

**Rousseau      Rousseau**  
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**Criticism     Critique**

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# Rousseau and Modern Feminism

## I. Introduction

This paper takes a fresh look at the approach Rousseau takes towards women in his writings.<sup>1</sup> This is a crucial question because Rousseau's "traditional" or "patriarchal" view of women and the relegation of women in his theoretical writings to a specific role (or set of roles) seem to run counter to his more generalized goal of attaining personal and political authenticity for all human beings. In our analysis of the various scholarly approaches regarding this issue, we advance a new theory of Rousseau's relationship to feminism that accounts for his position within 18th-century liberal political thought as well as his nascent critique of that system.

## II. The State of the Question

It is possible to divide contemporary commentary regarding Rousseau's stance on women into three approaches. The first of these approaches involves reading Rousseau as being basically sympathetic to women's concerns--as he is to all issues of human development--albeit within the context of traditional social arrangements. This may be said to constitute the "taking-Rousseau-at-face-value" approach to characterizing Rousseau's writings on women.

More recently, however, a second approach has made itself felt. Rousseau's consistence as a political and social thinker has been challenged by critics who argue that Rousseau compromises his intellectual integrity by relegating women to a segregated domestic sphere, where the height of women's achievement consists of nurturing the future *male* citizens of the politically authentic State.<sup>2</sup> For these

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<sup>1</sup> This is not an anachronistic question. Women in the 18th century - for example Mary Wollstonecraft - berated Rousseau for what appeared to them as his misogyny and for the contradiction that existed between men's freedom in the political sphere and women's restriction to the domestic one.

<sup>2</sup> See Susan Moller Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought* (especially chapters 5-9 ). For more on Rousseau's misogyny, see, among others:

- Ron Christiansen, "The Political Theory of Male Chauvinism: Rousseau's Paradigm" in *The Midwest Quarterly* XIII:3, Spring 1972 pp. 291-299.
- Zillah R. Eisenstein, *The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism*

scholars, Rousseau's critical attitude towards women can be explained at best by reference to the accepted patriarchy of the times in which he wrote; at worst, by their admission, on Rousseau's behalf, of his misogyny. On the other hand, a third view contends that to apply 20th-century criteria of equality to Rousseau's 18th-century writings is to (deliberately) misconstrue the import of his work. These critics argue that Rousseau's interpretation of women should be understood as neither feminist nor misogynist but instead as adhering to a third approach.<sup>3</sup> Joel Schwartz's understanding of Rousseau as advocating "sexual interdependence" may be read in this vein.

Faced with such a plethora of interpretative strategies, prudence would indicate a re-examination of the evidence. A brief overview of the major questions in this dispute forms the subject of the next section of this paper.

### III. The Nature of the Evidence

Most critical evaluations of Rousseau's writings on women have centered--and foundered--on Rousseau's literary works.<sup>4</sup> There

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Northeastern University Press, Boston 1981 especially pp. 55-89.

- Lydia Lange, "Rousseau and Modern Feminism" in Shanley & Pateman, *Feminist Interpretations and Political Theory* Pennsylvania State University Press 1991.
- Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* Stanford University Press 1988 (especially pp. 96-99).
- Victor G. Wexler, "Made for Man's Delight: Rousseau as Anti-Feminist" *American Historical Review* 18:1, 1976, pp. 266-291.

<sup>3</sup> Elshtain, for example, writes about "combative" and "assimilationist" strategies of reading. See *Meditations on Modern Political Thought* pp. 1-4).

<sup>4</sup> That is not to say that no other texts aside from Rousseau's novels have anything to say on Rousseau's conception of women. Certainly Rousseau's *Letter to d'Alembert on the Theater*, with its recommendation of segregated lifestyles for men and women, has come in for its share of criticism (see Okin, *op. cit.*). However, it is possible to claim that the *Letter to d'Alembert* may be more profitably read as a commentary on how inauthenticity can contain within itself the remnants of authenticity that still exist in the modern, depraved world of the 18th century. For more on this see my *The Politics of Ambiguity* (University of California Press,

are two obvious reasons for stressing these works in a consideration of Rousseau's approach to women. The first is the issue of form: especially in the 18th century, novels were deemed to be a "lighter" form of literature particularly well-suited to the intellectual capacities of their target female audience. The second is in terms of content: women and their concerns form the major topic of these novel-like works. Fully one section of *Émile* is devoted to the character Sophie, *Émile*'s future wife. Just in case we miss the greater theoretical ramifications of this section, this portion of the book is also subtitled "La femme", making it clear that what Rousseau says here bears on all women in general and is not just confined to the (admittedly fictional) events of Sophie's personal life.

