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Jean-Jacques Rousseau: The Artist as Parent

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The childhood of artists has long been a fertile area for psychobiographical study, but the examination of artist as parent is relatively rare, and we tend to generalize from random impressions. Many artist-parents have been notorious failures: Goethe's only son was an undistinguished alcoholic who died young; Melville's son committed suicide. But others like Johann Sebastian Bach or Charles Dickens had large families to whom they were passionately devoted and who, on the whole, did very well.

Still, the impression persists that artists generally are less successful as parents than the norm (whatever that may be). The very artist who so often presents his own self—the work—to the world for admiration and confirmation of his innate perfection sometimes lacks the stability of self and empathic inventory that make for a good parent. One thinks here of the unavailable mother in Bergman's film *Autumn Sonata* or the father in *Through a Glass Darkly* who keeps perceptive notes about his disintegrating children, but is unable to relate to them in a way that will help them. But is this type of artist really different from many other people in this respect? Could not the same picture be drawn of other famous, academic, or public people, or of anyone in any field who has driving ambition and strong narcissistic needs? Besides, as little as we know about the lives of artists, we know even less about their wives, who are really the primary influence on their children in the crucial stages. Not only have most artists been men, but those women who were able to overcome the formidable obstacles to recognition that stood in their way have seldom had the time, energy, or inclination to attain motherhood. The artist as parent is mainly a father.

In the present study, I wish to examine the raising of one specific child by a

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famous creative man: Jean-Jacques Rousseau's brainchild "Emile," the subject of his fictional account of the total care and upbringing of a mythical boy from his birth until his marriage at the age of twenty-five. *Emile* is a decisively important book in the history of human thought. Aside from its global assessment of the human condition, it was probably the first genuinely psychological text ever written on the raising of children and specifically laid the foundation for the subsequent development of the progressive movement in education and the spirit of libertarian permissiveness which challenged the authoritarian tradition and is so much a component of our liberal Western culture.

In spite of this, the book is seldom read. I myself failed to do so many years ago when I wrote a psychological study to Rousseau's *Confessions* (Kligerman, 1951). First of all, it had a reputation for sentimental quaintness little related to the realities of life. Second, there were aspects of Rousseau's own life, to be discussed later, that would make one skeptical of his credibility in the area of parenthood. And finally, the existing translation seemed so dull. But the recent publication of a first-rate translation of *Emile* by Allan Bloom (Rousseau, 1762) induced me to try again, and I now have no question that this is an exciting masterwork of the first magnitude, of powerful relevance not only to the subject of this essay, but to the world we live in.

Emile was "born," or at least first published in 1762 when Rousseau the father-governor was fifty years old. Jean-Jacques obtained this healthy normal baby boy at birth and piloted him carefully through the course of five books. What were the guiding principles that were followed during this journey?

Book I treats of infancy. Rousseau, who lost his own mother at birth, was passionately insistent on the need for maternal breast-feeding and roundly faulted the fashionable ladies of Paris for abandoning this practice. He made astute observations of the early symbiotic mutuality of mother and child, and concluded that the benefit came mainly from this emotional interaction and that therefore a wet nurse was an inadequate substitute for the mother. Why entrust a child to a woman who has abandoned her own for gain? Yet, bowing to necessity, Rousseau was willing to compromise by insisting that the nurse be carefully chosen for her warm, maternal qualities.

He also despised the practice of swaddling and believed that children should be given maximal freedom—they would not hurt themselves appreciably if the environment was correctly arranged and they were properly watched.

The above examples already illustrate some of the most central features of Rousseau's thinking:

1. Man is born naturally free, happy, whole, and well adapted to what we would term an empathic environment.
2. Man is corrupted, made vicious, and ruined by contact with people who impose arbitrary, often hostile restrictions, frustrations, commands, rules, etc.
3. These negative reactions do not occur if the frustration is imposed by

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Nature. The child responds calmly and realistically to necessity. If it rains, if there are no more cookies, etc., he does not react with the angry rebellion that is aroused when sources of gratification are willfully withheld. There is nothing personal about the deprivations of Nature, but deprivations caused by men lead to tendencies toward domination or enslavement.

