THE MORAL SEX

Woman's Nature in the French Enlightenment

LIESELOTTE STEINBRÜGGE

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Preface

Research on the European Enlightenment has had a long and worthy tradition. Until recently, however, studies of gender relations were all but foreign to the republic of letters of the *dix-huitiémistes*. The institutionalization of gender studies at American universities has been a major factor in changing this situation, such that research on the Enlightenment now regularly incorporates questions of gender. One may say without exaggeration that a discussion has now been set in motion that questions old certainties, allowing the age of Enlightenment to appear in a new light. This book, which first appeared in German in 1987, seeks to make a contribution to this discussion.

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L.S.

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THE MORAL SEX

Introduction

Legend has it that in France the eighteenth century was the century of women, and the facts would seem to substantiate this view. The intellectual elite met in salons led by women; the important thinkers of the age corresponded and discussed their ideas with women. A number of women took up writing themselves, producing scientific tracts, translations, novels, or pedagogical programs.[1] Women such as Madame du Châtelet, Madame de Graffigny, Madame Riccoboni, Madame de Lambert, Julie de Lespinasse, and Madame de Genlis—to name only a few—represent this development. It was this integration of women into intellectual life which, a century later, moved the Goncourt brothers to devote a celebrated study to the women of the eighteenth century, in which they concluded that woman had been the governing principle of the age,[2] a topos which has persisted virtually unbroken to this day.[3]

The reasons for this persistence seem to me to lie not so much in the—at least initially convincing—power of facts but rather in the very logic of Enlightenment philosophy. Indeed, the philosophe's aspirations toward emancipation and education did not stop with women. The eighteenth century was an era of upheaval in which human nature, and with it the nature of men and women, was being rethought. The religious worldview was losing its validity, and with it the biblical curse which for centuries had allowed women to be conceived as subordinate to men. The bourgeois notion of natural human equality also facilitated a new anthropological definition of the female human being. "Woman in a state of nature, like man, is a free and powerful being," wrote Choderlos de Laclos

in *Des femmes et de leur éducation* (On Women and Their Education),[4] following Rousseau's postulate on the natural equality of all human beings.

This development, however, by no means culminated in the concept of the equality of the sexes. The eighteenth century is the period when the sex-specific character[5] attributed to men and women developed and diverged; it is the epoch in which the ideological and institutional foundations were laid for women's exclusion from civil rights and higher education—in short, from public life. It is the age that saw the emergence of an image of female nature that allowed precisely these exclusions to be considered "natural."

Historians, particularly those studying the history of the family, have outlined the sociohistorical factors underpinning this development.[6] The exigencies of the bourgeois system of production accorded the family a purely reproductive role. Women were relegated to work that, lying as it did outside the sphere of social production, did not allow them to participate in scientific-technological progress and thus demanded of them other qualities than those required there. At the same time, the physiocrats, for whom population growth represented the fundamental precondition for all economic progress, glorified the maternal virtues in a sort of large-scale advertising campaign aimed at reminding women of their demographic duties.[7] Finally, the recognition of children as people in their own right also contributed to a new understanding of the maternal role.[8]

All these factors belonging to the realm of social history and the history of mentalities are the premises upon which my analyses rest. I assume that the theories and literary representations of woman's nature I discuss cannot be explained without these actual historical factors. They do not, however, provide the ultimate explanation. Rather, they demarcate the tension between, on the one hand, the Enlightenment aspiration to emancipate a (female) sex maintained in ignorance and, on the other, the "objective necessities" of the bourgeois economic order, which required women to adopt the role of housewife and mother. What interests me is *how* this tension, within which the recasting of female identity occurred, could be resolved theoretically in order that the concept of a general female incapacity for human emancipation could become a universal anthropological truth.

This concept, which can still be encountered today,[9] is by no means a product of the counter-Enlightenment. The division of humanity into two unequal parts was legitimated with genuinely Enlightenment principles—

this in an age professing devotion to the equality of all human beings. The road there led past the very authority that allowed men to conceive of liberation from the shackles of tutelage: Nature. The feminist dialectic of Enlightenment shows that the idea of (human) nature, the paradigm of Enlightenment emancipation in general, when applied to women, comes to mean "subsumption" and "limitation." My task in what follows is to sketch the path this process took.

The question of woman's nature greatly exercized thinkers of the time. It was the object of medical, historiographic, anthropological, philosophical, and, not least, literary discourse. The *querelle des femmes*, that debate over the question of the equality of the sexes which had been raging at least since the *Roman de la rose*, had revived, particularly since the 1750s.[10] This discussion was multifaceted, encompassing nearly all aspects of female existence, from woman's social role to her biological nature and sexuality.[11] The aspect that particularly interests me here is the problem of women's intellectual capacity and the related ideal of the learned woman.

This aspect seems significant to me for two reasons. First, in an age in which the belief in progress was expressed as belief in the transformative power of reason, the way in which women's intellectual capacity was evaluated was a decisive determinant of their position within the culture. Second, it can be demonstrated that the alteration in the period's ideal of femininity occurred in express rejection of a female type primarily defined by active participation in intellectual life.

Poulain de la Barre's 1673 pamphlet *De l'égalité des deux sexes* (On the Equality of the Two Sexes), the first detailed examination of the theme of female intellect, broke ground for the Enlightenment *querelle*. Thus, it is no coincidence that virtually all of the polemics that were to follow addressed his arguments, either implicitly or explicitly. For this reason, I treat the writings of Caffiaux, Archambault, Puisieux, and de Lambert, which exemplify this discussion, chiefly from the standpoint of women's intellectual capacity (chapter 1).

The form this discussion took can, I believe, only be understood against the background of the period's philosophical anthropology, as I try to show in chapter 3. Research into the organic preconditions of human knowledge also set a precedent for the medical and philosophical discourse on women and was fundamental for the recasting of ideas of female nature. The reevaluation of the female body took on particular signifi-

cance in this context. Argumentation in terms of sensory physiology at first facilitated the liberation of woman from the myths surrounding her corporeality, allowing for the emancipatory "mobilization" of nature against repressive superstition. On the other hand, it was precisely the great significance attributed to woman's physical nature that, in conjunction with physiocratic discourse, led to an unprecedented reduction of woman to the creatural. It was this final aspect that was to become ideologically dominant. Using texts from the *Encyclopédie* and by Thomas and Roussel, I try to show that at the end of the age of Enlightenment, the woman who emerged from reflexions about female nature was not a full individual but a being viewed solely in terms of her sex (chapters 2 and 3).

The Enlightenment debate was by no means limited to a dismantling of woman's human—particularly intellectual—capabilities, which at first made women appear as deficient men. Rather, this reduction was accompanied by a broadened anthropological definition of woman's sex-specific character, which was based precisely on woman's supposed closeness to nature. My central thesis here is that the accentuation of creaturliness, and thus also of emotionality, over enlightened rationality predestined women to adopt a particular role. The exclusion of women from public life and its complement, their relegation to private life, appeared to qualify women particularly for the realm of *morality*, conceived of in bourgeois society as a genuinely private morality, and one that could only be socially efficacious through the private sphere. And because this morality achieved an increasingly emotional basis in the age of Enlightenment, not least because of its private character, female nature could be proclaimed as particularly competent as emotional morality. With this, the definition of woman as "the sex" sealed women's destiny as the moral authority of a society that excluded certain direct human emotions from public interactions. Woman became *the moral sex*. Humane qualities survived (only) as a female principle.

It is this aspect of the *querelle* which I will use to show that with the standardization of female nature—that is, its subjection to strict and uniform norms—more was at stake than merely the "battle of the sexes." What is at stake here is not simply "woman" but the place of compassion in a society whose economic reproduction rested on the "war of all against all." The function of a moral authority, an unfilled position in the masculine world of business, is fulfilled by woman, who appears predestined for this role by virtue of biological propensities which place her closer than man to the sphere of compassion.

This "construction" could not stand up to reality, though, and the feelings that supposedly hibernated in the warm niches of family life, far from the rigors of bourgeois rationality, did not survive unscathed: a bitter experience not only for women. Woman as the sustainer of humane qualities continued to exist, in her pure form, mostly in fiction, as Virginia Woolf acutely observed: "Imaginatively she is of the highest importance; practically she is completely insignificant. . . . Some of the most inspired words, some of the most profound thoughts in literature fall from her lips; in real life she could hardly read, could scarcely spell, and was the property of her husband."[12] For this reason, I have used the ideal-typical literary models of femininity developed by two significant eighteenth-century writers to trace the "idea of woman's nature" against the background of the theoretical writings discussed in earlier chapters (chapters 4 and 5). Rousseau and Diderot seemed appropriate for several reasons. Their works represent two stages (in the systematic, not the chronological, sense) in the redefinition of woman's nature. Diderot remains at the first stage of development of sex character—the demotion of the female human being to a sexual being. Julie in Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse* is a much more complex character than the Tahitian "savages" in the *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville* or the figure of Suzanne Simonin in *La Religieuse* (The Nun). She embodies just that moral authority of the "female principle" in the sense of the functions I described. The reasons for these differing models of femininity do not lie, as might appear at first glance, in the authors' divergent biographies or in their personal tastes. To avoid falling into crude reductionism, one must examine them in the context of the authors' anthropological conceptions.

It was Rousseau's position that gained the widest influence. I have followed its "popularization" in some broadly distributed eighteenth-century works (chapter 6). These contributed significantly to the entry into collective consciousness of the construction of female sex-specific character as a natural fact and thus as an anthropological constant.

Texts in many scholarly disciplines and literary genres took up the discussion of female nature. For this reason, I have chosen to examine works from various fields and levels of theorization.[13] Up until now, only Paul Hoffmann has devoted extensive and detailed consideration to the majority of these discourses. His book *La Femme dans la pensée des Lumières* (Woman in Enlightenment Thought) examines almost the entirety of eighteenth-century literature. The methodological approach of his mono-

graph appears problematic, however. Hoffmann starts from the assumption that the discourse about woman cannot be analyzed rationally using either immanent logic or an examination of external reasons. "Neither logical nor sociological causality can explain the evolution of ideas about woman. The sum of the discourses which sketch its fleeting and eternal face at every period of history could never add up to a science."[14] Thus Hoffmann denies the possibility that the discourses about woman might have the status of scholarly theories and, with it, the possibility of a scholarly analysis of the texts' contents. This denial also leads to a doubling of the discourse on woman. Here he influences his own interpretation. It is no accident that Hoffmann refers to Diderot's *Sur les femmes* (On Women) and adopts for his own study Diderot's generalization that one cannot discuss women objectively. According to Hoffmann, fantasies and "factual statements" about women's nature resist critical analysis, allowing instead for merely subjective evaluations: "We admit our partiality! But the object of our investigation forbade any objectivity. No one can speak of woman without becoming involved, without compromising himself."[15]

This attitude is symptomatic of a (male-dominated) scholarly discourse on women which accepts uncritically the characteristics attributed to women, adopting them as the starting point for its investigations. Hoffmann's certainty that all discourses on woman are, of necessity, incoherent, changeable, vague, and subjective rests on the unspoken (because so widely shared) attitude that these are precisely some of the characteristics of women's nature.

Throughout his study, Hoffman treats sex-specific character as a valid anthropological given. "At no moment does woman's freedom appear more problematic than when she is called, by her own nature, to bear a child and bring it into the world. At no moment is the body more sovereign, but there is also no more propitious occasion for reason to demonstrate her duties and capabilities."[16] This approach appears methodologically questionable because Hoffmann takes as his starting point ideas which were the *result* of developments during the eighteenth century. Whether it was a woman's duty to bear children, and whether this duty restricted her freedom, was precisely one of the issues at stake in the *querelle*. Hoffmann's own assumptions preclude his grasping this evolution.

In order to do justice to the different types of texts, I have treated the various genres separately. Only in this way could I account for the pecu-

liarities of the texts, particularly the differences between fictional, philosophical, and popular-scientific literature. At the same time, this classification did not determine the substantive methodology of my work. Rather, I selected texts for analysis primarily according to the central theoretical issues just sketched. For example, my reading of Diderot's literary texts is informed by questions which emerged from my study of the scientific paradigms and medical presuppositions underpinning the debate on women's nature. I selected the theoretical texts according to representativeness. Here, in particular, there is a multitude of texts to choose from, which I did not need to treat exhaustively since, at a certain level, they all make the same arguments. For this reason, I have chosen to treat a few exemplary texts that display typical discursive strategies regarding the questions that interested me.

1

Reason Has No Sex

In the middle of the eighteenth century, the question of the equality of the sexes became a controversial topic of discussion. The emancipatory Enlightenment movement also shook up traditional ideals of womanhood. Proponents of theories of sexual equality could look to a famous predecessor who had already made a vigorous contribution to the *querelle des femmes* in the seventeenth century: François Poulain de la Barre. Two works by Florent de Puisieux and Dom Philippe Caffiaux,[1] which appeared in the mid-eighteenth century, stand in a direct line with Poulain's famous 1673 pamphlet *De l'égalité des deux sexes* (On the Equality of the Two Sexes). In order to understand the peculiarities of the late-Enlightenment *querelle*, we must first look at this work.

De l'égalité des deux sexes can be regarded as a milestone in debates on the equality of the sexes. As a Cartesian, Poulain de la Barre attempts to deduce the equality of man and woman *systematically*. In so doing, he opposes not only the proponents of female inferiority but also the approaches of earlier and contemporary apologists of the female sex.