The dual purpose to which the section entitled "La femme" is put makes perfect sense in the context of what Rousseau is trying to accomplish in the larger setting of *Émile*. We recall that at the beginning of the book, Rousseau states his aim of creating a man who would be able to function in all circumstances.<sup>5</sup> In this context, it becomes particularly important for Rousseau to hone *Émile*'s level of survivability to its highest point. To this end, *Émile*'s choice of spouse and the conduct of their married life have important social and political ramifications that extend beyond the personal happiness of this particular couple.

What appears to strike a discordant note in this narrative--while simultaneously supporting those critics who view Rousseau as a misogynist or person of *mauvaise foi*--is the nature of the person presented to *Émile* as the ideal spouse. Sophie is raised to be complementary to *Émile*, but not in the sense that she is to imitate his quest for authenticity--understood as the attainment of an honest and dynamic sense of Self.<sup>6</sup> Rather, Sophie is to dedicate her life to enable

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forthcoming).

<sup>5</sup> "Nous approchons de l'état de crise et du siècle de révolutions." *Émile* III pp. 468-469; Bloom p. 194.

<sup>6</sup> The notion here is of *perfectibilité* which Rousseau heralds in *Discourse on Inequality* as the hallmark of humanity. See Rousseau's comment on perfectibility as being an integral character-istic of human development (here, of human language): "la perfectibilité qui en dépend" (*Discourse on Inequality* p. 149). This particular reading of perfectibility as expressive of humanity is taken from Bernard Yack's *The Longing for Total*

Émile to achieve *his* own perfectibilité. In other words, Sophie's role is entirely secondary and derivative. Sophie's own attainment of perfection is valorized to the extent that she is willing (in Kantian terms) to serve as a means for Émile, instead of as an end in her own right. To this end, Sophie's education is entirely subordinated to Émile's needs. Émile's education is to be characterized by its explorative nature that is designed to foster in him a spirit of critical inquiry. However, Sophie's course of study emphasizes her unquestioning acceptance of her father's--and later, her husband's--opinions. Émile's education is "negative" in the sense that preconceived ideas are unacceptable and the only necessity admissible is the necessity of things. Sophie's education, on the other hand, is negative in its entire thrust: the mark of its success is that at its conclusion, all individuality on Sophie's part has been negated. Sophie is not permitted to think or to have opinions of her own. The reason for this is quite practical. Any possibility of intellectual independence on Sophie's part might lead her to have an agenda of her own which could, in turn, dissuade her from placing her own primary emphasis on Émile's attainment of perfectibility. To this end, Sophie's education remains contingent: she is taught only what she needs to know to run a household and be a good wife and mother. In Rousseau's words, Sophie is "prepared ground" for Émile to fashion to his liking.

The heroine in Rousseau's romantic novel, *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, does not fare much better. *La Nouvelle Héloïse* tells a more typical story of romantic frustration. The young protagonist, Julie, is prevented from marrying her untitled lover and is instead forced to marry an old comrade-in-arms of her father who, like Julie, is of noble birth. As Susan Moller Okin points out, *La Nouvelle Héloïse* strictly adheres to the requirements of a patriarchy-controlled world.<sup>7</sup> Julie is constantly torn between the wills of three men: her father, her lover, and her husband.

As we have already noted, these standard readings of both *Émile* and *La Nouvelle Héloïse* fit comfortably with the view that Rousseau, for all his liberating language when speaking of the human and political rights of *men*, is sadly lacking when it comes to dealing with those same rights as they apply to *women*. To be sure, alternative

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*Revolution*, particularly chapters 2-3.