According to Rousseau natural man does everything in his own favor—"he is numerical unity"—*numero uno*! He has *amour de soi*—a natural, wholesome self love free of conflict. But civilized man, subject to the will, opinions, and noxious influences of others, has his *amour de soi* transformed into *amour propre*, which leads to pride, envy, competitiveness, greed, frustration, insult, rage, etc. Since natural man could not survive in a civilized state, Rousseau sees the purpose of education as preserving the maximum of natural virtue that is compatible with adapting to society and citizenship. His method is what he calls negative education—that is, the delaying of the evil effects of men and their opinions as long as possible. Emile is to learn by himself, through personal experience with Nature and the limitations and necessities imposed by Nature. Human control is reduced to a minimum. There are no commands, no prohibitions, no stern rules. On the other hand, unlike the caricature which has sometimes appeared in some permissive schools, Jean-Jacques carefully and adroitly sets up the conditions of Emile's so-called freedom, so that he learns the proper lessons as if on his own. In this way, Emile always followed his own positive motivations to learn the lessons intended for him, and *amour propre* was avoided.

A moment's reflection will bring us to the recognition that Rousseau very early understood the concept of healthy and pathological narcissism, the relations between them, and the factors that lead to narcissistic rage, rebellion, and to negative therapeutic or educational reaction. Rousseau disagrees with both Plato and Freud that man is inherently aggressive. Also with St. Augustine, who observed that even a preverbal child gazed with bitterness and hatred at a foster-brother at the breast. Rousseau insists that such reactions are not necessary: They are induced very early though improper adult attitudes and can be avoided. How are they to be avoided? Emile, for example, is essentially raised in isolation—aside from the governor, Jean-Jacques, all other factors in the environment, both physical and human, are manipulated as much as possible. At this stage, Emile is to learn directly from nature, and his confrontations come from physical necessity not from perverse will. Thus Jean-Jacques exerts very little direct interference: he simply controls the whole environment. He creates Emile's world.

Rousseau was a profoundly astute observer of children. Some of his theories of cognitive, sensorimotor, and emotional development anticipate both Piaget and Freud; e.g., like Freud he believed that the earliest reality testing and differentiation of self from outer world came from motility. His comments on the function of crying in children are masterful. He saw crying as an early battleground for the struggle between the development of a sense of reality and a sense of grandiosity

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and omnipotence. For example, if a child cries for an object he cannot reach, you don't bring him the object like a slave. You carry him to the object and let him grasp it himself.

Rousseau had strong convictions about a genetic timetable and phase-appropriate capacities which played a major role in his whole philosophy of negative education. The child must never be taught anything he is not emotionally ready for, is not interested in, and cannot understand. Since no child can reason, it is senseless to inflict books on him—or reading for that matter. God, religion, distant matters, are all deferred to the age of reason which begins in preadolescence but is not really developed until much later.

Thus Rousseau's theories are absolutely the opposite to those of modern workers like Bruner and other behavioristically oriented psychologists who believe that a small child has unlimited intellectual possibilities and can be trained as if he were a Ph.D. candidate. Rousseau would have had nothing but contempt for such experiments.

Above all, Rousseau wants to delay the premature stimulation of the imagination and of the senses which in turn leads to *amour propre* and thus to strife among men. Therefore, Emile's education is entirely practical, a kind of play-work-therapy to master his immediate needs from day to day without concern about the larger world. At all times, Emile feels whole, undivided within himself, strong and assertive in ways appropriate to his age—unplugged by disagreeable tasks that mean nothing to him. Gradually, more sophisticated concepts are introduced through the art of the governor. Emile learns to grow beans and enjoy the fruits of his labor. Then he inadvertently encroaches on the land of another and learns about conflict of interest. But an amicable compromise is arranged, and Emile learns to collaborate for mutual self interest.

The ingenuity with which Jean-Jacques contrives these object lessons is remarkable, and not all of them are fictional. He tells a fascinating anecdote of his temporary tutelage of a spoiled young princeling, and how he handled the boy's bratty behavior in an adroitly corrective but not unkind manner. In this and other episodes, Rousseau displays the insight and skill of an eighteenth-century Aichhorn.

Book III deals with the prepubertal phase which Rousseau views as a very precious, all too brief, spurt of high educability and a time to catch up. He attributes this to the fact that while the younger child is in a state of relative weakness as opposed to his needs and desires, now for the first—and perhaps only—time a surplus of energy is available for learning.