Ever since the Renaissance, the chief interest of women's defenders had been to free them from the onus of sinfulness bestowed by the medieval church. The propagation of courtly platonic love, for example, as expressed in the writings of Christine de Pizan, Marguerite de Navarre, and Louise Labé,[2] among others, reflected the aspirations of "feminists" at the time to accord woman a role other than that of man's subordinate. The advocates of improving women's lot sought to demonstrate women's virtues and achievements with examples taken from throughout history,

mythology, and religion, and this prolific literary tradition lived on into the eighteenth century.[3]

All of these writings take the same approach: Using an endlessly repetitive sequence of examples, the authors try to build a positive image of woman. They simply order the "empirical" material, citing so many concrete examples of abstract characteristics intended to demonstrate the equality or even the superiority of women that the sheer mass of exemplary cases render plausible their preconceived ideas.[4] An author, for example, who wanted to show that women also could be stalwart and brave would list all the battles fought by Amazons, from antiquity to Joan of Arc.[5] In time, a sort of canon of heroic female exploits emerged which persisted into the eighteenth century. One can call this approach apologetic because the qualities claimed for women were not grounded in argument but merely presumed and justified by a random selection of mere facts. The choice of examples points to a changed interpretation of written tradition, particularly of the bible. For example, whereas the creation of Eve from Adam's rib had previously been cited as proof of woman's second-class status, it was now cited as evidence of her greater perfection because it showed that Eve was not made of mere earth. In the end, the legitimation for the positive image of women consisted merely in a revaluation of literary tradition, using the same methods as its opponents.

The Rationalist Tradition of the *Querelle des Femmes*

Poulain de la Barre's aforementioned brochure takes defenses of the "Cause des femmes" in a new direction. Dispensing with compilations of heroic deeds, he proceeds instead—like Descartes—to subject all previous arguments for female inferiority to methodological doubt. In his view, the fact that women are represented neither in the arts, nor the sciences, nor in public office by no means demonstrates that they were unfit for these *by nature*. Those who draw this conclusion are allowing themselves to be led by prejudice: "[W]e are filled with prejudices, and . . . we must renounce them completely if we are to attain clear and definite knowledge."[6] He rejects the uncritical adoption of received facts which prevents us from penetrating to the heart of the matter.

Following this methodological principle, Poulain next attempts to define woman's "true nature." In the Cartesian tradition it is the intellect that is central and that becomes the touchstone of equality. Descartes had

said, after all, that "common sense is the best distributed thing in the world."[7] Although Descartes was claiming the essential equal capacity for reason in the service of a sociopolitical opposition to feudal hierarchies, without taking gender into account, he at least created the epistemological preconditions for asserting the intellectual equality of the sexes. Poulain de la Barre takes up this premise, creating out of it arguments which were to point the way for further debate. If common sense, or reason, was really equally distributed among human beings, then this must hold true for women as well.[8]

A second, decisive argument proceeds from the Cartesian separation between *res cognitans* and *res extensa*. Because reason is separated from the body, physical traits exercise no direct influence over cognition. As a result, the specific qualities of the female body do not influence women's thought, just as the bodily distinctions between the sexes more generally are of no significance. "Reason has no sex" (l'esprit n'a point de sexe)[9]—with this famous phrase, which unites the two arguments, Poulain de la Barre radicalized the Enlightenment postulate of equality by applying it to relations between men and women.

Such deductions leave women's actual subordination untouched. Why is it that women, who are by nature possessed of the same rational capacities as men, do not participate in men's achievements? In order to answer this question, Poulain refers to history—not in the style of the compilers, but rather by means of a genetic-reconstructive method. Having already explored woman's true nature, Poulain must now seek out the causes of her inequality in history. In the savage state, man and woman were "simple and innocent," doing the same work (hunting and agriculture) and neither had dominion over the other. The origins of inequality, Poulain de la Barre believed, must be sought in men's first usurpations of power. Here right, not reason, made might. Women did not share men's thirst for power. Since that time, men had succeeded in oppressing them. "[T]hey [women] were subordinated solely by the rule of force, and it was neither a lack of natural ability nor of merit that prevented them from participating in all that which raises our sex over theirs."[10] With the passage of time, the result of relations of force came to appear as women's natural characteristics.

The principle of equality, arrived at by deduction, is the precondition for a pedagogical concept which allows women the same opportunities as men, particularly to engage in scholarship. Poulain de la Barre develops this concept in a programmatic work published a year later, *De*

l'éducation des dames pour la conduite de l'esprit dans les sciences et dans les mœurs (On the Education of Ladies for the Application of Their Minds to Scholarship and Manners). In the preface he elucidates the title, noting that the work consists of conversations with a lady desiring to devote herself to scholarly endeavors. The principles he sets down, however, may be equally useful for men, "as there is only one method for instructing both, since they belong to the same species."[11]

Poulain de la Barre was the first author to have developed a pedagogical program for women conceived neither in terms of male/universalist educational principles, nor as complementary to them, but rather in terms of the equal capabilities of the two sexes. His aim was to champion rational thinking over dogmatic-scholastic pedagogy. "The principal and most important maxim of all is to instill in men, as far as possible, that sovereign reason which enables them to judge all things sensibly and without prejudice."[12] "Men" (*hommes*) here definitely refers to both genders and explicitly includes the female segment of humanity. The quality of this universal human nature must be derived from principles. History, once cited as proof of female capacities and incapacities, no longer explains relations between the sexes. Rather, history consists merely of a sequence of accidental events without inner cohesion; concrete history actually falsifies the true nature of woman, whose abilities were expressed differently under changing circumstances. From then on, it became standard scholarly practice in the *querelle des femmes* to disregard these historical circumstances and attribute female nature to immutable principles.

Eighteenth-Century Discussions of the Ideal of the Learned Woman

Poulain de la Barre's thesis of "the sexless mind" was expressed pointedly in eighteenth-century discussions of women's role in the sciences. In 1750 a brochure appeared with the programmatic title *La Femme n'est pas inférieure à l'homme* (Woman Is Not Inferior to Man). Florent de Puisieux, under whose name the work appeared, claims in the preface that he was only its translator and that the author was an Englishwoman.[13] Without naming the source, the work contains some passages lifted directly from Poulain de la Barre's pamphlet.

The author argues against the practice of denying women other abilities because of their biological capacity to bear children.[14] She antici-

pates the objection that it is, after all, women's duty to serve men. It is precisely this assumption which she rejects, even if all appearances in daily life appear to support it. Like Poulain de la Barre, she considers it methodologically untenable to portray women's "disadvantages"—the results of men's "unjust usurpations" (*usurpations injustes*) and "tyranny"—as eternal characteristics of female nature. "[T]hey [men] are so accustomed to seeing matters as they are today that they cannot imagine them ever being otherwise."[15] In her unbiased treatment of the problem, she resists making the specificity of the female body women's dominant characteristic. "It is common knowledge that the difference between the sexes is purely physical, and restricted to those parts of the body serving the propagation of human nature."[16] Reason has no sex and, as a consequence, cognition is the same in both sexes. The demonstration of this assertion forms the centerpiece of her treatise. It is no accident that the longest section of her text is chapter 6, which asks, "Whether or not women are naturally capable of teaching the sciences." (Si les femmes sont naturellement capables d'enseigner les sciences ou non)[17] It is, after all, the issue of women's intellectual capacity which initially dominated Enlightenment discussions of women's nature.

It is surprising that mental abilities became the central criterion for sexual equality. How much more obvious it would have been to invoke women's physical weakness to prove their unfitness for activities requiring strength, such as artisanal labor, and to use this deficiency as an argument for their general inferiority. Such arguments are virtually absent from the text under discussion here, however. Our author expends little energy refuting such claims, merely asserting briefly that among women, as among men, there were strong and weak individuals; those who do not believe this need only watch poor rural women engaging in heavy agricultural labor.[18]

This explanation, which may appear surprising today, was generally accepted in the eighteenth century. Even proponents of the notion of male superiority did not justify women's subordination with arguments about their unfitness for particular activities requiring physical strength. Instead, they merely used the peculiarities of female anatomy as the occasion for claiming that women were *intellectually* and *morally* inferior.

There seem to be two essential supports for this line of argumentation. One was the power of fact. Women indeed worked as hard as men in agriculture, which at the time employed five-sixths of the female population.[19] In some regions, according to local custom, women even did

the heaviest labor. In some cases they replaced draught animals in the fields. The division of work into light and heavy physical labor by no means followed gender lines. The same can be said of the artisanal trades and emerging industry.[20] Women's integration in the agricultural and artisanal production processes was so obvious as to make it unthinkable for any *homme de lettres*, no matter how convinced of female inferiority, to endure the same physical rigors that were the everyday lives of peasant women or artisan's wives.

On the other hand, in an age marked by faith in reason's power to shape history, only intellectual capacity counted as a criterion for "classifying" woman. The significance accorded to reason in the emancipation of humanity led to a revalorization of intellectual labor. It was also in this period that the figure of the professional scholar emerged. Scholarly work was no longer conducted chiefly as a private hobby in one's own study but was institutionalized in academies.[21] It is thus only logical that the debate should have been conducted in the field of intellectual equality.

For the author translated by Puisieux, the assertion that reason has no sex is the position from which she can proceed to refute the inferiority of her own sex. One after the other, she reviews various disciplines (rhetoric, jurisprudence, medicine, theology, philosophy), concluding in each case that women are just as well suited to practice them as men. Even the exercise of the "art of war" is, in her estimation, primarily intellectual labor, and thus well within women's capacities: "[A] woman is just as capable as a man of learning, with the aid of maps, about good and bad routes, safe or unsafe roads and suitable places to set up camp. What is to prevent her from gaining knowledge of all the strategems of war, the means of charging the enemy, organizing a retreat, planning a surprise attack, laying an ambush."[22] With her demand for the admittance of women to all public offices,[23] Puisieux's author makes it clear that hers is not merely a general appeal for better female education. She calls for a professional attitude toward scholarship and explicitly disapproves of a fashionable smattering of learning. She sets "true knowledge" (*vrai scavoir*) and "thorough knowledge" (*les connoissances solides*) against "superficial knowledge" (*scavoir superficiel*).[24]

Women must be judged by reason alone, which must prove itself both in the sciences and in public social life. The elevation of the learned woman to a female ideal constitutes, in the tradition of Poulain de la Barre, the centerpiece of rationalist argumentation in the *querelle des femmes*,

signaling a break with received prejudices and myths about female nature.

Dom Philippe-Joseph Caffiaux's *Défenses du Beau Sexe, ou Mémoires historiques, philosophiques et critiques pour servir d'Apologie aux femmes* (Defenses of the Fair Sex, or A Historical, Philosophical, and Critical Treatise in the Form of a Vindication of Women),[25] published three years later in 1753, also propagates the model of the learned woman. The author explicitly places himself in the tradition of Poulain de la Barre. He begins his preface with "M. Poulain's Thoughts on this Subject" and cites his authority with liberal quotations. Caffiaux, whose voluminous and sometimes repetitive book claims to bring together all the topoi of traditional defenses of women, does not fail to enumerate the examples handed down from classical mythology, the Bible, and historiography in order to lend more weight to his revalorization of the female sex, and in so doing he joins the ranks of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century *compilateurs*. The first fifty pages of his second volume, for example, are devoted to the "heroic and illustrious deeds by means of which women have secured immortality" (Actions héroiques & éclatantes par où les femmes ont eternisé leur mémoire). His accounts of the heroic deeds of learned women, however, are even more extensive. The book's 200-page-long fifth chapter is entitled "On the Progress Which Women Have Made in All the Sciences" (Du progrès que les femmes ont fait dans toutes les sciences),[26] thus integrating women into a question which exercised the minds of leading thinkers of the age from Fontenelle to Turgot and Condorcet. Their attempt to reconstruct historical progress via the progress of the human intellect formed the core of Enlightenment theories of history.[27] In according the female intellect its place in this progress, Caffiaux brings women into historiography as historical subjects.

Poulain de la Barre and his successor Puisieux had already accused men of appropriating women's scholarship and, by extension, their historicity as well. Caffiaux also describes the exclusion of women from scholarly endeavor as an act of force: "How men seized science" (Comment les hommes se sont emparés de la science).[28] His gallery of learned women is vivid evidence of how levels of argument in the *querelle des femmes* had shifted from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century. Heroic deeds in the service of "King and country" or to "defend or avenge their honor,"[29] borrowed from the chivalric moral code and the traditional canon of female apologia, are by no means absent from the book, but they now take second place to the ideal of professional learning. Caffiaux knows that only the

list of female philosophers, theologians, rhetoricians, poets, philologists, mathematicians, physicians, artists, and academicians has any hope of entering the annals of history. Abstracting from women's actual opportunities, Caffiaux legitimates the concept of egalitarian gender relations here by claiming women's participation in the progress of scholarship.

This contribution to the "progress of reason" is presented as proof of woman's rationality. What marks the human being is no longer the mere possession of intellect; he or she must consistently work at perfecting it. Only when it can be shown that women have participated in the development of the sciences—so essential to the progress of human history—can women's fundamental fitness for scholarship be demonstrated. This dimension of late-Enlightenment historical theory revalorizes historical example, which no longer appears in the form of catalogues of random incidents but, rather, as the historical unfolding of a natural principle. For Caffiaux, history is the place where the true nature of woman as a rational being equal to man is both expressed and put to the test.

The debate between Mademoiselle Archambault and two anonymous male opponents, published in Paris in 1750 as *Dissertation sur la question lequel de l'homme ou de la femme est plus capable de constance . . .* (Dissertation on the Question, Whether Man or Woman Is More Capable of Constancy . . .), also revolves around the question of women's fitness for scholarly endeavor.[30] The two gentlemen deny that women possess the requisite *constance*, by which they mean perseverance and tenacity as well as courage and self-conquest. Archambault insists on the separation of body and mind, emphasizing that "woman's weakness and fragility may only be applied to her body, just as man's superior strength only extends to his."[31] In contrast to the polemics treated up until now, however, she does not proceed from gender-neutral reason. Instead, she attributes to the female intellect superior qualities, bestowed by God in compensation for women's lesser physical strength. "[T]hey [women] have better memories, more receptive, lively and penetrating minds than most men, as even their enemies maintain; they possess better and surer taste and more discerning judgment of the fine and the delicate."[32] Archambault's opponent M.L.L.R. by no means denies women the typical qualities she sets out. Indeed, he substantiates them, owning that women are better novelists than men because of the *délicatesse* of their style and the tenderness of their sentiments. However, he confidently opposes the postulate of female superiority, asking "[D]o they [novels] suffice to entitle women to call themselves learned?"[33] He answers firmly

in the negative, arguing that women lack the "reliable reason, the breadth of mind and acuity of judgment" needed to engage in mathematics and the natural sciences, to rise to metaphysical speculation, and to develop sound moral principles.[34] This, he continues, is no reason to look down on women, however. It is, rather, a reason to admire them: "[A] woman who does what she can in her own sphere, who watches over her servants, lays the first groundwork of her children's education, keeps her house in order and obeys her husband, deserves as much praise as all these heroes, great statesmen and scholars."[35] Relegating women to the family sphere is nothing new. At the end of the seventeenth century—not least in reaction to Poulain de la Barre—Fénelon was already polemicizing vehemently against learned women, developing a pedagogical program for girls centered around household management which was to become the bible of Madame de Maintenon's girls' school at Saint-Cyr.[36] This attitude came under increasing fire in the eighteenth century, as champions of the women's cause, both male and female, adopted the Enlightenment postulate of equality and supported their right to participate in human progress not only with enlightened argument but also often with their own practice as learned women. At the same time, the role of wife and mother meshed precisely with the socioeconomic needs of the middle classes.

