage, by contrast, is a cultivated, independent individual who both does good for others and enjoys happiness, apparently as a result of his own deliberate choice. He is healthy and happy without the extreme primitiveness of natural man, the denaturing of the citizen, the painstaking education of Emile, or the externally enforced isolation of the solitary walker. Instead, he attains his healthiness and happiness simply by pursuing pleasure intelligently, without illusions. But, one is forced to wonder, can it really be so easy?

⁴⁰ Rousseau himself draws such a dichotomy near the outset of *Emile* (see pp. 39–40). For a classic work on this dichotomy, see Judith N. Shklar, *Men and Citizens: A Study of Rousseau's Social Theory* (Cambridge, 1969). For an analysis of several different typologies that have been applied to Rousseau's thought — including that of Shklar as well as that of Cooper — and a thoughtful attempt to create a new, more complete typology (without, however, mentioning the 'rich man' passage), see Matthew D. Mendham, 'Gentle Savages and Fierce Citizens against Civilization: Unraveling Rousseau's Paradoxes', *American Journal of Political Science*, 55 (2011), pp. 170–87.

⁴¹ See also Allan Bloom's claim that 'Rousseau seems to suggest that, for a man like himself, with his doubts and his independence, something like this [i.e. the way of life described in the 'rich man' passage] is the best solution of the tension between nature and civilization'. Bloom, *Love and Friendship*, p. 96.

III

Although the way of life depicted in the ‘rich man’ passage is attractive in many respects, a number of doubts lurk in the reader’s mind when considering it. The stated lesson of the passage is that few material goods are necessary if one has good taste, and thus that one does not actually need to be rich to live as rich Rousseau does. But if rich Rousseau were not actually rich, then where would he obtain even ‘the necessities’, given that he imagines spending his days enjoying leisure, games and feasts, rather than labouring? Where would his friends obtain *their* necessities? As Bernard Mandeville would surely ask, if everyone were to adopt rich Rousseau’s maxims, would not society as we know it collapse entirely? Further, is the type of decency towards others embodied by rich Rousseau — a kind of compassion out of self-interest — always enough? Is a life without any apparent connections to family, to country or to religion ultimately desirable, no matter how healthy and happy one might be? And is rich Rousseau’s taste peculiar to himself, or would everyone attain similar fulfilment and contentment from pursuing his way of life?

In the context of Rousseau’s thought, however, one question looms above all others: What about amour-propre? Rousseau concludes the ‘rich man’ passage with the dictum that ‘whoever enjoys health and does not lack the necessities is rich enough *if he roots the goods of opinion out of his heart*’ (p. 354, emphasis added), but one of the central themes of his writings is how extraordinarily *difficult* it is to root the goods of opinion out of one’s heart. ‘The sole folly of which one cannot disabuse a man who is not mad is vanity’, he had proclaimed earlier in Book 4. ‘For this there is no cure other than experience — if, indeed, anything can cure it’ (p. 245). In fact, Rousseau holds that amour-propre — the comparative form of self-love that entails a concern for how one appears in the eyes of others — is present to one degree or another in *all* adult individuals outside the ‘pure’ state of nature.⁴² In *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, Rousseau admits that even he, who ‘never had much of a bent for amour-propre’, could not avoid this passion entirely.⁴³ While he claims to forget about other people and their opinions when he is alone, he acknowledges that whenever he ventures into the company of others, he is invariably and promptly visited by ‘a foolish amour-propre whose complete folly I sense, but which I cannot overcome’.⁴⁴ The prevalence — even ubiquity — of

⁴² On natural man’s lack of amour-propre, see Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, p. 218. On the necessary emergence of amour-propre in ‘nascent society’, see *ibid.*, pp. 165–6. On its necessary emergence in all civilized individuals during adolescence, if not long before, see Rousseau, *Emile*, pp. 215, 235.

⁴³ Rousseau, *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, p. 115.