"From where does man's weakness come? From the inequality between his strength and his desires. It is our passions that make us weak, because to satisfy them we would need more strength than nature gives us. Therefore diminish desires, and you will increase strength" (p. 165). This economic principle was central to the philosophy of negative education, and stands in marked contrast to

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the pejorative view some have of progressive education as encouraging unruliness and anxiety by the failure to set limits. (Also, I might add it stands in contrast to the values of a consumer society.) Rousseau's position was that no new acquisition should be undertaken until there was optimal readiness both physically and emotionally—never push precocity—a principle of universal validity that is, to this day, more honored in the breach. Any child who was the brightest and strongest in his class, then skipped a grade, to his parents' delight, and found himself in a class he could handle intellectually, but in which he was socially and physically disadvantaged, would certainly side with Rousseau.

At any rate, Rousseau sees prepuberty as the period in man's entire life with the greatest relative strength, when the child is approaching the power of a man, but is not yet afflicted with the instinctual storm soon to follow. Emile is ripe to employ his burgeoning curiosity in all sorts of intellectual investigations and acquisitions, principally in science. But here, too, the stress is not on empty book knowledge: The lessons of science are learned in the laboratory of life. When Jean-Jacques the governor gets lost in the woods with a ravenously hungry Emile, he shows him how by astronomy they can find their way back to lunch. Emile learns a trade, and he finally, at twelve, gets his first book—*Robinson Crusoe*—whose main character Rousseau idealized as the prototype of the autonomous, self-sufficient man, adapting to the forces of nature, but with internal forces entirely at peace. While the educational capacity is soaring, the emphasis is still mainly utilitarian.

In Books I-III, Jean-Jacques has raised his Emile to be strictly for himself. His *amour de soi* has furnished the motivating fuel for his entire education of self-serving utility. But at the same time Emile is happy and mild-natured and has no wish to hurt anyone. (For example, Rousseau would see the anal-sadism of childhood not as a natural drive or stage but as narcissistic rage and bitterness arising from unempathic training.) The few confrontations he has had with fellow men have resulted in a capacity to compromise for mutual benefit—a utilitarian protomortality.

This happy equilibrium is now rocked by the onset of puberty and its inevitable demands which Rousseau discusses in Book IV. Rousseau considers the usual adolescent as completely uneducable. Not so Emile. Because the previous period has laid the groundwork for a strong, confident self and because his tie of trust to the governor is so firm, the latter can succeed in containing and sublimating the turbulent passions which are now emerging. These passions have changed the nature of Emile's world. For sexual awareness and the fulfillment of need requires another, and the solitary state of self-sufficiency will no longer work. Sexual love implies marriage, children, and family, and family is the basis of communal society, the state, and citizenship. Thus Emile must adapt his self-serving goals to the requirements of citizenship.

Jean-Jacques now begins to educate Emile for that role—he must learn about

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his fellow man and society. He still keeps Emile in the dark about sexuality, but strives to sublimate the sexual energy in positive social feelings and the development of ideals. The central feeling at this time is *compassion*, and Jean-Jacques goes to great lengths to teach it. It can only be learned by regarding people in less fortunate or in unlucky situations. One can then identify with these victims, feel “This could happen to me too,” and yet at the same time feel above their condition and beneficent. But if someone is better favored by fate, no compassion results—only envy and rivalrous feelings—in other words, the undesirable *amour propre*. In Jean-Jacques's tutelage there are no heroes for admiration—no great, successful leaders of men to be emulated. But he uses history books like Plutarch's *Lives* to teach Emile all about them—so that instead of admiring the kings and tyrants he can see the fatal flaw caused by vanity and take pity on them. Then Emile will not be taken in by power, fame, or glamor.

During this period of sublimation and ideal formation, the question of God comes up. The long digression on God is one of the high points of the book—the famous “Profession of the Faith of the Savoyard Vicar.” This celebrated statement of the God of Nature and the attack on formal theology cannot be discussed at this point, but I will note in passing that it got Rousseau and “Emile” into hot water and resulted in the philosopher's becoming virtually a fugitive in several countries.

Now that Emile has learned about the social relations of men and has developed a compassionate attitude which raises his self esteem and strengthens his *amour de soi*, he is finally ready for the culmination of his development, the achievement of the capacity for love and intimacy, which occurs in Book V. Jean-Jacques finally enlightens Emile, now in his twenties, about the facts of life, and the imagination which had previously been downplayed is now invoked to create the image of his perfect mate, Sophie. The idealizing love Emile feels for the mythical Sophie helps ward off the perils of sexual acting out, and abstinence helps Emile to create a rich inventory of loving feelings. Masturbation is to be avoided at all costs as an irrevocable disaster. Jean-Jacques prevents this by making sure that Emile goes to sleep dead tired and rises immediately upon awakening, so that he never spends any time dangerously idling in bed.