<sup>7</sup> Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought* p. 174.

interpretations to these narratives do exist. The dominant trend in adhering to this latter view has been to stress Rousseau's emphasis on cooperation as the key to a successful spousal relationship. Joel Schwartz (echoed by Jean Bethke Elshtain) claims that Rousseau recognized that the interdependence of both men and women was the salient factor in the relationship between the sexes.<sup>8</sup> Using this alternate approach, the concept of interdependence reveals the simplistic element inherent in interpreting Rousseau as a traditional misogynist. This criticism of the standard reading of Rousseau-as-misogynist resonates more when we recognize that Rousseau does give Sophie a role that is more complex than that of the mindless subservient wife. Sophie's task is to socialize Émile through love, a crucial undertaking in view of the larger social and political ramifications of Émile's own attainment of authenticity. The simplistic interpretation of the character of Sophie is further belied by the fact that Sophie is allowed to choose her own spouse. Moreover, she is expected to monitor Émile's adherence to the moral code which will foster lives based on personal and political authenticity.

It is admittedly more difficult to interpret *La Nouvelle Héloïse* according to this "interdependent" approach, perhaps because the plot of the novel conforms so well to the accepted structure of the love triad: Julie undergoes the trials of patriarchal domination, ostensibly accepts the reality of social mores, and finally dies in a chaste though frustrated position. One could perhaps claim that Julie's unremitting efforts to communalize the spirit of love at Clarens represents an extension of Schwartz's notion of sexual interdependence. Still, that would be stretching the meaning of the term "interdependence" beyond all recognition, substituting a vague notion of brotherhood and comity for what Schwartz would claim is Rousseau's concept of a dynamic interrelationship between the sexes. The truth is that Schwartz's understanding of interdependence adds little to grasping the workings of the plot in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. Moreover, it fails to explain why the experiment at Clarens, which appears to work admirably, inexplicably collapses upon itself at Julie's death. This becomes painfully evident when, despite all Julie's protestations and reworkings of her concepts of love and happiness, Julie on her deathbed confesses that she has always been unhappy at Clarens. That

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<sup>8</sup> Joel Schwartz, *The Sexual Politics of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, especially pp. 150-153.

revelation is crucial because Julie had always looked upon happiness as a moral barometer. In that vein, she had always regarded the propensity of the rational system of management at Clarens to achieve happiness as a potent indicator of the estate's ethical claims on her loyalty. The fact that Julie's expectations on this point are dashed thus casts the moral and social systems of Clarens into severe doubt.

The conclusion that seems to follow is that none of the previous approaches categorizing Rousseau's views on women seems to fully account for the way in which women are actually treated in Rousseau's works. Accepting Rousseau's account of women as basically sympathetic clearly discounts much of what he actually says about women. On the other hand, the traditional view of "Rousseau-as-misogynist" ignores the elements of mutuality and the subtle shadings that complicate the relationship between the sexes, as demonstrated particularly in *Émile*. Similarly, the apologist view of "Rousseau-as-advocate-of-sexual-interdependence" too readily glosses over the negative implications of some of Rousseau's most cherished beliefs regarding the position and character of women. Any one of these approaches, slavishly followed, implicitly disregards Rousseau as a serious critical thinker by ignoring some portion of Rousseau's pronouncements on women. More fundamentally, this dichotomous approach to Rousseau's thinking about women neglects to integrate Rousseau's thinking on that subject with his political and social thought in general.

In view of these major deficiencies in the current interpretative stances on Rousseau's thinking on women, an alternate approach suggests itself. This fourth approach concentrates on a dynamic interpretation of Rousseau's understanding of women that is integrated with Rousseau's overall political and social concerns. To arrive at this understanding of Rousseau's writings, we must first ascertain why Rousseau's actual depiction of women in the fictional universe he creates for them consistently fails to support any of the other theoretical approaches that claim to encapsulate Rousseau's interpretative stance on women. We shall see that the fate of the women in Rousseau's literary works does not favor a despotic, patriarchal stance towards women, and certainly does not uphold a "mutually supportive" interpretation of their role. Rather, the fate of women in Rousseau's works serves to undermine the theoretical basis of Rousseau's universe. Ironically, the fate of Rousseau's women casts doubt upon the very patriarchal structures that Rousseau's texts are seen as supporting.