⁴⁴ Indeed, Rousseau concedes, ‘not only have I not been able to succeed [in overcoming amour-propre while around others], I have not made any progress; and all my painful, but vain, efforts have left me as easy to disturb, to grieve, and to render indignant as before’. *Ibid.*, p. 118.

amour-propre is of immense consequence, as Rousseau claims that it is the source of ‘the hateful and irascible passions’ (p. 214) and in fact that it ‘inspires men with *all* the evils they do to one another’.⁴⁵ Not only is amour-propre the source of all wickedness, it is also the root of much misery: ‘in whatever situation we find ourselves, it is only because of amour-propre that we are constantly unhappy’.⁴⁶

It is true, as recent scholarship has stressed, that Rousseau does not deem amour-propre *always* or *necessarily* destructive: in his view, it can take beneficial forms as well as pernicious ones.⁴⁷ When properly governed or educated, amour-propre can become the source of qualities such as noble pride, patriotic devotion and romantic and familial love. Yet Rousseau holds that the vicious manifestations of amour-propre are vastly more common than the salutary ones. Hence, even as he claims that amour-propre can be the source of both good and bad, he is quick to point out that the bad greatly outweighs the good: it is to the passions associated with amour-propre, he says, that ‘we owe what is best and what is worst among men, our virtues and our vices, our Sciences and our errors, our Conquerors and our Philosophers, *that is to say a multitude of bad things for a small number of good things*’.⁴⁸ The beneficial forms of amour-propre are so rare, in Rousseau’s view, because they generally require an extraordinary, almost superhuman individual to bring them about, such as a god-like Lawgiver who is capable of denaturing people and thereby expanding their amour-propre to include their entire fatherland⁴⁹ or an exceptionally gifted tutor who is willing to devote nearly every waking

⁴⁵ Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, p. 218, emphasis added.

⁴⁶ Rousseau, *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, p. 116. See also Rousseau’s claim in *Emile* that ‘amour-propre, which makes comparisons, is never content and never could be’ (pp. 213–14).

⁴⁷ For a pioneering argument in this regard, see N.J.H. Dent, *Rousseau: An Introduction to his Psychological, Social and Political Theory* (New York, 1988), pp. 52–85, 143–5. For two detailed and excellent (if rather different) discussions, see Cooper, *Rousseau, Nature, and the Problem of the Good Life*, ch. 4; and Frederick Neuhouser, *Rousseau’s Theodicy of Self-Love: Evil, Rationality, and the Drive for Recognition* (Oxford, 2008).

⁴⁸ Rousseau is here describing what we owe to the ‘ardor to be talked about’ and to the ‘frenzy to achieve distinction’, not to amour-propre *per se*, but it is clear that he sees these passions as manifestations of amour-propre. Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, p. 184, emphasis added. See also Rousseau’s claim in *Emile* that ‘amour-propre is a useful but dangerous instrument. Often it wounds the hand making use of it and rarely does good without evil’ (pp. 244–5).

⁴⁹ On the need for the Lawgiver to have a nearly divine nature, see Rousseau, *Of the Social Contract*, pp. 68–9. On the fact that in the citizen amour-propre is not so much eliminated as expanded to include the fatherland, see Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on Political Economy*, in *The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings*, ed. Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge, 1997 [1755]), pp. 16, 20.

moment to carefully controlling all of his pupil's experiences and guiding all of his pupil's passions, from birth to marriage.⁵⁰

The Rousseau of the 'rich man' passage, however, experiences very little in the way of amour-propre, and what little he does feel is advantageous. The term 'amour-propre' does not appear anywhere in the passage, and rich Rousseau suggests that this passion has little hold over him, claiming that, unlike most rich men, he would be 'sensual and voluptuous rather than proud and vain' (p. 345). He seeks the kinds of absolute goods that are associated with amour de soi, such as health, pleasure and independence, rather than comparative or relative goods, and he appears to feel no envy, jealousy, anger, resentment, or any of the other hostile passions associated with amour-propre. Indeed, we have seen that the moral of the entire passage is that the concern for the opinions of others is one of the greatest obstacles to true happiness: 'It is only opinion that makes everything difficult and drives happiness away from us. It is a hundred times easier to be happy than to appear to be happy' (p. 354; see also p. 351).