Needless to say, Emile finally meets his Sophie and, under the artful guidance of his mentor, ultimately wins her. The tale comes to an end with Emile joyfully informing Rousseau of his impending fatherhood, and expressing his gratitude and his hope for continued guidance.

The above terse summary does scant justice to the power and richness of Rousseau's work, in which there is scarcely a page that does not contain some gem of wisdom. But there is enough, I think, to give us some notion of the direction of Rousseau's thinking, and to raise certain questions in our minds. One of these questions concerns the whole issue of sexuality. Rousseau regards the early

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appearance of sexual feelings and interests as disruptive to healthy development and more the product of inflammatory external stimulation than true instinctual urgency. Thus he places the onset of sexuality at puberty, and considers anything before that to be artifact. He does, however, deal with the sexual curiosity of children. His advice is to answer questions straightforwardly in plain, simple language, in a way that does not inflame further curiosity. He quotes admiringly the response of a woman to her son when he asked where babies come from: “My child, women piss them out with pains which sometimes cost them their lives” (p. 218). Rousseau considers this a wise answer; “... the idea of a need which is natural and known to the child turns aside that of a mysterious process. The accessory ideas of pain and death cover this process with a veil of sadness which deadens the imagination and represses curiosity” (p. 218). Jean-Jacques Rousseau lost his own mother in exactly this way.

Thus Rousseau considers the sexes almost indistinguishable until puberty when the differentiating storm breaks. He tries to shield the

child from sexual activity, however, until well into the twenties. Instead he attempts to mobilize this energy in the service of learning and the development of ideals and sentiments like compassion and love. Like Freud, Rousseau understood the remarkable plasticity of the sexual drive. Unlike Freud, he had no conception of infantile sexuality or the Oedipus complex, or of the unconscious. His psychological system avoided the incest taboo, castration anxiety, repression, the development of intrapsychic conflict. There was no development of oedipal guilt or of Judeo-Christian morality. Man need not be divided against himself.

The task of raising Emile in this way was lightened by the fact that there was no real family life, no consistent mothering figure alongside of Jean-Jacques, no triadic situation, no siblings—thus no sibling rivalry, that notorious source of *amour propre*. One might think that social feelings would have their origin in the family, in sibling, then peer relationships. Not so with Emile—he had no siblings, and as far as I can determine, no significant ties to peers.

Naturally, no child was ever—or could ever be—raised this way, nor did Rousseau seriously expect literal emulation. In fact, when rich and influential people all over Europe besought him to be their children's governor, he modestly declined, and referred them to his book. Actually *Emile* is a kind of ablation experiment, with the whole libidinal line functionally extirpated, suppressed in the interest of development of self. Rousseau's system is an early version of experience-near self psychology, involving transformation of grandiosity into ideals and realistic goals commensurate with capacity.

What sort of man would have created such a system? Before going further into this aspect of the investigation, I want to reaffirm the time-honored principle that the validity of ideas must be judged on their own merits, independent of their origins. The fact that a man who hates his brutal father becomes a revolutionist doesn't discredit the revolution, nor does it fully account for the man's being a

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revolutionist. But it cannot be ignored either, and genetic studies of this kind often enrich our understanding of the total Gestalt. The alienated person often has a much deeper vision of that from which he has been alienated.

I have already mentioned that Rousseau lost his mother in childbirth. The connection of this fact with his intense interest in the early mother-child relation, the emphasis on breast feeding, etc., is obvious, as is his passionate interest in (Mother) Nature and his idealization of solitary man and the purity of his relation to Nature—mild and content—until visited with corruptions by contact with other men. He was born in Geneva in 1712, the son of a watchmaker who, after fathering Rousseau's older brother, went off for several years to work in the Seraglio in Constantinople—as a watchmaker. His return resulted in Jean-Jacques's birth and the death of his wife. There were several mother surrogates—an aunt, a nurse, etc.—but the strong emotional tie of childhood was apparently with the father, and the tie was both ambivalent and intense. In his *Confessions* (1781), he states:

“[Father] thought he saw her in me, without being able to forget I had taken her from him; never did he clasp me in his arms, but I felt, by his sights, by his convulsive embraces, that a bitter regret was mixed with his caresses.... Ah! said he with a groan, give her back to me again; comfort me for her; fill up the space she has left in my soul. Could I love thee thus, if thou wast only *my* son? [p. 5].