#### IV. The Evidence in the Text

In both *Émile* and *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, women serve as the linchpins in both the personal and social structures: the achievement of authenticity for everyone--the attainment of an honest and dynamic sense of Self--is predicated upon its attainment and dissemination by women.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, the failure of the women to achieve authenticity--indeed, their lot as victims of inauthenticity--carries with it grave social and political implications. At the end of *Émile*, even Émile openly opts out of authenticity and political freedom, declaring himself to be free in his chains.<sup>10</sup> Rousseau's noble experiment in education appears to have failed not only the distaff side of Rousseau's much touted New Couple, but also the protagonist of the experiment. Even in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, where the denizens of Clarens have ostensibly achieved authenticity, closer analysis reveals that its actual attainment is more illusory than real. At the end of the novel, Julie repudiates the values that she had adopted upon her marriage to Wolmar as false and misleading. In truth, authenticity had been no more within her grasp than within Émile's. *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, however, goes beyond *Émile* in alerting us to an additional danger lurking in the quest for authenticity. *Émile* reveals how authenticity can simply or perversely elude us. *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, on the other hand, demonstrates how the quest for authenticity can be rendered nearly futile because inauthenticity can masquerade as authenticity. At Clarens, the manipulation lurking just below the peaceful surface of the estate manages to disguise and present itself as the only possible and rational way of conducting one's life. In that way, the inhabitants of Clarens are prevented from ever realizing their authenticity, because they as a matter of course embrace the very inauthenticity that is the source of their downfall.

The fact that Rousseau's heroines fail to achieve the authenticity that Rousseau sets out as their ultimate goal points to the moral bankruptcy of the social and political system that surrounds

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<sup>9</sup> This can be seen in the importance that Rousseau places on lactation, and the fact that women are placed in charge of preserving the standards of morality and decency in inauthentic society. On this see especially Books I and V of *Émile*.

<sup>10</sup> "J'en devenois plus homme et cessant d'être Citoyen, je suis plus libre qu'auparavant" *Émile et Sophie ou les Solitaires* letter 2 pp. 912; 916.

them. Consequently, if Rousseau is to be taken at all as a serious and consistent thinker, Rousseau's presentation of this traditional patriarchal society cannot be confused with a benign acceptance of the status quo, with women summarily relegated to their "separate sphere" in the background. Thus, the first view of Rousseau as clinging to traditional notions of acceptable social arrangements is clearly faulty. On the other hand, the portrayal of Rousseau as a self-satisfied misogynist totally ignores Rousseau's sympathy for the plight of women caught in the middle of a system whose cards are clearly stacked against them. This is particularly evident in Rousseau's depiction of Julie's cousin Claire, who deliberately manipulates the system in order to ensure herself the maximum potential freedom, even while she realizes that the attainment of ultimate personal authenticity is not likely to lie within her grasp.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the second view of "Rousseau as traditional misogynist" does not succeed either in capturing the essence of Rousseau's stance towards women.

Taking matters a step further, Schwartz's characterization of Rousseau's evaluation of the relationships between men and women as "interdependent" also fails to capture the nature of Rousseau's approach to women. As we shall see, the complexity inherent in Rousseau's notion of ambiguity, and his insistence on coming to terms successfully with ambiguity as a vital prerequisite to the attainment of authenticity reveals a dynamism far greater than that inherent in Schwartz's understanding of "interdependence". That is why, as we have noted above, Schwartz's apologia for Rousseau--the "third" approach--often seems forced and adds little of real interpretative value to Rousseau's understanding of social and political change.

Truth to tell, we as readers recognize that the failure of the protagonists' projects in *Émile* and *La Nouvelle Héloïse*-- both works written as exemplars of how Rousseau's theories would work to achieve the goals set forth for their protagonists--can give rise to a certain amount of despair. Still, reducing Rousseau's novels to exercises in self-indulgent pathos, like reading them as simplistic misogynistic tracts, does not reveal their contribution to Rousseau's social and political thought. To do that, we have to read the novels in a different light: not as prescriptions for *the* one right method to

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<sup>11</sup> "Je me suis mise à faire la veuve coquette assés bien pour t'y tromper toi-même. C'est une rolle ... j'ai employé cet air"; *La Nouvelle Héloïse* IV,2 p. 407.

attain authenticity, but rather as indicative of different ways in which authenticity *might* be achieved. For this, we must recall that in Rousseau's attempt to establish authenticity in the corrupt world of 18th-century France, he consciously rejects cataclysmic revolution as his method of choice. This is because Rousseau reckons that the dislocation and upheaval that revolution engenders are at least as bad as the inauthenticity that it eradicates.<sup>12</sup> Rousseau's solution--reflected both in Rousseau's sketch of Émile's and Sophie's future life together and in his depiction of the estate at Clarens--is to root the establishment of permanent authenticity and political transformation in the incremental change of everyday life. This has important consequences for the theory of revolution in general, and the position of women in particular.