The Enlightenment's understanding of itself, on the one hand, and the objective constraints of social conditions, on the other, led to a change in the *querelle des femmes* in the middle of the eighteenth century; one already hinted at in the debate between Archambault and her opponents: women's equality was no longer understood as an equality of identical capabilities, but rather as one of *different* but equally valuable natures.

Emotionalizing the Female Mind

This change had already been anticipated by the opposing side, however. Madame de Lambert, whose *Réflexions nouvelles sur les femmes* (New Reflections on Women)[37] carried on Poulain de la Barre's postulate of equality, had already began to make gender-specific differentiations within this concept.

Women, Lambert argues, are commonly said to have more *goût* (taste) than men. She gladly accepts this "gift which men present to ladies,"[38] insisting, however, that *goût* is not merely a matter of feeling but also of knowledge arrived at by reason. "I believe that taste depends upon two

things: the fine feelings of the heart and great acuity of the mind."[39] Lambert's attempt to turn the weaknesses attributed to women into strengths shows that women's better judgment in matters of taste is by no means coupled with an incapacity for rational thought. Women had been unjustly accused of judging only with their hearts, and not their minds. Feeling might dominate, but it did not prevent women from arriving at clear understanding. Lambert was not prepared to accept the denigration of *sentiment*. In women, sentiment did not combat reason but rather led, almost naturally, to reason: "[I]n women, thoughts come of their own accord, and are put in order more by sentiment than by reflexion: Nature reasons for them, sparing them all effort."[40] Thus, female reason is, in the end, superior to male reason: "[N]othing is so absolute as the intellectual superiority arising from the capacity to feel."[41]

Lambert thus boldly demands woman's right to recognition of her intellectual contributions. As an author who did not dare to publish her own works for fear of offending against propriety (*bienséance*), she stressed the significance of societal approval of women's intellectual development. "Glory, the soul and pillar of all intellectual achievement, is denied them."[42] That sounds more courageous than the practical advice to her daughter published before the *Réflexions*.[43] While in the *Avis d'une mère a son fils* (A Mother's Advice to Her Son) the son is admonished to be proud, confident, and ambitious in order to attain fame,[44] the daughter's wings are clipped: "Your greatest ornament is modesty."[45]

The education proposed for girls is appropriately mediocre. A bit of history, philosophy, and ethics; Latin, because it is the language of the Church. Italian, "the language of love," has already been rejected as too dangerous.[46] For the same reason she recommends that daughters not read novels. Scholarship is a vice against which the daughter must be on guard: "[R]emember that girls should approach the sciences with almost the same delicate modesty as they approach the vices."[47]

Seen against the background of these two *Avis,* formulated separately for sons and daughters, Renate Baader's assessment, placing Madame de Lambert in the tradition of Poulain de la Barre, is accurate only in part.[48] All the criticism of the neglect of girls' education in the *Réflexions* should not blind us to the fact that Lambert falls short of previous demands, and that in her *Avis* to her daughter she scarcely undertakes "all possible efforts to develop and improve female education."[49] Baader's assessment is correct in that Lambert does not yet place any limitations on female reason. Above all, she addresses herself in general to any attempt to denigrate women.

At the same time, though, Lambert introduces a differentiation between the sexes that would have been unthinkable for proponents of radical equality. Man and woman were considered completely equal on the basis of reason. The revalorization of feeling added a new human capacity attributed in unequal proportions to men and women. Through this a new, particularly female, quality arose. Sensitivity and empathy were recast as something specific to women. Even if this actually accorded women more capabilities than previously, the rationalists' postulate of equality had been left behind.

On the other hand, it is precisely Lambert's reinterpretation that appears to vindicate the thesis of the equality of the sexes. Sentiment, newly attributed to women, was not yet regarded as opposed to reason. More sensitivity did not (yet) mean less reason. Empathy did not prevent women from thinking; on the contrary, it enhanced their capacity for understanding. This was only possible because feeling was still considered as spontaneous a capacity of the human *mind* as reason. In this, Lambert differs substantially from later attempts to derive women's particular sensitivity (as opposed to rationality) from physiological factors, whereby women's merely physical feelings were seen as inferior to men's intellectual capabilities. In maintaining the unity of emotionality and rationality, Lambert guarded women against denigration.

Her approach to specifying female qualities nevertheless provided one of the preconditions for a devalorization of women. It was, after all, only the differentiation between the sexes that allowed them to be evaluated differently. Surely, Lambert accorded women a new characteristic, but it was precisely this well-meaning addition that facilitated women's reduction to that selfsame characteristic. The stage was now set for a female anthropology of the Enlightenment. Madame de Lambert is important to the extent that she showed the way to a definition of human nature divided along gender lines. The *Encyclopédie* permits us to study this anthropology in a systematic context.

2

Dividing the Human Race: The Anthropological Definition of Woman in the Encyclopédie

The Human Being as Natural Being

Diderot and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie*[1] represents an ambitious attempt to collect and make available in systematic form the sum of eighteenth-century knowledge. Anthropology has a central place within this system. A closer look, however, reveals that the definitions it offers of what is "human" apply only to the male half of humanity. This statement may seem merely to repeat a well-known fact, but does this mean that from its very inception the new "science of man" excluded woman as an object of knowledge? In the following chapter I would like to discover whether and *how* woman became a topic apart, and what function she served within the system of Enlightenment anthropology.

The most general definition of the human being can be found under the entry "Man" (HOMME [*Morale*]):

> MAN (*Moral*): This word has no precise meaning, merely reminding us of all that we are; but what we are cannot be contained in a single definition. To show but a part of this requires further divisions and details. We shall not speak here either of our outward form nor of the organic structure that places us in the class of the animals. See MAN (*Anatomy*). The man under consideration here is that being who thinks, wills and acts.[2]

The article undertakes no separate, gender-specific definition of the male human being. French, like English, does not make the distinction (possible in German, for example) between *Mensch* (human being) and *Mann* (male human being), so that *man* is simply subsumed under *Man*.

"Woman", in contrast, is defined in a separate article, "Woman" (FEMME [*Anthropologie*]), as "the female of man".[3] This special status has led Friederike Hassauer-Roos to conclude that woman was no longer to be construed as a human being but rather as something separate, contrasted to the universality of the human and thus excluded from the concept *Man*. As a result, woman's humanity remains vague, and she is not, at least not explicitly, defined as a human being. As a human, she thus represents a "systematic empty space" that functions as an absence to be filled, at best after the fact, by imagination—*outside* the total anthropological system.[4]

Consistent with this analysis, Hassauer-Roos ultimately understands Enlightenment anthropology as the science of *man*. In so doing, however, she misunderstands the nature of eighteenth-century anthropology. The fact that the description "the female of man" only refers to woman in her capacity as a natural being by no means calls into question her anthropological definition. The characterization of human beings as natural and creaturely can even be regarded as a central trait of the *Encyclopédie* and of the anthropology of the later Enlightenment more generally. This becomes clear when we consult further articles on the subject.

In setting out to answer the question "What is a human being?," the Encyclopedists proceed from human beings' natural condition. Even the aforementioned article "Man" (HOMME), which is included in the discipline of *Morale*, indicating that it is devoted to the nonphysical side of human beings, expressly calls attention to the animalistic aspects of human nature. A number of articles on anatomy and natural history treat the biological nature of human beings. The fundamental articles HOMME (*Hist. nat.*) and HOMME (*Anatomie*) by no means use the term *homme* in a gender-*un*specific manner only. To do so would indicate that, in the final analysis, *homme* as male would represent the universally human. In fact, the articles do differentiate on the basis of gender. Despite the fact that in French as in English, *Man* and *man* are homonyms, the two can be clearly differentiated here. In this context, the authors borrow a term usually applied to animals (*mâle*) in order to make clear when they are speaking of men (e.g., in the article HOMME (*Exposition anatomique du corps de l'*).[5]

The *Encyclopédie* thus provides parallel *natural-historical* definitions for female and male human beings. In the minds of Enlightenment thinkers, these definitions are part of an anthropology grounded largely in natural history. They are nothing more than definitions of "the human being," to which species women expressly belong.

It is only in later descriptions that women begin to be set apart from the definition of the human being. The human being is, to be sure, part of nature, but at the same time—in contrast to other natural beings—also its ruler. Asking what distinguishes human beings from animals, and answering in the spirit of the theoreticians of progress, Le Roy cites human inventiveness:

> But all of their [animals'] actions, taken together, still leave an infinite distance between themselves and *man*. Man's dominion over them may have been acquired by illegitimate means, but that nonetheless proves the superiority of his methods and thus of his nature. One cannot help but be struck by this advantage when one regards man's mighty achievements, when one examines in detail his arts and the progress of his sciences, when one sees him traversing the seas, measuring the heavens, and stealing the very noise and effects of thunder.[6]

Specifically, human reason, the ability to transform nature through invention, makes of the human "a being . . . who appears to stand above all the other animals he dominates."[7] These passages no longer differentiate according to gender. In contrast to the anatomical and natural-historical descriptions of the human being, the differences of meaning between *Man* and *man* disappear here. Because one word stands for both, the male human being is implicitly named in the definition of *Homme*, while the female human being implicitly disappears from the definition. There are no analogous definitions under the rubric "Woman" (FEMME). Neither the article FEMME (*Anthropologie*) nor the article FEMME (*Morale*), for example, lists the spirit of invention as a characteristic distinguishing women from animals.

But even these observations should not lead us to conclude that woman's human status was in doubt, that she was excluded from the concept of human being. She was, after all, defined as a human natural being. Her exclusion applies to the human quality of rationality—also implicit here—attributed to man. But just as man does not lose his status as a human natural being, so the purely biological definition of woman does not rob her of humanity. In the minds of the Encyclopedists, the

human being was a rational *animal*. That which was specifically human—reason—did not comprise all of human nature.

It was thus not a matter of whether or not women were human beings. The problem, rather, lay in the *divergent* definitions of female and male human beings. Woman's humanity was thus not undefined, but defined *differently* from that of men. Only with this working hypothesis can we uncover the concrete definitions of woman *within* the anthropological system of the *Encyclopédie*.

The following account will examine more closely the internal structure of the concept *Homme*, in order to analyze the respective places occupied by man and woman in Enlightenment anthropology. To do so, it will be necessary to abandon abstract definitions of concepts and to return to the ensemble of discourses in the *Encyclopédie*. I shall not limit myself here to the immanent analysis of concepts; rather, I would like to show, using certain significant examples, why in the minds of the Encyclopedists the specific humanity of woman was not identical to that of man.

The Image of the Useful Human Being: *Honnêteté* Turns Bourgeois

The many articles in the field *Morale* provide us with an idealized image of the human being, whose concrete model character is already expressed by its crystallization into a particular concept—the *honnête homme*. Borrowed from aristocratic usage, it may be understood as a bourgeois rallying cry. One finds this term, virtually a shorthand for all the virtues admired by the Encyclopedists, in almost every fundamental article, but often also in short, definitional ones. The *Encyclopédie* dismantles at every turn the original meaning of this term—as formulated, for example, by the Chevalier de Méré in the seventeenth century as a courtly code of behavior. It is replaced by the bourgeois-enlightened meaning of *honnêteté*, the diametrical opposite of the aristocratic notion.[8]

I shall limit my remarks to one significant aspect of this redefinition: the revaluation of work. The phrase *occupation honnête* as a synonym for (paid) labor, which we find in the article "Idleness" (OISIVETÉ [*Droit nat. & polit.*]),[9] already reveals the authors' aspirations to free work from the aristocratic contempt to which it had been subject. For the aristocratic *honnête homme*, after all, work was not an *honnête* activity.

The new work ethic was legitimated by appeals to human nature. Only through work, claimed Jaucourt in the article, could the human being realize himself. But which activities counted as work? Where did idleness begin? The criterion was clear: *usefulness to society* was the measure of the honorability of any activity: "The practice of *idleness* is contrary to the duties of man and the citizen, whose obligation in general is to be good for something, and in particular, to make himself useful to the society of which he is a member. Nothing can relieve anyone of this duty, for it is one imposed by nature."[10] The *honnête homme* realized himself as a human being through activities useful to society. When the Encyclopedists speak of concrete human beings, it is always from the perspective of their social utility. Countless descriptions of various productive activities, from the crafts to the article "Planting" (PLANTATION), make clear in what that utility consisted. That which was specifically human, the individual's exercise of reason, was always a step forward for humanity in general. The "tremendous achievements of man" (article HOMME [*Morale*]) were inextricably linked to universal human progress. Specifically human activity was always social.

Woman as Natural Being in the Physiocrats' *Ordre Naturel*

The socially useful (i.e., productive) activities of human beings, however, were defined in the *Encyclopédie* as a strictly male business. We look in vain for the female counterpart to the *honnête homme*, the *honnête femme.* The fact that this term—in contrast to the ubiquity of its male equivalent—appears, so far as I could discover, but once in the *Encyclopédie* (see later discussion) is no mere formality. The authors exclude woman's work from their archived knowledge, or rather, they suppress it in favor of another form of female productivity: fertility. The disproportion between articles on woman's social activities and her biological nature in the *Encyclopédie* is striking. A multiplicity of articles (e.g., the entries "womb, birth, breasts, wet nurse, menstruation") assemble what was known about the peculiarities of the female body, with an emphasis on childbirth and breast-feeding.