Rousseau learned to read very early. The mother had left a large library of romances. Every night he and the father would read them together, taking turns in the reading. Often they would become so engrossed as to read the whole night through. The practice was enormously stimulating to Rousseau. He tells us: “Sometimes my father, on hearing the swallows in the morning, would say, quite ashamed, Come, let us go to bed; I am more a child than thou art (p. 6).

“In a short time I acquired ... a knowledge of the passions peculiar at my age. I conceived nothing; I had felt the whole. These confused emotions ... gave me a romantic extravagant notion of human life, which experience and reflection have never been able to eradicate” (p. 7).

While Rousseau himself was indulged in this bittersweet way, his brother—seven years older—was neglected. He turned to bad ways, and “gave into libertinism before the age of a real libertine. ... Once when my father chastised him severely and in anger, I threw myself impetuously between them, and closely embraced him. I covered him thus with my body, receiving the strokes aimed at him. I persisted so much in this attitude, that my father was at last obliged to pardon him, either softened by my cries and tears, or being unwilling to beat me more than him” (p. 8). The brother later took off and disappeared forever.

Now, in my earlier study of Rousseau (Kligerman, 1951), I used the above material to reach the following formulation: that Rousseau identified himself with the dead mother, actually became her replacement in the father's affections,

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and developed a passive feminine attitude to the father, which was repressed, but indirectly gratified in the stimulating nocturnal reading sessions.

The offering of himself to be beaten instead of the brother was seen in the light of Freud's (1919) classic “A Child Is Being Beaten” as an expression both of a reaction formation to sibling hatred and an erotic wish to be loved by the father by passive anal penetration, and laid the groundwork for the development of a masochistic beating fantasy. Substitution of a dominating woman for the father removed the homosexual onus, and facilitated its emergence into consciousness as a conscious wish to be spanked by an imperious dominatrix. Rousseau himself first became aware of his perverse pleasure at the age of ten, when he was spanked for some infraction by Mlle Lambercier, a mother-surrogate with whom he boarded in the country, and about the same time he was subjected to the same delicious humiliation by a domineering girl his own age. Rousseau claims that these were the only times in his life that the fantasy was actually

gratified, but it played a central role in his imagination for the duration of his life in his sexual activity as well as in his characterological difficulties. I am still convinced that my earlier formulation is entirely valid, but I would like now to view some of these events from a slightly different perspective.

The overstimulation of the reading sessions and the example of the precocious libertinism of the brother gave Rousseau a profound conviction of the noxious effect of premature development. Thus the negative education of Emile: He did not even learn to read until twelve, and then he got only one book—*Robinson Crusoe*—a story quite unlike the mother's romances. Instead of the grandiose fantasies Jean-Jacques early developed, Emile engages in imagination but little until he reaches the age of reason. Whereas Rousseau was fixated with an early masochistic sexual orientation, Emile didn't even know what sex was until he was over twenty.

But to return to Rousseau's history: When he was ten, his father got into a brawl and had to leave Geneva. There were occasional visits, but father and son never again had a consistent relationship. Instead, Rousseau remained with an uncle who treated him like a poor relation. He was later apprenticed to an engraver, a brutal man who maltreated him, and he had a liberal education on the malevolence of the world, losing the innocence and joy of his youth. At sixteen when he returned from a Sunday stroll to find the gates of the city closed, he was only too happy to run away. He was now a penniless vagabond, alone in the world, without friends, trade, or means of subsistence. Emile had the consistent and exclusive loving care of his governor until his marriage at twenty-five, and even then retained him as an affectionate adviser.

In this context, I cannot go into the colorful and fascinating details of Rousseau's life, except to say that he became the protégé of a pretty young gentlewoman, Mme de Warens, in Annecy, in the beautiful land of Upper Savoy. Eventually he landed in Paris, as an obscure music copier and minor composer.

But at 37, when he was suddenly catapulted into fame by writing a prize essay,

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his career as a social philosopher and writer was launched. For the rest of his days he was a celebrity, alternating between acclaim and extraordinary favor and patronage and political persecution, vilification, flight, and exile.