The location of political revolution in the quotidian forcibly negates the cut-and-dried dualistic concept of politics and political change that had heretofore obtained. This approach refuses to see everyday life as inevitably detracting from the heights of political activity (Plato), or as completely separate from and irrelevant to political life (as evident in the liberal political thought of the 17th and 18th centuries).<sup>13</sup> Rejecting these rigid dichotomous approaches allows Rousseau to insist that political change can never follow a formula and therefore cannot be limited to one definite path. On the contrary, argues Rousseau, the salient characteristic of politics, as of life, is its

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<sup>12</sup> "Comme quelques maladies bouleversent la tête des hommes; les révolutions font sur le peuple ce que certaines maladies font sur les individus" *Social Contract* II,8 p. 385.

<sup>13</sup> In his approach to the political significance of daily life, Rousseau distinguishes himself from both his classical and liberal precursors. Unlike Plato, who viewed the structures of daily life as inherently antithetical to the higher consciousness required for the attainment of the just political State, Rousseau demonstrates the positive contributions of everyday structures like the family to political life. Contemporary liberal political thought of the 17th and 18th centuries, on the other hand, tended to see the private sphere as completely separate from the public realm, and hence irrelevant to it and therefore unimportant. Rousseau is likewise unsympathetic to this view, demonstrating the interconnectedness between the private and public realms and consequently the immense *political* significance of the quotidian.

ambiguity.<sup>14</sup> Hence, the successful attainment of authenticity is contingent upon the ability to deal with ambiguity. Rousseau gives many examples throughout his work, and particularly in his novels, of how ambiguity is central to the changes and development that life brings.<sup>15</sup> In many ways, the failure of Rousseau's heroines to achieve authenticity can be traced to their inability to deal with life's ambiguities. Sophie cannot deal with modern life beyond her sheltered cocoon in the country, while Julie to the very end refuses to acknowledge the inauthenticity that really prevails at Clarens.

This fourth approach, which strives to understand Rousseau's treatment of women against the background of his social and political thought, does not yield a formula that explicates either Rousseau's conception of women or the process of political change. Still, for all its traditional language of "family life" and "private sphere," the revolution inherent in locating political change in what is normally considered to be the banalities of everyday life greatly empowers women. This is true both according to the traditional notions of women as "guardians of the hearth," and according to Rousseau's more dynamic situation of women as central to the domestic education of children--i.e. their education into authenticity in the midst of a depraved and inauthentic world. Thus, by erasing the liberal

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<sup>14</sup> One example of this is Rousseau's refusal to single out one absolutely best form of government for all times and places: "Quand donc on demande absolument quel est le meilleur Gouvernement, on fait ne question insoluble comme indéterminée; ou si l'on veut, elle a autant de bonnes solutions qu'il y a de combinaisons possibles dans les positions absolues et relatives du peuples"; *Social Contract* III,9 p. 419.

<sup>15</sup> Emphasized repeatedly in the novels is the idea that the world is continuous rather than dichotomous. This is in direct opposition to the classical and liberal penchant for dichotomy - nature vs. civilization; private vs. public; emotional vs. rational; "best" vs. "worst" types of government. While Rousseau does present certain of his conceptions as polar opposites, this is done for ease of explication, and it soon becomes obvious that one end of the continuum implies the other. Thus, for example, in his evaluation of love, Rousseau's description of the difficulties of love derive from the fact that certain aspects of the "bad" sort of love - amour-propre - are to be found in the "good" kind of love - amour de soi. ("L'amour de soi mis en fermentation devient amour-propre"; *Lettre à Christophe de Beaumont* in *OC* IV p. 936). Similarly, Rousseau's two notions of pity are revealed to be complementary rather than antagonistic in nature.

dichotomy between the private and public spheres, Rousseau's traditional location of women within their own "separate sphere" may be less confining than it may at first appear. In sum, the very traditional sobriety of Rousseau's language when speaking of women masks a potent new origin of political power which, when examined carefully, can serve as a source of concrete political change.