The exclusion of women's work stands in stark contrast to social reality. Léon Abensour has demonstrated that women played as great a role as men in eighteenth-century economic life.[11] This ignoring of women's

artisanal, agricultural, and intellectual labor, together with the simultaneous marked interest in the biological side of their humanity, reflects, I believe, the Encyclopedists' *physiocratically oriented social theory.* Woman's value as a human being—like man's—lay in her usefulness to society. This usefulness, however, as the physiocratic economists understood it, lay not so much in the productivity of her labor as in her biological capacity to produce human life. As Diderot wrote in his programmatic article HOMME (*Politique*),

> There is no other true wealth than *man* and land. *Man* is worthless without land, and land is worthless without *man*. *Man* is valuable in numbers; the more numerous a society is, the more powerful it will be during times of peace, and the more formidable during times of war. A sovereign will attend seriously to the multiplication of his subjects. The more subjects he has, the more merchants, workmen and soldiers there will be.[12]

For the Physiocrats, the assurance of population growth was as important a factor as arable land. The *biological reproduction of human beings* gained new significance against the background of their population policies and the broad demographic discussion they initiated in the eighteenth century. This aspect was intensified by the fact that contemporaries in eighteenth-century France lived with a sense of population crisis. Although, in contrast to the preceding century, this period experienced a thirty percent growth in the French population (from 21.5 to 29 million), the increase went unnoticed by contemporaries. The French were still haunted by the great mortality crises of the past, and the entire century lived in the shadow of a myth of stagnation.[13]

This consciousness did correspond to an *objective* crisis of the household economy, one which spawned an unprecedented wave of child neglect. The growth of child abandonment in the eighteenth century was an eloquent expression of this widespread abuse. In 1772, at the height of this development, seven thousand abandoned children were admitted to the "Couche," the hospital responsible for foundlings, in Paris alone.[14] Diderot speaks of five thousand child abandonments a year in his article "Man" (HOMME [*Politique*]).

The Physiocrats' theories describe this state of affairs as a squandering of wealth in the form of human labor power, and women became the main addressees of the economists' alarm signals. Elisabeth Badinter has shown the great ideological significance that the propagation of the mother role held within physiocratic discourse.[15] By locating woman's

social utility in her biological particularity, the natural side of her humanity took on quite another significance than it held for the natural being man.

In the *Encyclopédie*, this shift of emphasis was expressed as a liberation of woman from the medieval-clerical constraints which had long surrounded her sex. Here we no longer encounter the pejorative connotations of femininity which still belonged as a matter of course to the knowledge assembled in the Jesuit *Dictionnaire de Trévoux*, whose entry "Woman" (FEMME) included misogynist proverbs.[16] For Enlightenment thinkers *woman's biological nature* became an object of knowledge to be grasped rationally. To a great extent, the *Encyclopédie* treats female physiology and maladies with strict medical matter-of-factness (see, e.g., the article "Woman in childbed" [FEMME EN COUCHE]).[17] This is true even in those cases which seem most open to all manner of misogynist speculation. In the article "Menstruation" (MENSTRUES [*Médecine*]),[18] the misogynist myths surrounding menstruation are labeled superstition, although even the most progressive physicians of the age possessed no plausible explanation for the phenomenon.

The desire to allow sexuality—as an economic factor—to develop optimally and in a form appropriate to bourgeois society also led to a revision in conceptions of marriage. If the aim and purpose of marriage was to produce children, as Jaucourt expressly emphasizes in the article "Marriage" (MARIAGE [*Droit nat.*]), then the appropriate conditions had to be created. It was thus necessary to prevent young people from being married off against their will, since this deprived the state (!) of "women's few, precious years of fertility."[19] Jaucourt thus argues against forced marriages and marriages contracted for social position.

By producing and raising children, the married couple fulfilled its function, and Jaucourt saw no objections to divorce once they had discharged this duty. His reasoning once more reveals clearly the close ties between emancipatory demands grounded in natural law and the anthropological definition of men and women as natural beings:

> Because the aim of the association between the male and the female is not simply to procreate, but also to perpetuate the species, this association must continue at least as long after procreation as is necessary for the nourishment and preservation of offspring, that is to say, until they are capable of taking care of themselves. This is the principal and perhaps the only reason why male and female human beings are required to continue their association longer than other animals.[20]

This attitude leads to the notion of marriage as a civil contract, as opposed to the church's understanding of marriage as a sacrament. If we recall that one of the central demands of the *Cahiers de doléances* written by women before the French Revolution was the right to divorce,[21] the emancipatory significance of the natural law concept of marriage articulated here becomes more apparent.

Finally, we should not underestimate the demographic discourse's legitimizing function for the Enlightenment's rehabilitation of sensuality in the face of clerical prudery. In his article "Celibacy" (CÉLIBAT [*Hist. anc. & mod. Morale*]),[22] Diderot had calculated the sum lost annually to the state through priestly celibacy by putting a price of 9 pounds sterling on each child not born because of the injunction against priestly marriage (following the Englishman Bernard de Mandeville). Under the entry "Sensual" (VOLUPTUEUX), he informs his gentle readers:

> Those who teach I know not what austere doctrine which would reproach us for the sensitivity of the organs bestowed upon us by nature, whose desire it was that the preservation of the species and ourselves should afford us pleasure; and for that multitude of objects that surround us and that are destined to affect that sensitivity in a hundred agreeable ways, are so many melancholics who should be locked up in an asylum.[23]

The Other Side of the Natural Order

Other consequences of the physiocratic notion of femaleness were to have a more drastic effect on women's fate within the culture, however. By directly locating women's role in social reproduction in her natural bodily functions, the Physiocrats equated woman's humanity with her creatureliness. *Her humanity consisted chiefly in her sexual destiny.* She was *le sexe*, an expression used as a synonym for *woman*.[24]

According to the testimony of the *Encyclopédie*, this notion led to a continual emphasis on the incompatibility between female nature and woman's capacity to control nature. It was not the implicit equation of human being with man which was the real disgrace but, rather, the—equally unspoken—equation of woman with sex. The unchanging female nature attributed to women served as justification for keeping them in their supposedly creaturely place. The concept of nature here does not serve as a foundation for mature independence and freedom. Rather, it demarcates the limits of proper social behavior. A woman who over-

stepped these boundaries incurred the wrath of nature. As an example, one need only point to the numerous tracts in which women who refused to breast-feed were confronted with horrific cautionary tales about the supposedly dire effects of milk blockages.[25]

I would like to sketch the *domesticatory function of the concept of female nature*, taking the discursive strategy of the article "Midwife" (ACCOUCHEUSE) as an example. In this text, authored by Diderot, the midwife's work is described as the devil's own. With something close to relish, he reports on the deformities (supposedly witnessed by himself) caused by the cruelties and ignorance of the midwife and announces, by means of a quotation from La Mettrie, the enlightened male public's opinion of this profession—which by the way is the only female trade to which the *Encyclopédie* devotes an article. "Women would be better off . . . if there were no midwives. The art of midwifery is inappropriate unless there are obstacles: but these women do not await the time appointed by nature; they tear the egg, & drag out the baby before the woman's pains have truly commenced."[26] As a rule, women should not require midwives; they only had to wait for nature to take its course. Any attempt to control their own nature was to court disaster. A few pages before, the entry "Childbed" (ACCOUCHEMENT) provided four pages of precise instructions for assisting childbirth. The assistant mentioned, however, is not a "midwife" (*accoucheuse*), but a "surgeon" (*chirurgien*). What is forbidden to the midwife/woman is the duty of the surgeon/man. It is his nature to intervene in nature, investigating and transforming. While female nature is constantly reminding women of the "natural" limits of creaturely existence, male nature rises ever higher above it. While male nature develops through the productive activities of practical and theoretical labors, female nature is trapped in the cycles of organic reproduction.

In future, the biological determination of female nature was to become a convincing argument for legitimating the idea of natural sex-specific character.[27] The *Encyclopédie* only hints at this conclusion: "If that same delicacy of the organs that renders *women's* imaginations more lively also renders their minds less capable of attention, one can also say that they perceive more quickly, see as well and look more cursorily."[28]

That man sometimes came to fear the monster he had created by constructing female nature was a fate he brought upon himself. The female biology conjured up by men threatened at times to slip out of their control. Medical research, whose failings were a subject of agreement among the physicians who wrote for the *Encyclopédie*, did not succeed in ban-

ishing all the unpredictabilities of female natural power. Hippocrates' warnings about the uterus were still taken seriously in the eighteenth century. The article "Womb" (MATRICE), which went on for pages about the "maladies" which befell this organ, began with the Hippocratic theory that "the smallest disturbance in this organ results in a general disorder of the machine as a whole; one may claim with confidence that there is scarcely an illness which affects women in which the womb does not play some part."[29]

In the article "Marriage" (MARIAGE), (which is also a synonym for sexual intercourse), Ménuret de Chambaud describes the natural power of female sexuality. "Once they become carried away, they forget the laws of modesty and propriety, seeking by any and all means to satisfy their wild passions; they attack men shamelessly, enticing them with the most indecent poses and lascivious propositions."[30] He speaks here of women who are sexually unsatisfied. To prevent them from disturbing the social order, they must be married off as quickly as possible. The unmarried woman does not conform to the norm and is considered either licentious (*debauchée*) or of necessity neuropathic from sexual deprivation. "All practitioners agree that the various symptoms of the vapors or of the hysterical afflictions which affect young girls and widows are a result of sexual deprivation [*privation de mariage*]."[31] The life of unmarried women was diagnosed as an illness, and the doctors already had some remedies in mind:

> Physicians are often obliged to marry these patients off, and the success of this remedy proves the correctness of their advice. . . . There are a thousand circumstances in which coitus legitimated by marriage is impossible, and religion does not permit us to imitate the fortuitous audacity of Rolfink, who saw no other means to cure a dangerously sick woman than to cause an expulsion of her semen [which it was believed women also had]. Since no husband was at hand, he used an artificial object for this purpose and achieved a complete recovery.[32]

The Moral Sex

Woman's biological nature was not simply a physical problem of interest to physicians. Because it was intended to be channeled for the good of society, this nature also had a genuinely social dimension. When the social function of woman's nature was set down as a binding norm, this

raised the issue of morality in the narrower sense of the word: not simply as an anthropological definition of woman but also as the generalized social expectation of particular modes of behavior. Since woman's duties were to be restricted to the functioning of her biological nature, her morality, too, referred mainly to her sex-specific character (i.e., concretely speaking, to her sexual behavior).

In the article "Woman" (FEMME [*Morale*]), a description of the sophisticated salons, portrayed as sites of immorality, serves to distinguish specifically female morality. The social life of the *monde* is characterized in lavish detail as a corrupt one which deforms female character. The author Desmahis describes a type of woman he calls Chloë whom he locates within the aristocracy: "She bears a great name." Chloë experiments with love, which appears as her sex's sole reason for being.[33] As an archetypical representative of Paris salon culture who has chosen fashionable sociability as her life's work, she is portrayed as a woman in a world of superficial vanities who has ceased to follow her heart. Desmahis makes unmistakeably clear his disapproval of amorous intrigue as a way of life for women. The description of the course taken by Chloë's life is meant to serve as a deterrent to others. The author warns his female readers against seeking their happiness among the *monde*, which would prove to be their moral downfall. It is in this context that the term *honnête femme* appears—used exclusively, however, in the sense of "decent, chaste woman"—in contrast to aristocratic libertinage.

> Flirtatious in the extreme, she nevertheless believes herself merely coquettish. In this conviction she sits at the gaming-table; now attentive, now distracted, she answers the first man with her knee, squeezes the hand of the next, praising his laces, and at the same moment tosses a few apposite words to a third. She claims to be without prejudice because she has no principles; she assumes the title "honnête homme" because she has renounced that of *honnête femme*.[34]

His protagonist plays with her lovers according to the rules of fashionable society; her behavior is guided by pretence rather than genuine feeling: "[S]he knows how to give sensuality all the appearance of sentiment, and pleasure all the charms of sensuality. She is equally adept at hiding desires and feigning emotion, at putting on a smile and shedding a tear. Her eyes rarely betray what is in her soul; her lips almost never speak what her eyes reveal, or what is in her soul."[35] The observing philosopher concludes, "Who can define women? Everything in them speaks,

but in an equivocal language. . . . Women's souls are like their beauty; it seems that they only let it be seen in order to fire the imagination!"[36] The author, however, is by no means using his imagination. Rather, he follows his morally disapproving portrait of the flirtatious woman with her opposite, a representation gleaned not from his own fantasy, but depicting in concentrated form the moral definition of woman as expressed in the Enlightenment conception of femininity.

> [H]er happiness is to know nothing of what the elegant world [*le monde*] calls *pleasures*; her glory is to live in obscurity. Confined to the duties of wife and mother, she devotes her days to the practice of unheroic virtues: occupied with running her family, she rules her husband with indulgence, her children with gentleness, and her servants with kindness. Her home is a haven of religious sentiment, filial piety, conjugal love, maternal affection, order, inner peace, sweet slumber, & health: thrifty and domestic, she keeps passions and desires at bay; no pauper presenting himself at her doorstep is ever turned away; no licentious man ever presents himself. She is respected for the reserve & dignity of her character, loved for her leniency & sensitivity & feared for her prudence & firmness. She spreads a sweet warmth, a pure light which illumines and enlivens all that surrounds her. Was it nature that placed her on the highest level, at which I find her, or was it reason that led her there?[37]

moral ideal

Woman is accorded a secure place here, sited in a triple sense: anthropologically as the "ruler" in the sphere of human reproduction; socially as a (bourgeois) housewife and mother; morally as a chaste person living in seclusion whose destiny (to love) manifests itself solely in the family sphere. Desmahis' rhetorical question "Who can define women?" appears to refer not to women in general, but only to women of a particular social stratum. It is the *femme du monde* who is so indefinable for him; her "unnatural" way of life distorts human nature to the point of unrecognizability. He nonetheless by no means dispenses with a concrete definition of the feminine more generally. On the contrary, his normative model of the housewife and mother is the standpoint from which not only the critique of the nonbourgeois woman is formulated, but also from which the nature of woman within the Encyclopedist's anthropological system is defined.