Whereas most people are driven by amour-propre to want ever more money, power and prestige, the few instances in which rich Rousseau expresses a concern for the judgments of others actually lead him in the opposite direction, towards greater moderation and decency. For example, he claims that he would 'be somewhat ashamed to display my riches too much; I would always believe I saw the envious man whom I had overwhelmed with my pomp saying into his neighbor's ear, "Here is a rascal who is very much afraid of being known for what he is!"' (p. 345). Similarly, he would seek to restrain his sexual desires so as not to bring ridicule or disdain upon himself in the pursuit of young and pretty girls (see p. 350), and he and his friends would avoid relying on servants so that they would not have to envision them 'whispering criticisms of our demeanor' or 'counting our helpings with a greedy eye' (p. 352). In each of these cases, rich Rousseau's regard for the views of others serves as a *check* on his desires, rather than as a means of magnifying them.

In other words, Rousseau seems to be suggesting, in the 'rich man' passage, that an individual with a well-developed sense of taste will be able to conquer

⁵⁰ For discussions of how Emile's governor, Jean-Jacques, seeks to deal with amour-propre over the course of his education, see Jonathan Marks, 'Rousseau's Challenge to Locke (and to Us)', in *The Challenge of Rousseau*, ed. Eve Grace and Christopher Kelly (Cambridge, 2013); and Neuhausser, *Rousseau's Theodicy of Self-Love*, pp. 171–80. Even Neuhausser, who has made the most forceful and detailed case to date that Rousseau thinks amour-propre can take positive as well as negative forms, accepts that getting it to take a positive form would require 'highly unusual and demanding conditions . . . not merely a godlike legislator and an improbably wise tutor but also a complete wiping clean of the historical slate (in the case of politics) and total seclusion from the particular bonds of family (in the case of education)'. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

amour-propre, or at least to avoid its harmful forms.⁵¹ Such an individual would see that *true* pleasure and *true* happiness require ignoring what other people think, or at least avoiding the abuses of wealth and power that expose us to their scorn. Of course, this means of checking amour-propre and channelling it towards beneficial ends appears to be conspicuously (and suspiciously) *easy*, compared to the others that Rousseau identifies elsewhere in his works. Rich Rousseau avoids the ills of amour-propre not as the result of denaturing legislation, a painstaking education, or a complete withdrawal from the presence of others, but rather simply through ‘voluptuousness’ or the love of pleasure itself — that is, through seeking pleasure *right*. He does not so much transcend amour-propre, or soar above it, as avoid its destructive manifestations through a kind of refined sensuality or purified hedonism.

At one point, Rousseau seems to have toyed with the idea that this lesson in taste is one that virtually anyone can learn. In one of the manuscript versions of *Emile*, in a paragraph that appears crossed out immediately prior to the ‘rich man’ passage, he had written: ‘Come then, gaudy imbecile, who puts your [pleasure] only in someone else’s opinion, let me teach you to taste it by yourself. Learn to flatter your senses, rich beast; acquire some taste, and you will enjoy.’⁵² Here Rousseau indicates that he is capable of imparting true taste, or a taste for the kinds of pleasures that do not depend on the opinions of others, even to a ‘gaudy imbecile’ (*fastueux imbécile*) or ‘rich beast’ (*riche brute*) — presumably, given the placement of this paragraph, through the narrative of the ‘rich man’ passage itself. However, the very fact that Rousseau crossed out and then removed these lines should give us pause; it seems that he had second thoughts on this score. Adding to the uncertainty is the fact that we are never told, in the ‘rich man’ passage, where rich Rousseau’s extraordinary sense of taste came from — whether, for instance, it is somehow innate, or the result of his upbringing, or hard-won experience, or philosophical reflection. Given that so many of Rousseau’s writings focus on *how* given individuals and societies emerge, or could emerge — how civilization developed out of the state of nature, how a truly legitimate state could be established under the right conditions, how an ordinary child could be raised to be a healthy adult, how he himself grew to be as he is — the fact that rich Rousseau appears on the scene essentially *ex nihilo* is rather striking, and doubt-instilling.