## V. Afterword

The reversal in the traditional concepts of the sources of political power and change, and the relationship between everyday life and politics, sets Rousseau's thought apart from the accepted political verities of his time. Yet in another, perhaps deeper, sense, Rousseau was very much in tune with 18th-century political thought as it was expressed in the writings of his revolutionary counterparts in the New World across the Atlantic. Their sense of the power of politics, while limited, allowed for the greater expression of human freedom than had heretofore been known.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, Rousseau's understanding of the political, while less sublime than that espoused by classical political thought, yields more in actual practical hope for the average citizen whose survival depends on the achievement of real political change.<sup>17</sup> It is perhaps not altogether surprising that, from the depths of the 18th

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<sup>16</sup> On the limitations of human perfection, there is the famous pronouncement of the *Federalist*: "But what is government itself but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary" (#51, p. 322 ed. Clinton Rossiter NAL/Mentor 1961). Consequently, Madison recommends a limited government of separated powers. Interestingly, it is the limited nature of the government which, although it reflects the imperfection of its originators, also guarantees for them the greatest sphere of freedom of action that had heretofore been known. The tone of the *Federalist* - an admittedly conservative tract with revolutionary intentions - supports both a skeptical approach to the potential powers of government to accomplish totalizing change together with an exalted appreciation of the human potential to act upon and change the surrounding environment.

<sup>17</sup> The authors of the *Federalist*, like Rousseau himself, declined to identify the form of government that would be the best for all time and seasons. They were similarly modest about rating their own enterprise: "I am persuaded that it is the best which our political situation, habits, and opinions will admit, and superior to any the revolution has produced" (#85 p. 523).

century, Rousseau continues to speak to us as well. Rousseau rejects the notion of reality as confined to the dualistic and dichotomous and insists on a more nuanced and complex understanding of the world around us. This, in turn, leaves us with a legacy of hope in trying to liberate our notions of male and female, equality and difference, from the exclusive straitjackets of meaning imposed by a world that dualism and dichotomy have rendered both frighteningly atomistic and totalitarian.<sup>18</sup> In this regard, Rousseau's expression of the tensions he discovers in the liberal patriarchal world can be said to prefigure many of our own philosophic concerns.<sup>19</sup> Of course, we may wonder why Rousseau chose to express his thoughts on women in the traditional, repressive manner that he did. Suffice it to say that in many ways, Rousseau's 18th-century reaction to anticipated change mirrors much of our own apprehension at contemporary instances of social and political re-ordering.<sup>20</sup> Unfortunately, as we have already seen,

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<sup>18</sup> The point is that a world categorized into exclusive domains holds only the mirage of liberty and autonomy. The reality, as Kai Nielson points out in "Feminist Theory - Some Twistings and Turnings" (in Hanen & Nielson, eds: "Science, Morality and Feminist Theory" *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* Supplementary Volume 13 University of Calgary Press 1987 pp. 383-418) is more often alienating and oppressive.

<sup>19</sup> Lorraine Code, "Second Persons" pp. 357-382, *ibid.* We may further add that in his emphasis on the relative and not absolute goodness of any particular political choice, in his valorization of everyday life and in his specific preference for incremental change as opposed to the heroics of cataclysmic revolution, Rousseau might be styled as the first (prototypical) post-modernist!

<sup>20</sup> Rousseau's lapse into accepted patriarchal terminology regarding the "sphere of domesticity" and "women's enlightened role" is gloomily prescient regarding contemporary reactions to the inner contradictions of liberal political theory. Modern reactions to the polarities engendered by liberal political theory broadly adhere to either "radical/restructuring" approaches (avoid contradictions by advancing new totalizing political theories) or "conservative" solutions (tinkering with liberalism, or, alternatively, insisting that the inauthenticity of yesterday is really the new authenticity of today - e.g. Barbara Dafoe Whitehead's "new familism" in *Family Affairs* Summer 1992 vol. 5 nos. 1-2). In this context, Rousseau's advocacy of the second tack strikes one less as inexplicably hypocritical than an acknowledgement of one way in which we still at times try to deal with

Rousseau, while subtly pointing out the different ways in which things do not quite go "right," does not explain precisely how these inequities may be remedied. In the final analysis, the challenges that Rousseau poses to us have yet to be met. Still, we can take a measure of comfort from the fact that his words can provide us with at least some of the tools needed for their fulfilment.

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contradictions that impress us both as untenable and unavoidable.