While the article "Man" (HOMME [*Morale*]) addresses Man's relationship to nature as a whole, the article "Woman" (FEMME [*Morale*]) concentrates solely on woman's relationship to her own (i.e., sexual) nature. As a result, woman, in contrast to man, is not regarded from the standpoint of intellectual perfectability but chiefly from the standpoint of moral improvement, with an emphasis on her sexual morals.

X

Whereas LeRoy, as we have seen, demonstrated man's superiority to animals by pointing to his great scientific achievements in the article "Man" (HOMME [*Morale*]), Desmahis makes woman's virtuousness the determining factor of her humanity. Woman's intellectual capacity, her actual or potential role in human knowledge or scientific progress is no longer part of the discussion. The devoted wife and mother, the paradigm of female happiness, is defined by moral qualities such as complaisance, gentleness, forbearance, and sensitivity.

The often quite extensive articles on child-rearing, on school curricula, and on the institutionalization of education nowhere address girls or women.[38] Only in the odd phrase is their intellectual improvement mentioned at all.[39] The sole goal of exercising their intellect is to educate their *moral* judgment. For Barthez the function of women's learning is to "weaken their sinful tendencies."[40] Desmahis also hands women a bit of unambiguous advice for the use of their reason: "There is a woman whose wit makes her loved rather than feared. . . ."[41] For him, the deficiencies of girls' education are, above all, a moral danger: "It is astonishing that such uncultivated souls could bring forth so many virtues, and that more vice does not sprout there."[42] The *Dictionnaire raisonné* pays no heed to Poulain de la Barre and his followers. Compared to discussions up to that time, the authors of the *Encyclopédie*, that very work which prided itself on assembling the knowledge of its age, pay little tribute to the learned woman. In the article "Woman" (FEMME [*Anthropologie*]), Barthez may express his wonderment at the large number of illustrious women, but he only mentions one, Anna Maria Schurmann, whom contemporaries regarded as a "paradigm of female learning."[43] His passage cannot be viewed as an homage to this unusual woman either; the euphoria of feminist texts in the rationalist tradition has given way to a more skeptical evaluation. Mallet considers Schurmann's argument "that scholarly studies enlighten and provide a wisdom one cannot buy with the perilous aid of experience" a mere excuse, insisting that "it is doubtful whether this premature caution does not cost a bit of innocence."[44]

By focusing above all on woman's social role as mother, the *Encyclopédie* can no longer formulate an equality between men and women in the sense of identical (intellectual) abilities. In contrast to the rationalist feminists' position, which abstracted from social conditions, the discourse on woman in the *Encyclopédie* is grounded in Enlightenment thinkers' notion of society.

The *Encyclopédie* reflects the conflict between bourgeois concepts of

society and the emancipatory drive for education. The Encyclopedists' socioeconomic ideas, which culminate in numerous articles in calls for stable family structures and population growth, left their mark on the articles on women. The demands for education made in passing throughout the *Encyclopédie* are not followed up either by references to existing approaches or concrete suggestions for reform. The bourgeois way of life no longer permitted equality in the use of reason.

It is against this background, I believe, that we must evaluate Desmahis' article "Woman" (FEMME [*Morale*]). The function of this text, which at first glance seems more anecdotal than analytical, is to make women's exclusion from the public sphere appear reasonable. The author's warnings against fashionable sociability are more than the simple expression of a general rejection of the way of life of the Ancien Régime's parasitic upper crust which we find in a number of articles throughout the *Encyclopédie*. While elsewhere condemnations of aristocratic idleness culminate in demands for new, more useful forms of sociability than those prevailing in the *monde*,[45] Desmahis' demonization of the lady of fashion serves to justify woman's complete exclusion from social communication. Bourgeois woman's virtue was not to be expressed in the development of new forms of social intercourse within the framework of an enlightened counterpublic, as articulated for example by Saint-Lambert in the article (HONNÊTE). "Her glory" was, rather, "to live in obscurity."

It was precisely here, though, that Desmahis touched the weak point of Enlightenment strategies of legitimation. When he speaks of the virtuous woman as one living "in obscurity," "enclosed" within the sphere of her domestic duties, he reveals the conflict just described—that the process of excluding women from public life also means their exclusion from intellectual exchange, all the more so when one considers that a good portion of intellectual communication—also and particularly among the Encyclopedists—took place in salons. This explains the eloquent silence hanging over the learned woman in the *Encyclopédie*.

Women's capacity for rational thought, however, had not yet been excluded altogether. It remained an empty space, which was filled in the 1770s by two theoretical texts. While the *Encyclopédie* avoided the question of female learning, both Antoine Léonard Thomas and Pierre Roussel were to devote much attention to the subject.

3

The Sensualist Turning Point

The writings of Thomas and Roussel may be regarded as occupying representative positions in the late-Enlightenment *querelle des femmes*. The many reviews of Thomas' *Essai sur les femmes* (Essay on Women) in contemporary journals, and the fact that it inspired Diderot's own essay *Sur les femmes*, point to the work's broad reception. Roussel's *Système physique et moral de la femme* (Systematic Overview of Woman as Physical and Moral Being) went through numerous editions into the second half of the nineteenth century.[1]

Thomas' *Essai* cannot, however, be regarded as an original text. It is, rather, an agreeable summary of the *querelle des femmes* since the middle of the eighteenth century. The passages concerned with moral-philosophical considerations, in particular, are highly indebted, without explicit acknowledgment, to the ideas of Rousseau, or to the reception of his works, particularly *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. This kind of text seems to me just the place to learn which aspects of the mid-century *querelle* had gained intellectual influence. In a later chapter on Rousseau I will examine those finer points of Rousseau's positions that were lost in the "popular" reception of his works.

The historian Thomas and the physician Roussel agreed that the answer to the question of woman's intellectual capacity depended on her biological nature. According to Thomas, "We must see . . . to what degree . . . the natural weakness of their [women's] organs permits the intense and lasting attention required to sustain a long continuous train of thought."[2] Roussel believed that reflections on women's "moral" nature

could only proceed on the basis of physiological knowledge. "Having considered woman from the physical standpoint, I then examined her from the intellectual standpoint. In so doing, I have doubtless restored medicine to its rights. I have always been persuaded that it is only in this discipline that the foundations of good morals lie. . . ."[3] The shift of the *querelle des femmes* to the plane of sensory physiology made possible the strict separation of femininity and masculinity in *all* aspects of life. For Poulain de la Barre and his followers, woman's biological nature had played only an insignificant role in regard to her intellectual capabilities, because, in the Cartesian tradition, they gave precedence to reason, which they conceived of as genderless. Thomas and Roussel, in contrast, proceeded from woman's physiological constitution in order to determine her intellectual capacity.

This reversal of perspective must be viewed against the background of a changed epistemological position within philosophy which also resulted in radical changes within medicine, particularly neurology.[4] The transition from rationalism to sensualism brought with it a shift of emphasis in notions of the origin and uniqueness of human knowledge. Surely, Descartes had taken account of both sides of knowledge—perception and cognition. One need only point to his extensive discussion of sensory physiology in the *Traité de l'homme* (Treatise on Man).[5] But the certainty of knowledge could only come from reason, which as *res cogitans* was in principle independent of the sensory impressions of *res extensa*. During the eighteenth century this autonomy of reason remained fundamentally unchallenged. To that extent Poulain's dictum of incorporeal, and thus gender-neutral, intellect could still claim validity.

Nevertheless, it cannot be overlooked that ever since Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and more particularly Condillac's *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines* (Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge), the concepts processed by reason, and to some extent also the connection of these concepts, were attributed primarily to sensory perception or experience.[6] In this way, knowledge was made dependent on the human physiological constitution. Questions surrounding the nature of the sensory organs and nerves attained greater significance than had been the case for Descartes and his adherents. In addition, the knowing subject no longer attained certainty through direct evidence but rather through self-perception. Human beings observed the operations of their own reason, which themselves had become an empirical object.[7]

All of this had become the object of an anthropology that placed the human being's natural condition at its center. Here human nature was not, as it had been for Descartes, for example, that which was original and essential but rather, quite literally, the physical-material condition of the human being. Surmounting, at least partially, the traditional dualism of nature and intellect, a theory of the intellectual capacities of the sexes could no longer ignore the physical differences between men and women which Poulain had still managed to exclude. This was to have fateful consequences for the learned woman. I would like to treat these two works beginning from this standpoint.

Roussel, who provided a precise description of the female organism according to the medical knowledge of his day, points to the "immediate effects, which appear to stem from the organization of woman's sensitive body parts."[8] The superior softness and mobility of women's bodily organs resulted in a greater sensitivity of the nerves and thus in quicker and more subtle sensory perceptions. This intensity and simultaneity of the most varied perceptions, however, made women incapable of abstraction: "The difficulty of shedding the tyranny of her sensations constantly binds her to the immediate causes which call them [the sensations] forth, preventing her from rising to those heights which would afford her a view of the whole."[9] Woman, thus, has more sensitive perceptions than man, but it is precisely this superiority which hinders her from grasping broader connections, because she is dominated by immediate sensory impressions. On the way to more complex concepts, woman finds herself at a standstill. Since, under empirical conditions, only this inductive method leads to universal knowledge, the fate of the learned woman is sealed.

We find the same assessment in Thomas, to whose *tableau énergique & élégant* Roussel incidentally refers. Thomas still shows the influence of Poulain when he complains that in previous "defenses of women" "reasoning has everywhere been replaced by authority, even when speaking of women; but on this matter, as on many others, twenty quotations are not worth a single argument!"[10] His line of argument, however, unlike Poulain's, does not proceed from a presumption of fundamental intellectual equality but from a comparison of bodily organs. "It seems that, in order to decide, once and for all, the great point of pride and rivalry between the two sexes, we must examine the strength or weakness of the bodily organs."[11] This sensualist position shifts the problem of "rivalry" between the sexes from the rational-intellectual to the sensory-physiologi-

cal plane, thus rendering physical constitution a decisive determinant of intellectual capacity.

Thomas distinguishes four different operations of reason: the "philosophical spirit, which reflects" (*esprit philosophique qui médite*), "memory, which associates" (*esprit de mémoire qui rassemble*), "imagination, which creates" (*esprit d'imagination qui crée*), and the "political or moral spirit, which governs" (*esprit politique ou moral qui gouverne*).[12] Not surprisingly, he appeals to Descartes, who, to his mind, wrongly attributed the philosophical spirit to women (perhaps he means Poulain here?). Thomas does not consider woman capable of philosophical reflection because her mind, dominated by a multiplicity of impressions, is too inclined to jump back and forth between objects instead of focusing on one at a time in order to reach more profound insights. "It [woman's intellect] contains more wit than effort. What it cannot grasp at once, it either does not see, or rejects, or despairs at ever seeing. It would thus be scarcely surprising if it were lacking in that stubborn slowness which alone seeks and discovers great truths."[13] Woman may possess a quick understanding, but she lacks the thoroughness and the will to apply herself that are necessary to achieve true knowledge. Thomas attributes this deficiency to the "natural weakness of her organs, from which her beauty arises . . . the restlessness of her character, stemming from her imagination . . . the number and variety of her sensations, which constitute part of her charm."[14] The same reasons contradict the assumption that men and women share a "spirit of order and of memory which classifies facts and ideas in order to recover them when needed."[15] In an analogy to biological differences, Thomas claims, "We know that there exist intellectual abilities which are mutually exclusive. One cannot use the same hand to cut a diamond and to drive a gallery [in the mines]."[16] Thomas has thus already answered his final, purely rhetorical question of whether women's education, or women's nature, is responsible for the dearth of famous women compared to men "in favor" of women's nature.

Roussel advances further physiological arguments for woman's limited intellectual capacity. The assumed sensitivity of the entire female organism can withstand no extraordinary strain. For this reason, he warns against excessive physical effort. Continuous studies, however, are even more harmful than physical labor. Even in men, the "strong exertion of the intellectual powers" would lead to an unhealthy concentration of bodily fluids in the brain. The result was the "vapors" (*vapeurs*), a term

for supposed hysteria, that is, for a whole range of nondiagnosable, chiefly psychosomatic illnesses. Another physician, Raulin, had already pointed to women's greater disposition to "vaporous afflictions" (*affections vapeureuses*) in 1758.[17] The conclusions Roussel draws go beyond his colleague's. "Her delicate organs will feel more keenly the unavoidable ill effects that serious study brings with it!"[18] For this reason, nature had equipped women with healthy instincts which shepherded them safely past the dangerous abysses of scholarship. For Roussel, the theory of usurpation with which Poulain and his followers had explained female ignorance was nothing but the flattery of a few unprincipled men. "Those men who seek to flatter women maintain . . . that we bar the door to the sciences before them, in order to secure this privilege exclusively for ourselves. The truth is that they do not care a whit for them [the sciences], and rightfully so. One wants to praise them for the intellect they might have, as if there were not enough to commend in the intellect they do have."[19] Henceforth, woman could only persist in trying to cross the threshhold of the sciences at the expense of losing her normatively defined, gender-specific identity. Femininity and learning had become two incompatible quantities. Roussel describes the consequences of scholarly endeavor in a truly deterrent manner: "A person who devotes herself deeply exists only in the head; she scarcely appears to breathe. The body, deprived of regenerating juices . . . languishes, fades and, at length, dwindles like a tender shrub planted in arid soil, whose branches have been parched by the torrid sun."[20] In contrast to their limited capacity for rational reflection, Thomas accords women great powers of imagination because of their "mobile senses, [which] skim all objects, retaining their image. . . . The real world is not enough for them; they delight in creating an imaginary one, which they inhabit and embellish."[21] This capacity for fantasy, which is always mentioned primarily as a disposition toward superstition, exercised the minds of the time. Women react to outside influences like sensitive seismographs and were thus more receptive to sensory impressions—but also more susceptible to sensory illusions. This premise led to the presumption of great female powers of imagination that—in contrast to male imagination, which was ruled and controlled by reason—continually threatened to slip into irrationality and superstition. "Ghosts, enchantments, wonders, all that is outside the ordinary laws of nature, are their work and their delight. Their souls are elated and their minds ever closer to enthusiasm."[22] The supposed power

of this greater capacity for imagination, and the supposed feebleness of the reduced capacity for thought, are attributed in both cases to woman's particular physical constitution.