Early in his Paris days he took up with Thérèse Le Vasseur, a simpleminded, almost illiterate young seamstress. She remained with him for the rest of his life, and in his old age he finally married her. Somewhere along the line they had five children. What kind of father was Rousseau in real life? He insisted on placing each successive child in a foundling home. This decision seems to have been rationalized in part by an egalitarian theory he had developed (similar perhaps to some kind of kibbutz psychology?). He felt he had to be true to his principles. Later he expressed some qualms about these actions:

If I deceived myself in my conclusions, nothing can be more astonishing than the security with which I depended upon them. Where I one of those men unfortunately born deaf to the voice of nature, in whom no sentiment of justice of humanity ever took the least root, this obduracy would be natural. But that warmth of heart, strong sensibility, and facility of forming attachments; the force with which they subdue me; my cruel sufferings when obliged to break them; the innate benevolence I cherish toward my fellow creatures; the ardent love I bear to great virtues, to truth and justice; the horror in which I hold evil of every kind; the impossibility of hating or injuring, or wishing to injure anyone; the soft and lively emotion I feel at the sight of whatever is virtuous, generous, and amiable; can these meet in the same mind with the depravity, which without scruple treads under foot the most pleasing of all our duties? No, I feel, and openly declare this to be impossible. Never in his whole life could Jean-Jacques be a man without sentiment, or an unnatural father. I may have been deceived, but it is impossible I should have lost the least of my feelings. Were I to give my reasons I should say too much; since they have seduced me, they would seduce many others. I will not therefore expose those young persons by whom I may be read to the same danger. I will satisfy myself by observing that my error was such, that in abandoning my children to public education for want of the means of bringing them up myself; in destining them to become workmen and peasants, rather than adventurers and fortune hunters, I thought I acted like an honest citizen and a good father, and considered myself as a member of the republic of Plato. Since that time the regrets of my heart have more than once told me I was deceived, but my reason was so far from giving me the same intimation, that I have frequently returned thanks to heaven for having, by this means, preserved them from the fate of their father, and that by which they were threatened the moment I should have been under the necessity of leaving them. Had I left them to Madame d'Epainay or Madame de Luxembourg, who, from friendship, generosity, or some other motive, offered to take care of them in due time, would they have been more happy, better brought up, or honest men? To this I cannot answer, but I am certain they would have been taught to hate and perhaps betray their parents; it is much better that they have never known them [**Rousseau, 1781**, pp. 336-337].

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This lengthy declaration seemed to have a hypocritical ring which created the original prejudice against reading *Emile*. The actual deed of repetitive child abandonment, followed by this guilty, defensive web of rhetoric and rationalization for fear of influencing others to do likewise, seemed a poor recommendation for a treatise on the bringing up of children. But this critical attitude fails to do justice to the depth of Rousseau's sorrow and remorse. Nor does it appreciate the compelling inner need that was stirred in the core of a motherless child when confronted with the birth of his own. Among other motives, it is quite likely that he was afraid of losing by death his Thérèse, the selfobject to whom he clung so tenaciously, and who clearly kept him from fragmenting altogether. The possibility of abortion, so commonplace today, was not readily available, and it was an age in which actual infanticide of newborns seems to have been a not uncommon practice (**Piers, 1978**). These considerations might perhaps soften our moralistic judgment of Rousseau's platonic solution to a

paternal failure.

When a man fathers a son, he in effect has a second chance. He may wish to repeat the joyful experiences of his own childhood, and take pleasure in the identification the son makes with him. Or he may wish to prevent the repetition of his own painful traumatic experiences, and correct his own deficits in the person of his son.¹ To create a perfect child, usually there is a combination of both. One recalls Freud's (1914, p. 90) formulation of types of narcissistic object choice: One tends to love someone who represents oneself—what one once was, or what one would like to be. Happily the father, having moved to a new level, strikes the optimal balance between the presentation of himself as a positive identification figure and the emphatic mirroring of the son's autonomous needs and inclinations. In *Emile* Rousseau portrays the father he would like to have been (or have had) to the son he would like to have reared—who was also the man he would like to have been: his own ideal self. Perhaps the writing of this book was an act of expiation for abandoning his won children. More likely, it was an imaginary biography of himself to be compared to the shame-laden, ambivalent self portrait of the *Confessions*—an attempt at self healing and self cohesion, in its way so profound, so sensitive and insightful, that to this day it remains a fertile wellspring on the art of child-rearing.

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¹ Often with denial, hostile withdrawal, or primitive behavior when the traumatic period is re-experienced.

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