More generally, if Rousseau were really suggesting that it is possible to avoid the destructive consequences of amour-propre simply through the intelligent

⁵¹ Recall also that one of the key aims of Emile’s education in taste is to help raise him above opinion even further (see pp. 350–4).

⁵² See the editorial note in the Pléiade edition of Rousseau, *Émile, ou de l’éducation*, p. 1621, note (a) to p. 677. A nearly identical passage appears in one of Rousseau’s fragments on taste, and I have drawn heavily on the translation found in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, Vol. 11, ed. Christopher Kelly (Hanover NH, 2005), p. 18.

pursuit of pleasure — that this is truly a viable option for most people — it would represent a remarkable retraction of everything else he wrote on the subject (including the rest of *Emile*). The fact that virtually everyone in the modern world *does* experience harmful forms of amour-propre indicates either that most people do not share rich Rousseau's sense of taste or that they find themselves unable to act on it, for one reason or another. It seems safe to say that Rousseau did not truly expect his readers to quit their jobs and renounce their familial, political and religious obligations in order to enjoy a life of leisure in the country among their friends.

What, then, was Rousseau seeking to accomplish in the 'rich man' passage? Why did he write it at all? The question of Rousseau's intention(s) with respect to his expected readership(s) is a notoriously thorny one,⁵³ but we can conclude by venturing some suggestions on this score. On the level of theory, this passage does seem to be what it professes to be: an attempt to outline Rousseau's views regarding what true taste entails and what true happiness would require. In other words, there is no reason to question his statement that 'this is a kind of essay on true taste in the choice of agreeable leisure', describing 'the spirit in which a person enjoys himself' (p. 354), simply because the ideal it describes is unlikely to be put into practice. After all, Rousseau never hesitated to devote enormous efforts to describing unrealizable ideals, such as a state of nature to which we can never return, a legitimate state that cannot be established in the modern world, an ideal education that is impossible to implement, and a way of life (his own) that is the product of a unique temperament and unique circumstances.⁵⁴ Moreover, the ideal of the 'rich man' passage is perfectly consistent with what Rousseau says about happiness elsewhere in his works — for instance, that true happiness requires a kind of inner tranquillity rather than the endless pursuit of one goal after the next; that it is disrupted by unfulfilled desires, and hence is to be found in a posture of moderation rather than one of conquest; that it entails a long-lasting state of contentment rather than brief moments of intense bliss; and that it requires enjoying the present moment rather than looking constantly to the past or the future.⁵⁵ The model of the 'rich man' passage may in fact represent the happiest *imaginable* way of life, in Rousseau's view, even if amour-propre prevents us from realizing it.

⁵³ For a helpful summary of some of the most prominent answers to this question, and a striking suggestion as to Rousseau's *true* aims, see Melzer, *The Natural Goodness of Man*, ch. 13.

⁵⁴ For an argument that Rousseau himself saw all of these ideals as ultimately unrealizable in the modern world, see Dennis C. Rasmussen, *The Problems and Promise of Commercial Society: Adam Smith's Response to Rousseau* (University Park PA, 2008), ch. 1, especially pp. 40–8.

⁵⁵ On these four points, see, respectively, Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, pp. 187, 197; Rousseau, *Emile*, p. 80; Rousseau, *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, p. 68; and *ibid.*, pp. 68–9.