It would nevertheless be hasty to attribute to Roussel and Thomas the conception that reason itself took on a specifically female character. Caution is necessary here: women are not being denied in principle the capacity for reason, which is still conceived as gender neutral. Roussel and Thomas do, however, deny them the necessary preconditions for developing this reason as men do. The discovery that the sensory organs exert an influence over human knowledge is used to shape the argument that women are incapable of certain cognitive operations. The same conditions that, according to Locke, make human knowledge possible in the first place, are now seen as having the opposite effect. In women, the very sensory perceptions that provide men with the materials for their cognitive labors are turned into obstacles to certain cognitive functions. The female sex may have quicker and more precise perceptions, but women are incapable of abstraction and thus of cognitive accomplishments comparable to men's.

The dismantling of women's capacity for thought and creativity on the grounds of their physical constitution went hand in hand with a new definition and valorization of femininity, derived from precisely this biological determination: the ability to bear children as a genuinely feminine corporeality. As the *Encyclopédie* already hinted, there was no discourse on women in the late Enlightenment which did not mention this sex-specific bodily function at least implicitly. In the next chapter I take a closer look at this phenomenon.

4

The Sexualization of Female Existence

The transition to a sensualist or naturalist anthropology of woman was no mere shift of epistemological or scientific paradigms. From the very beginning, the distribution of sensory and cognitive capacities between the sexes had a social character. It was argued that woman, because of her physical constitution, possessed more sensitivity and less rationality than man and was thus better able to fulfill a particular social function. This fusion of sociability and nature becomes particularly apparent in the discourse on female sexuality. For the sensualist theoreticians, the specificity of female nature reveals itself nowhere more clearly than in those bodily functions directly dependent on sex.

Medical Discourse

The proliferation of literature dealing with the female body and more particularly with women's sexuality is striking. This phenomenon can be observed both in the literary and medical fields. The multitude of popular medical treatises in particular testify to the dominant consciousness of the Enlightenment.[1] Michel Delon has described the effort to recognize and express the specificity of the female organism as opposed to the male as a characteristic of medical discourse. This dissociation (gradually) came to replace the ancient theory regarding the female body

as derivative of the male, a view which retained its validity into the eighteenth century. "In relation to man, woman is regarded either as a lack, an excess or, in a more developed theory, as an inversion."[2] The male body and its functions—so far as they were known—represented the norm, and the definition of the female body consisted in a compilation of deviations from this norm. The universal ignorance surrounding the female reproductive organs strengthened the tendency to define woman's entire organism as a mere variation on the male. Woman was viewed as a "deficient man" (*homme manqué*). The lack of a specific medical terminology for describing the female body is typical.[3] In addition, Enlightenment physicians also referred to Galen, who, proceeding from the Aristotelian thesis of the *homme manqué*, described the female genitals as internalized and only partially developed forms of the male organs. This view led Buffon to argue that scientists should devote themselves more to finding the homologies between the male and female organisms: "[I]n reflecting upon the structure of the generative parts of each sex of the human species, one finds so many resemblances and such a singular conformity that one might be led to believe that those parts which appear so different to us on the outside are, in truth, the same organs."[4] In the article FEMME (*Anthropologie*) in the *Encyclopédie* Barthez, citing Daubenton, similarly reduces the biological differences between men and women:

> M. Daubenton . . . having noticed the greatest analogy between the two sexes in the secretion and emission of semen, believes that the only difference one can find in the size & position of certain parts depends solely upon the womb which is additionally present in women, & that this organ, were men to possess it, would make their reproductive organs absolutely identical to those of women.[5]

These physiological theories admitted of no extensive sex-specific distinctions. Roussel, who developed the first systematic female physiology in 1779, bemoaned this state of affairs:

> If philosophers on the one hand have observed the moral side well, physicians, on the other, have described the physical well, at least as far as is possible. The latter would have done well, however, to pay greater attention to woman's constitution in general, & and not simply to regard her as a being completely identical to man, except for those particular functions that characterize her sex.[6]

In contrast to contemporary medical literature, Roussel emphasized men's and women's *different* functions in reproduction, viewing these biological differences as a universal principle encompassing *all* of life:

> There are authors who believed they had found much resemblance between the genital parts of women and men. Rest assured that these authors have been misled by false or superficial reports. The different functions of man and woman in the important task of procreation alone suffice to remove any idea of similarity between the organs with which each participates.[7]

For him, woman is not an *homme manqué*. Instead, her membership in the female sex shapes her entire physical and psychic constitution, which differs in every respect from man's. Roussel does not stop at the feminization of the female body. The entire female organism is, in his view, designed to perform a function assigned to woman by nature, one which consists not merely in childbearing but also extends to her social role. It is the physician's task to explore this function systematically. Henceforth femaleness was no longer an (anatomical) attribute but a principle within the anthropological system as a whole. Each part of the female organism was a mark of woman's destiny. In this Roussel departs decisively from materialistic theories (e.g., La Mettrie's and Helvétius'), which regarded the intellectual (and also physical) differences between human beings as the result of outside influences and education. For him, the differences between man and woman were both innate (*innées*) and determinant of their character. "It is probable, then, that the arrangement of those parts which compose woman's body is determined by nature herself, and that it serves as the *foundation* [emphasis added] of the physical and moral character which distinguishes her [from man]."[8] Roussel assumes an eternal feminine and an eternal masculine principle, which are expressed in the physical nature of human beings. As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, he (re)constructed female sex-specific character largely through pure analogies to women's physique, justifying his approach with the assertion that woman's constitution was finalistic, that is, essentially grounded in her capacity for reproduction.

Roussel's treatise is typical of the biological-medical dimension of the paradigmatic shift. In it we see the process, typical for the eighteenth century, of the complete sex-specific determination of the female individual. Scientific discourse was the precondition for the later view of female human beings primarily as sexual beings. Diderot's literary representations provide an excellent illustration of this phenomenon.

No

Literary Discourse

Sur les femmes

This little text[9] was written in response to Antoine-Léonard Thomas' *Essai sur les femmes*, which was discussed earlier. Diderot criticizes the neutral distance to his subject which Thomas adopted as an author. He calls for a discourse that proceeds from the female human being's sexual destiny. According to him, the topic of women can only be treated in the context of their sexuality. Thus he traces all manifestations of woman's life back to her sexual organs. The relationship between femaleness and irrational feeling, still vague in Thomas' work, reveals itself in Diderot's review as a clinical diagnosis: hysteria. The anomalies of female imagination—which Diderot treats at some length as cases of mass hysteria, superstition, religious fanaticism, prophecy, and self-destruction—are for him not exceptions but central features of female sexuality.

In contrast to the norm—male sexuality—Diderot views female sexuality as oscillating between the poles of frigidity and excess. Measuring it against controlled virile regularity, he finds female desire wanting. "Less in control of their senses than we are, the rewards are also less prompt and less sure for them."[10] The lack of control over their own sensuality was also the cause of the excessive feelings that erupted in bouts of hysteria: "The woman dominated by hysteria feels I know not what infernal or celestial emotions. At times she makes me shiver. I have seen and heard in her the raging of the ferocious beast which is a part of her."[11] This lack of self-control is in the very nature of the female sexual organs. When he speaks of them, Diderot's discourse evokes danger: "Woman carries within herself an organ subject to terrible spasms, ruling her and exciting in her imagination phantasms of all sorts. . . . It is from the organ peculiar to her sex that all kinds of extraordinary ideas emerge."[12] Woman's dependence on her sexuality prevents her advancement to a higher stage of civilization. She remains mired in humanity's original savage state, ever threatening to sully man's cultural achievements with an uncontrolled outbreak of her powerful natural sexuality: "Outwardly they are more civilized than we are, but inwardly they have remained true savages, at the very least complete Machiavellians."[13] Woman is not receptive to humanity's moral values: "[L]acking in reflection and principles, nothing penetrates to a certain depth of conviction in women's minds . . . the ideas of justice, virtue, vice, kindness, maliciousness swim

on the surface of their souls."[14] While Thomas had excluded the female sex from the public sphere because of particular deficiencies, Diderot now relegates woman to the realm of the mysterious, far removed from reality: "The symbol of women in general is that of the Apocalypse, on which is written: MYSTERY."[15]

Elisabeth de Fontenay interprets Diderot's representation of woman as the emancipatory counterpart to aristocratic, ecclesiastical, and scientific models of femininity. She attributes to the essay *Sur les femmes* a double taboo-breaking function. On the one hand, female sexuality is no longer excluded from discussions of woman and, on the other, woman is no longer defined as an *homme manqué* but rather as a being in her own right. She considers Diderot's rejection of a "neutral" discourse evidence that, in his reflections on woman, he was not setting himself up as an ultimate authority but rather bringing his own sexuality into his reflections. Instead of raising masculinity to a universal principle by neutralizing it, he describes it as desire:

> Diderot writes as a lover, not as a subject of knowledge, a strategist of seduction or a representative of divine judgment. . . . It is thus that we should interpret his constant recourse to the masculine first person plural: far from setting himself up as the norm from which women deviate, he emphasizes the involvement of male desire in his discourse on woman.[16]

According to this interpretation, Diderot explodes the symmetrical order of the sexes through the functions of the uterus which were peculiar to women, and which existing systems could no longer accommodate. The total conditioning of female existence by the sexual organs no longer allowed for a symmetry of the sexes and, with it, for the Cartesian image of humanity. From then on, both the sexlessness of cognition and the universality of the *res cogitans* itself were called into question:

> The uterus allows Diderot to develop his anti-Cartesian strategy, in that its bursts of rage and cunning pretences threaten the prerogative of another experience, the experience, at certain points, of the unifying thinking substance, and of the uniqueness of the subject. The pantomime of hysteria unhinges clear and distinct ideas, confuses obvious fact and scoffs at the truth: feminine peculiarity dismisses the universal masculine.[17]

Michèle Duchet makes a similar argument. She relativizes the taboo-breaking function that Fontenay claims for the essay, rightly pointing out that references to female sexuality had become commonplace in the sci-

entific and philosophical discourse of the second half of the eighteenth century. But she also emphasizes the significance of this essay as an attempt on Diderot's part to set himself off from Cartesianism. "Diderot's true boldness does not lie in his theory of the female body. It lies wholly in the connection he establishes between the physical, the moral and the production of ideas in beings thus abandoned to the whims of an organ that determines their behavior in advance and unbalances their conduct."[18] Although Fontenay and Duchet are correct in their assertion that Diderot's discourse would be unthinkable without the shift of epistemological paradigm (as I have shown), it is doubtful whether the rejection of a rationalist image of woman signified an overthrow of the masculine hierarchically structured thought order itself. The discussion of female sexuality, as we find it in Diderot's writings, by no means occurs independently of norm-producing gender-neutral rationality but rather continues to be oriented toward this norm. Not the universality of reason is called into question, but at most its autonomy. Diderot does in fact establish a connection between "the physical, the moral and the production of ideas," as Duchet remarks. Nevertheless, we need to be more precise about the respective functions of this sensualist epistemology for man and woman. The fact that in *Sur les femmes* Diderot names the uterus as the bodily organ most important for constituting woman's capacity for sentiment and knowledge is surely not irrelevant. In contrast to his *Eléments de physiologie* (Elements of Physiology) and *Lettres sur les aveugles* (Letters on the Blind), which are decisive for his revision of the rationalist image of humanity, and in which he formulates the foundations for the association between knowing and feeling, in *Sur les femmes* Diderot reduces the unity of woman's body and mind to the relationship between sex and mind—a reduction that Duchet and Fontenay overlook. The corporeality of the female capacity for knowledge is dominated by woman's sex-specific bodily organs. This difference leads to a qualitative displacement. While sensations contribute to the development of man's cognitive (and moral) capacity, they tend to limit or misguide this development in woman. As a result, for woman sensory experience and rational knowledge are mutually exclusive rather than mutually reinforcing or complementary. Fontenay's assumption that Diderot uses the intensity of female sensation to call into question one-dimensional (male) logic overlooks that this questioning is expressed as fear rather than opportunity. He fears that the relics of medieval superstition will destroy the enlightened view of the

world. Female sexuality is not the paradigm for overcoming Cartesian "evidentism and apriorism." On the contrary, it is the root of ignorance, superstition, and religious fanaticism, that is, of all those phenomena that the Enlightenment opposed.

It seems to me characteristic that Diderot does not adopt the method used by the physician Raulin here. Raulin no longer sought the origins of the "vapors" solely in the uterus but incorporated the entire human—male and female—organism into his diagnosis.[19] Diderot perpetuates the myth of hidden powers at work in the female body, thus creating a site for the *mystère* banished from enlightened society. Within woman's body, those forces continued to operate that were beyond the laws of the male-dominated world. Woman thus became the favorite object of nonrational knowledge, that is, of (male) imagination. For Diderot, woman was thus both the realm that escaped rational knowledge and the place where rationalists were ordered not to use their own reason. It was for this reason that he argued against Thomas' "scientific" discourse on female nature.

Diderot's relegation of woman to the realm of *mystère* did indeed facilitate the creation of rich fantasies around woman while simultaneously abstracting from real women. It is no accident that he hotly criticized the "impartial" style of Thomas' treatise. Woman's unpredictability and natural power did not allow for matter-of-fact discourse. "In writing of women, one must dip one's pen in the rainbow and scatter the dust of butterfly wings across the page; like the pilgrim's little dog, pearls must fall with each shake of one's paw. Not a one falls from M. Thomas'."[20] Diderot himself fulfilled this demand—not only in his review of Thomas, but also in his own fictions. In his novel *La Religieuse* (The Nun), he gave the "mystery" of woman form.

La Religieuse

This novel is usually considered significant because of Diderot's blunt and realistic portrayal of convent life. His indictment of the life-denying and ultimately inhumane practices of the clergy and his appeal for the right to self-determination of a woman held in a state of tutelage are formulated with a clarity that might have put him behind bars had the book been published during his lifetime.[21] It is not my intention here to deny *La Religieuse* its status as an emancipatory novel.[22] Rather, I would like to show that it has another theme as well: the female body and female sexuality.

This theme seems at first glance to be organically woven into the tale the novel tells. Suzanne Simonin's banishment behind convent walls implies the depiction of the suppression of her sensuality and the portrayal of prudish clerical morality. It soon becomes apparent, though, that there is a second text hidden behind this one. The representation of cloistered women's suppressed sexuality is more than merely an enlightened critique of clerical celibacy, conveying at the same time male fantasies of female sexuality. The world Diderot shows the reader via his protagonist is one populated and ruled exclusively by women. Once Suzanne Simonin enters the convent, or at least once she has been admitted to holy orders, all of the characters—with the exception of the father-confessor and the lawyer—are nuns. This world is, at the same time, a medieval one, in the Enlightenment—and thus pejorative—sense. Not reason, but a ritualized belief in dogmas, determines the actions of individuals. Both elements, the world of women and the medieval world of the convent, are fused in the text to form an apparently organic whole.

Diderot conceives of the convent world—one shaped by unnatural constraints—as a sort of experimental situation. Human, in this case female, nature is placed in surroundings where human beings' supposedly innate sociability cannot develop. The results are terrible. Gentle creatures become brutal, sadistic tormentors and—lesbians. Diderot equates the two, portraying both the Mother Superior's tortures and her sexual practices as the misdirected expression of repressed drives. The boundaries between the nuns' homosexual activities and their maltreatment of Suzanne are fluid. This becomes particularly clear in the vision the Mother Superior has at the moment when her passion reaches its peak. The image of the tormented Suzanne arouses her sexual desires:

> "Drowning those eyes in tears!" And she kissed them. "Drawing groans and wailing from that mouth!" She kissed that too. "Condemning that charming, serene face to be constantly clouded by sadness!" She kissed it. "Making the roses of those cheeks wither!" She stroked them with her hand and kissed them. "Robbing that head of its beauty! tearing out that hair! loading that brow with sorrow!" She kissed my head, brow, hair. "Fancy daring to put a rope round that neck and tearing those shoulders with sharp points!" She pushed aside my collar and coif, opened the top of my dress. . . .[23]

The medieval tortures to which the Mother Superior subjects Suzanne are the complementary inversion of her amorous practices. The ultimate motive for punishing the novice is not that she resisted the order's rules

but that she rebuffed the advances of the Mother Superior, who, as another nun remarked, "is capable of passing from the greatest tenderness to ferocity."[24]

The novel's anticlerical message is conveyed through forbidding images of perverted female nature. These images conjure up a "monster" woman. Although the Mother Superior is a monster created by inhumane circumstances, Diderot implies that female nature itself harbors certain perverse tendencies, which are given free reign to develop in the novel. What is more, the fear of women at the mercy of their drives—as articulated in *Sur les femmes*—guides the story here. The plot gains its tension from the expectation of the Mother Superior's continuing cruelties.

The novel evokes the image of a female nature harboring immeasurable destructive powers which are unleashed under certain conditions. Left to her own devices, woman is incapable of mastering these inherent powers. They become the undoing of the Mother Superior, for example. Her attempt to fight her own sinful inclinations ends in insanity and, finally, in death. Diderot contrasts her to the father-confessor Morel. He has recognized that the clerical estate is contrary to human nature, but he sublimates his unsatisfied drives through rational insight. While the Mother Superior destroys herself, and Suzanne continually risks her life by revolting against convent existence, their male counterpart chooses the path of the "practicable," resigning himself to his fate: "How dreadful is the condition of a nun or a priest who has no vocation! Yet it is ours and we cannot change it. We have been loaded with heavy chains which we are condemned to try ceaselessly to shake off, with no hope of breaking them; so dear sister, let us try to drag them after us."[25] Because woman is not in a position to direct her drives rationally, she is more susceptible than man to superstition, which Diderot, the man of the Enlightenment, considers the very epitome of irrationality. The fanaticism with which the nuns, especially the Mother Superior, submit to convent regulations is an eloquent example. Diderot takes up a common motif in Enlightenment literature, that of the female soul enslaved by religious superstition, and uses it against female nature in general. In *Sur les femmes* he had already described in theoretical terms what he was later to give literary shape in the Mother Superior:

> The nun in her cell feels herself lifted into the air, her soul sinks into the bosom of the divinity. Her essence unites with the divine essence; she swoons; she dwindles, her breast rises and falls at a rapid rate, the companions who sur-

round her cut the laces of the garment which constricts her. Night comes. She hears heavenly choirs; her own voice joins the concert. Then she returns to earth, speaking of ineffable joys, they listen to her, she is convinced, she is persuasive.[26]

The reliogiosity into which the Mother Superior throws herself in order to "master" her unhappy passion for Suzanne takes the form of mortification of the flesh and madness:

> [S]he fasted three days a week, she scourged herself, she heard offices in the lowest stall. We had to pass her door on the way to the church, and there we saw her lying prostrate with her face to the ground, and she only rose when everybody had gone. At night she went down in her nightgown, barefoot, and if Sainte-Thérèse or I met her by chance she turned away and pressed her face against the wall. One day I emerged from my cell and found her flat on the ground with her arms extended and face to the floor, and she said: "Come on, come on and trample me underfoot. I don't deserve any other treatment."[27]

Diderot characterizes both her religious mania and her homosexual inclinations as sicknesses. "Sickness" evokes the possibility of recovery, and thus "health." Normality is only conceivable as the negation of the circumstances portrayed. Even if it is never explicitly represented, it is a constant theme. In his plea for her release, M. Manouri, Suzanne's lawyer and champion condemns conditions in the convent. He justifies this condemnation by citing the immorality that was the inevitable result of life behind convent walls:

> Does God, who made man sociable, approve of his hiding himself away? Can God, who made man so inconstant and frail, authorize such rash vows? Can these vows, which run counter to our natural inclinations, ever be properly observed except by a few abnormal creatures in whom the seeds of passion are dried up, and whom we should rightly classify as freaks of nature if the state of our knowledge allowed us to understand the internal structure of man as well as we understand his external appearance? Do all these lugubrious ceremonies played out at the taking of the habit or the profession, when a man or woman is set apart for the monastic life and for woe, suspend the animal functions?[28]

The "animal functions" in question are Diderot's constant point of departure, expressing his underlying belief that our biological nature largely determines the path human beings take in life. All "lapses" along this preordained path lead to abnormality and, finally, to madness. But he

leaves no doubt of what he means by women's animal functions. Manouri's (rhetorical) question provides illumination: "What need has the Bridegroom of so many foolish virgins?"[29] Virginity is directly related to the nuns' delusions. The upshot is that women who do not live according to their biological destiny are condemned to end like the hapless Mother Superior—as "monsters."

Supplément au voyage de Bougainville

Twelve years later Diderot fashioned a universe in which human beings' "animal functions" were given free reign to develop: Tahiti, the setting of his story *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville* (Supplement to Bougainville's Voyage)[30] and, like the convent, a laboratory for testing human nature. While the convent milieu may be understood as an experiment in which the human subject is studied in an artificial environment in order to gain insights into her true nature, the choice of the island location in the *Supplément* corresponds to another experimental situation, one based on the conviction that human nature can only develop fully in "natural" surroundings. While in *La Religieuse* female nature is normatively defined as a negative, focusing primarily on the "perversions" of female nature in an unnatural environment, in the *Supplément* human nature is observed in its original, that is, uncivilized state.[31] The islanders' communal life appears to be free from all social and moral constraints; the Tahitians live in harmony with each other and nature, without social hierarchy or private property.

At the story's center is a description of the sex life of the Tahitians. The conversation between the ship's chaplain and the native Ourou, in which the priest's moral attitudes are confronted with the islanders' natural sexuality, provides the narrative framework. K.- H. Kohl has convincingly shown that the story's initial claim that Tahitian society knew no artificial constraints and that the sexes enjoyed total permissiveness in their relations with each other is relativized in the course of the narrative by discussions of the sanctions imposed on particular sexual practices.[32] Thus sexual intercourse was forbidden to menstruating women, as well as to men and women no longer capable of procreation. In contrast to the ship's chaplain, however, Ourou justifies these prohibitions not with moral proscriptions, but rather with human nature itself. Human beings, like all other creatures, are subject to the eternal natural law of procreation. Biological reproduction is described as the highest principle guiding

island life. To try to prevent the *actions physiques* arising from this principle with moral (i.e., nonphysical) norms was as senseless as to "abuse" them. On Tahiti the same argument is used to justify both restrictions and permissiveness: the purpose of sexuality is procreation. Since procreation was an economic necessity for Diderot, sexuality was as well.[33]

We should not, however, view Diderot's island utopia *solely* from the standpoint of his convictions on population policy. The scientific problem of biological reproduction is more important here. Since the publication of Buffon's *Histoire naturelle,* at the latest, reproduction had been adopted as a criterion for distinguishing the different species. In this context, sexuality also gained particular significance for anthropology. On the (Enlightenment) premise that physical nature provided the foundations for the development and civilization of human beings, and that it too was subject to continual development, human sexuality could serve as *the* barometer of civilizing development. Buffon, for example, takes the supposedly relatively underdeveloped sexuality of the American "savages" as proof of their social backwardness.[34] Diderot's approach is similar, but he proceeds from a different hypothesis: Assuming that the (savage) islanders have a highly developed sexuality, he considers their social development superior to that of the European nations, in which sexuality was not unleashed as a (re)productive force.

There are, however, cracks in Diderot's model of a world in which (male and female) sexuality could unfold free of normative moral constraints while preserving the common good of society. Even the island world of Tahiti could not dispense with sanctions against those members who did not play by its demographic rules. Diderot glosses over these cracks, though. Despite the moral strictures existing on Tahiti, he postulates in the heading of his story, it was a question of *actions physiques* which existed wholly outside the realm of *idées morales*.

In fact, woman is accorded no explicit special role in the utopian world of Tahiti, but the sanctions against permissive women, which are much more severe than the punishments intended for men, imply indirectly that the feminine had quite another function in a society whose existence and continuation depended on the means of securing descendants. Despite the author's intentions, *idées morales* clearly do emerge. The natural self-regulation of the utopian community is, in the final analysis, a moral one.[35] And this moral regulation consists largely in control over female sensuality.

All of the texts by Diderot discussed here suggest that this control was necessary for society. Even in the most natural of societies, woman's closeness to nature (i.e., her sexuality) requires an institution of control, in order to secure the biological reproduction of the species. In this context, Diderot accorded female modesty the decisive role. *One* important function of *morality* lay in just that channeling of female sexuality that we have already encountered as a decisive mark of woman's humanity in the *Encyclopédie*. In contrast to Diderot, who only treated this subject unconsciously, Rousseau regarded it as a central problem.

5

The Historical and Moral-Philosophical Dimensions of the Feminine

The texts dealt with up until now have viewed female nature as an ahistorical entity. The relegation of woman to the realm of sensation, in contrast to man's rational orientation, was justified by means of arguments from sensory physiology and epistemology. The centuries-old "metaphysics of gender" in its specifically eighteenth-century version has been thrown into relief against the background of the shift in epistemological paradigm.

One of the great achievements of the Enlightenment was, of course, the conception of human nature as part of a universal natural history.[1] The various attempts to explore the natural context of which human beings formed a part extend from Helvétius, via d'Holbach, to Condorcet and Rousseau, to name only the most important representatives of this anthropology. The abandonment of the Creation myth raised questions about the *history* of human nature, and the answers were fed by the period's numerous travel accounts. Eighteenth-century philosophers were confronted with a picture of the synchrony of the asynchronous. In their efforts to reconstruct the history of humanity, they sought to place explorers' observations about peoples who were at a different stage of civilization from the Europeans into a comparative framework.[2]

Our subject raises the question of the role played by women in the history of the path toward humanness or, in the terminology of the time,

of the "civilizing" of woman. Although the question seems both sensible and obvious, it has rarely been asked in a systematic fashion. This holds true both for eighteenth-century texts and for the secondary literature. Thus, in her fundamental work on eighteenth-century French anthropology Michèle Duchet adopts the ostensibly gender-neutral perspective of the texts she investigates.[3]

In the following I would like to show, by examining texts by Rousseau, that there is a specific historiography of female nature. The grounding of female sex-specific character in nature also historicizes nature itself. To be sure, this is not accomplished in the same manner as for the species "Man." Anthropological discourse only treats woman, and then often only implicitly, when her development and history diverge from that of man. As a result, the numerous conceptions of "female nature" appear, when separated from their anthropological contexts, as normative constructions. The treatment of Rousseau is typical here; the usual reaction to his image of woman is either indignation at such an act of patriarchal despotism or the view that it is founded solely on the socioeconomic necessities of bourgeois life.[4] I consider both explanations inadequate for understanding the great significance and model character that Rousseau's representations of women (Sophie, Julie) had for broad segments of the French public. *How* Rousseau's notion of femininity was connected to his general theories on the philosophy of history, and how precisely this notion lived on in the tradition, remains to be examined.