On the level of practice, Rousseau may have hoped that the ‘rich man’ passage would help to impart a general preference for rural simplicity over urban sophistication to his readers. Even if they cannot overcome or avoid amour-propre, it would seem that anyone can move out to the country and thereby replicate at least *some* of the healthy aspects of rich Rousseau’s way of life. This goal is manifest in many of Rousseau’s works, including not only the rest of *Emile* — with its description of Emile and Sophie’s domestic bliss in their country retreat (see p. 474) — but also in works that have a clear, and explicitly stated, practical intention. For instance, Rousseau’s epistolary novel *Julie, or the New Heloise*, the most widely read of his works during his lifetime, offers a similar portrait in the idyll of Clarens. In the ‘second preface’ to the work, Rousseau suggests that one of his aims in writing it was to

give men the love of a regular and simple life; cure them of the whims of opinion; restore their taste for true pleasures; make them love solitude and peace; keep them at some distance from each other; and instead of inciting them to pile into the Cities, motivate them to spread themselves evenly across the territory to invigorate its every part.

He seeks to do all of this by ‘demonstrating to well-to-do people that rustic life and agriculture offer pleasures they cannot know’ and that ‘a man of merit who wanted to retire to the country with his family and become his own farmer could lead a life just as blissful there as in the midst of City entertainments’.⁵⁶ Similarly, the last of the ‘Moral Letters’ that Rousseau wrote for Sophie d’Houdetot recommends that every month she take a break of two or three days from the diversions and dealings of Paris to seek solitude in the country, in order to ‘taste the retired and rustic life’.⁵⁷ It is worth noting, however, that even in this respect the ‘rich man’ passage stands out as a distinctive ideal: the model of *Julie*, like that of Emile and Sophie, is a domestic or family-oriented one, while Rousseau advises Sophie d’Houdetot to ‘make a law for yourself to live alone’ during her stays in the country — a sort of temporary version of Rousseau’s life as a solitary dreamer.⁵⁸ Rich Rousseau is unique in living in the country not alone or with his family, but rather with his friends.

Yet there are signs that Rousseau regarded even the hope that his readers would be inspired to adopt a simple country life — of whatever kind, and however temporarily — as likely to remain unfulfilled. Earlier in Book 4 of *Emile*, he had explained why people find narratives like that of the ‘rich man’ passage so appealing:

⁵⁶ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Julie, or the New Heloise*, in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, Vol. 6, ed. Philip Stewart and Jean Vaché (Hanover NH, 1997 [1761]), p. 15. See also the discussion of ‘the art of living’ in the second letter of Part 5 of this work.

⁵⁷ See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, ‘Moral Letters’, in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, Vol. 12, ed. Christopher Kelly (Hanover NH, 2006), pp. 199–202.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

We are touched by the happiness of certain conditions — for example, of the rustic and pastoral life. The charm of seeing those good people happy is not poisoned by envy; we are truly interested in them. Why is this? Because we feel that we are the masters of descending to this condition of peace and innocence and of enjoying the same felicity. It is a resource for a rainy day which causes only agreeable ideas, since in order to be able to make use of it, it suffices to want to do so. There is always pleasure in seeing our resources, in contemplating our own goods, even when we do not wish to make use of them (p. 223).⁵⁹

While we generally find ‘the rustic and pastoral life’ charming, the fact that we tend to regard it as ‘a resource for a rainy day’ means that we never actually choose to live such a life *now*. As the opening lines of Book 4 indicate, we rarely (if ever) stop to savour life, to be happy in the present; we spend the vast majority of our lives toiling and stocking up resources for a rainy day that never arrives (see p. 211; see also pp. 410–11). Thus, not only does Rousseau believe that we, his modern readers, are incapable of replicating the ideal of the ‘rich man’ passage in its entirety due to our amour-propre, he does not even expect us to approximate it to the best of our abilities. In the end, then, a consideration of even this most optimistic of Rousseauan passages ultimately leaves his essential pessimism firmly intact.

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⁵⁹ This paragraph, incidentally, may help to explain what Rousseau meant when he claimed that rich Rousseau’s sense of taste is ‘more evident and closer to the morals of the reader’ than Emile’s is (p. 344): not that Rousseau’s readers share all of rich Rousseau’s attributes or even that they are capable of replicating them, but rather that his example is likely to appeal to them. For a different but related suggestion on this score, see Denise Schaeffer, *Rousseau on Education, Freedom, and Judgment* (University Park, PA, 2014), pp. 130–2.