In fact, there are few explicit statements on the nature and natural history of woman in the two discourses[5] which lay the groundwork for Rousseau's anthropological theory. In contrast, chapter 5 of *Emile*, in which guidelines for the upbringing and education of Sophie are set down for the female sex as a whole, deals extensively with the subject of women. Rousseau proceeds from Sophie's training as a companion for Emile, whose upbringing as a man he described in detail in the preceding four chapters. At first, Sophie's upbringing seems aimed solely at making of her a submissive wife. Silvia Bovenschen has demonstrated that training for wifehood is symptomatic of the function of the feminine in the process of becoming human: "Woman represents, so to speak, the humus for the perfection of the human being—a phrase which must now be corrected to read: for the perfection of man."[6] Bovenschen sees the predefined destiny of Sophie/woman primarily as a "supplementary negation of male definitions." For her, "female nature," as it appears in Sophie,

is not transmitted by means of the "central categories of [Rousseau's] philosophy of history" but rather is "only indirectly visible through male demands." The "feminine is absent from the genealogy of human history."[7] The female canon of virtues is, for her, merely derivative of the universal system of virtues.

In the following discussion I try to show that this seemingly obvious impression is misleading. The definitions of the feminine in Rousseau are not simply normative constructions. Rather, they derive their logic from the total context of his theory.

Control Over the Passions as Educational Objective in *Emile*

One theme which we can follow through all of the tutor's advice for Sophie is the moderation of the girl's appetites, passions, and needs. All those qualities usually considered feminine, such as a fondness for finery, curiosity, coquetry, adroitness, and garrulousness, which Rousseau describes as "natural inclinations," must be channeled in order to prevent excess. Thus the fondness for finery must not end in extravagant spending; the girl's curiosity must not be indulged, lest she ask too many questions; her coquetry must remain within the bounds of propriety, and her adroitness and cunning must not lead to duplicity. One could cite many more of the examples used to underline the educational principle that only those girls develop into honorable and chaste women who are accustomed early, through "habitual restraint," to moderate their needs and to keep their moods constantly in check throughout their lives.[8]

Just as needs must not degenerate into passion, reason and knowledge must remain within strict boundaries. Rousseau not only regards women's intellectual potential as inferior to men's to begin with, he also considers the intentional development and encouragement of women's mental capacities unnatural. Girls and women cannot, and should not, progress beyond a certain stage of thinking. Their knowledge should be directed to concrete objects relating to their practical lives. It is not woman's role to think in abstract principles; her place, instead, is in the realm of the tangible:

> The search for abstract and speculative truths, for principles and axioms in science, for all that tends to wide generalisation, is beyond a woman's grasp; their studies should be thoroughly practical. It is their business to apply the

> principles discovered by men, it is their place to make the observations which lead men to discover those principles. A woman's thoughts, beyond the range of her immediate duties, should be directed to the study of men, or the acquirement of that agreeable learning whose sole end is the formation of taste; for the works of genius are beyond her reach. . . .[9]

It is these aspects of girls' education that have led to an exclusively negative view of Rousseau's ideas and their dismissal as a "program of domestication" and *dressage*.

Women were not simply deficient, though. Rousseau also equipped them with an equal number of positive qualities. Men's strong suit, producing "works of the mind," was replaced in women by spontaneous observation and feeling. Female taste (*goût*) was the counterpart to male reason (*raison*). This contrast characteristically illuminates the dimensions of the female cognitive faculty. Taste applies to the realms of art and morality, serving to judge both the beautiful and the good. "Taste is formed partly by industry and partly by talent, and by its means the mind is unconsciously opened to the idea of beauty of every kind, till at length it attains to those moral ideas which are so closely related to beauty. Perhaps this is one reason why ideas of propriety and modesty are acquired earlier by girls than by boys. . . ."[10] For Rousseau *goût* is a particular means of understanding. Taste is not random or merely subjective, but contains a certain claim to truth. It remains, however, on the level of sensory knowledge and thus is only adequate to judge individual situations. Only male reason is equal to generalizations reaching beyond the immediate perceptions of the moment. In order to attain *goût*, girls require no intensive training or education. On the contrary, what characterizes taste is precisely its naturalness and immediacy. It presumes not acquired knowledge, but natural talent; rational thought is positively detrimental to taste. For this reason, Rousseau expressly opposes any intentional encouragement and instruction for girls. When it comes to artistic development, particularly singing and dancing, he argues against giving girls lessons. "Take the case of singing; does this art depend on reading music; cannot the voice be made true and flexible, can we not learn to sing with taste and even to play an accompaniment without knowing a note?"[11] The same applies to conversation, which he accords first place in the hierarchy of the "art of pleasing." He explicitly differentiates the male rhetorical tradition from women's innate linguistic talents. "A man says what he knows, a woman says what will please; the one

needs knowledge, the other taste. . . ."[12] The transition from an aesthetic sense of taste to moral sentiment is fluid. In social life, as in the arts, woman behaves with the same simplicity, which is spontaneous and free of knowledge. She observes and "feels" her environment. Her behavior is not determined by principles, but by intuitive understanding. The passage in which Rousseau describes a host and hostess at a dinner party is typical. The man's social behavior is determined by information about the individual guests, the woman's by observation and sensitivity: "[T]he man knowing the assembled guests will place them according to his knowledge; the wife, without previous acquaintance, never makes a mistake; their looks and bearing have already shown her what is wanted and every one will find himself where he wishes to be."[13] This gift for observing people is not the fruit of training; it is innate to women. "Can this art be acquired? No; it is born with women; it is common to them all, and men never show it to the same degree. It is one of the distinctive characters of the sex."[14] It is this innate gift of observation which determines women's moral judgments and actions. Their social conduct is not mediated by (rationally based) principles and morality, but is a sort of perception of feelings. "The men will have a better philosophy of the human heart, but she will read more accurately in the heart of men. Woman should discover, so to speak, an experimental morality, man should reduce it to a system."[15] Equipped as she is by nature with a social instinct, woman is a more social being than man. For this reason she has a better command of the social graces and social intercourse than man. That which man has often acquired artificially, and which is therefore "insincere" springs from woman's natural character. "[A] woman's politeness is less insincere than ours, whatever we may think of her character; for she is only acting upon a fundamental instinct. . . ."[16] Rousseau traces this female nature back to specific biological functions—and the social functions that derive from them—in which man and woman differ fundamentally. Woman's duties of childbearing and childrearing, of maintaining a harmonious family life, demand particular social qualities: a restrained and moderate nature and, above all, gentleness, "what is most desired in a woman."[17]

This explanation, of course, does not go beyond a normative construction. There is no valid reason why these tasks could not be accomplished with the aid of knowledge acquired through a rationally based morality. In fact, a number of indicators in *Emile* might lead us to conclude that the necessity of a thorough separation between male and female sex-

specific character rests on premises which precede its grounding in biological and social particularities, and that deriving Rousseau's representation of the feminine directly from his petty bourgeois social model does not go far enough. The point of departure for this consideration is my assertion that the dichotomy Rousseau sets up between untutored female taste on the one hand, and male knowledgeability on the other, correlates with another pair of opposites: utility and interest versus pleasure and complaisance. Thus in conjunction with his apology of female eloquence Rousseau suggests that, "utility should be the man's object; the woman speaks to give pleasure. There should be nothing in common but truth."[18] We find the disjunction between utility and complaisance elsewhere in *Emile*, in Book IV, where Rousseau explains the "Foundations of Taste" that the tutor is to convey to his pupil. Here, too, taste is clearly placed on the side of the nonutilitarian: "Taste deals only with things that are indifferent to us, or which affect at most our amusements, not those which relate to our needs; taste is not required to judge of these, appetite only is sufficient."[19] As a consequence, taste also only arises in the realm where diversion reigns. Only in "societies for amusement and idleness" (*sociétés d'amusements et d'oisiveté*)[20] can taste develop, for in business circles advantage (*l'intérest*), not pleasure, rules. Aesthetic enjoyment and judgment are thus evidently incompatible with the principle of utility, of purpose—or, more precisely—of advantage. Advantage, which in business circles inhibits enjoyment, also stands in the way of moral rectitude and friendliness:

> In social intercourse I observe that a man's politeness is usually more helpful and a woman's more caressing. This distinction is natural, not artificial. A man seeks to serve, a woman seeks to please. Hence a woman's politeness is less insincere than ours, whatever we may think of her character; for she is only acting upon a fundamental instinct; but when a man professes to put my interests before his own, I detect the falsehood, however disguised.[21]

The striving for advantage, egoism, which prevents man from fully developing taste as well as spontaneous charity, appears evidently not to affect woman's social behavior to such a great extent. Female politeness (*politesse*) remains natural and sincere because woman is less subject than man to the corrupting influences of the civilizing process. In contrast to man, egoistic passion in woman does not gain ascendancy over natural, instinctive politeness.

The instinctive character attributed to female sociability must be seen

in connection with Enlightenment anthropology's orientation, as described earlier, toward natural history. The fact that human beings were regarded as natural beings had particular significance for female human beings, who, because of their function in biological reproduction, appeared more equipped with natural functions than male human beings.

Rousseau transferred this unequal attribution to the character of moral judgment. Here, as in the process of understanding, there was a shift of emphasis. If in the latter the part played by sensory perception was given greater weight, here a displacement occurred from rationally to emotionally based judgment. This shift resumes the tradition of sensualist aesthetics and moral philosophy dating back to the *querelle des anciens et des modernes* (Perrault and, in the eighteenth century, Cartaud de la Villate)[22] and runs parallel to the aestheticizing moral philosophy prevalent in England and Scotland (Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Hume). As in this tradition, instinctive moral sensibility also fulfills a social function in Rousseau's moral philosophy and philosophy of history.[23] What was a mere tendency in moral philosophy is accentuated more in Rousseau's work, gaining a new gender-specific weight. The general tendency to situate human compassion in the private sphere—away from the goal-oriented world of business—is now expressed in the particular attribution of the moral qualities necessary for interpersonal relations to women, because their biological-social function brings them closer to the realm of the private.

Rousseau's position here seems decisive for all the further constructions that make up his image of woman. The category of egoism, which is used in *Emile* to explain the difference between male and female moral actions, is also central to Rousseau's social theory. An analysis of this category is the key to understanding his educational principles for Sophie and his representation of femininity more generally.

Egoism as the Competitive Society's Ruling Passion in the *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*

The genesis of the feeling or, rather, the passion of egoism is the subject of Rousseau's 1755 *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of the Inequality of Mankind) (Second Discourse). Self-interest (*amour-propre*) is the

central category in Rousseau's considerations on the philosophy of history here. He views the origins of egoism in connection with a particular stage of civilization, the invention of metalworking and agriculture and, with them, of the division of labor and the emergence of private property. This epoch figures as the third stage in human history as constructed by Rousseau. In the original, premoral state of self-sufficient natural man (first stage), as well as in the golden age of communal living (second stage), the natural inequalities (strength, intelligence, age) still had no effect on social life. Once people began to claim land as their private property, however, which was a necessary consequence of agriculture, these inequalities led to social differences. In the course of the development of private property and economic competition new types of interests emerged. "In a word, there arose rivalry and competition on the one hand, and conflicting interests on the other, together with a secret desire on both of profiting at the expense of others. All these evils were the first effects of property, and the inseparable attendants of growing inequality."[24] Out of this change in property relations there followed a transformation in human motivations for action. The innate human instinct of self-preservation (*amour de soi*) was perverted into self-interest (*amour-propre*). Thus egoism was not an original human characteristic, as many earlier social philosophers had claimed (Hobbes, Locke, Mandeville). Instead, Rousseau regarded this passion as the result of particular social conditions, which gave human kindness no chance to develop. At the inception of socialization, in the golden age, the instinct of self-preservation was, accordingly, compatible with natural pity (*pitié naturelle*) because the interests of individuals were linked by common property ownership. Rousseau describes this stage as an idyll in which the moral and aesthetic feelings potentially present in all human beings could unfold:

> As ideas and feelings succeeded one another, and heart and head were brought into play, men continued to lay aside their original wildness; their private connections became every day more intimate as their limits extended. They accustomed themselves to assemble before their huts round a large tree; singing and dancing, the true offspring of love and leisure, became the amusement, or rather the occupation, of men and women thus assembled together with nothing else to do.[25]

This was, however, also the stage where the foundations of corruption were laid, and where the perfection of human capacities prepared for their later depravation.

The perfection of reason plays a decisive role in this process. Reason first perfects itself in the process of mastering nature through material labor:

> On the seashore and the banks of rivers, they invented the hook and line, and became fishermen and eaters of fish. In the forests they made bows and arrows, and became huntsmen and warriors. In cold countries they clothed themselves with the skins of the beasts they had slain. The lightning, a volcano, or some lucky chance acquainted them with fire, a new resource against the rigours of winter: they next learned how to preserve this element, then how to reproduce it, and finally how to prepare with it the flesh of animals which before they had eaten raw. This repeated relevance of various beings to himself, and one to another, would naturally give rise in the human mind to the perceptions of certain relations between them. Thus the relations which we denote by the terms great, small, strong, weak, swift, slow, fearful, bold, and the like, almost insensibly compared at need, must have at length produced in him a kind of reflection.[26]

This context is important because it makes clear the hidden underlying motives. Not merely the thirst for knowledge, but primarily physical necessity drove human beings to exercise their minds. Rousseau concurs with other philosophers of history in regarding physical needs as the first motor of reason.[27]

In the early stages these needs are communal ones. Reason serves the primitive commonweal. But reason, as just defined, only develops fully at a later stage, in which the partition of immediate needs into private interests begins. The human being only attains general concepts at the stage of agriculture and metalworking, which also means the period of private property. Thus as soon as it has reached a certain stage of development, reason begins to serve private purposes. The rationality of the individual begins to conflict with that of others. Reason is soon occupied not only with mastering nature, in order to make the earth habitable, but also, under conditions of competition, with securing advantage over one's fellow human beings. Human beings no longer think only with each other but also against each other. Reason becomes the handmaid of egoism, fusing with it into a single motive. It becomes "'calculating reason,' chained to the sensual passions."[28]

Rousseau criticizes this, but the union of reason and egoism makes such an impression on him that he equates one with the other. For him, the relationship between the two even appears to be reversed. At a developed stage of society the means becomes the cause: "It is reason that

engenders *amour-propre*, and reflection that confirms it: it is reason which turns man's mind back upon itself, and divides him from everything that could disturb or afflict him. It is philosophy that isolates him, and bids him say, at sight of the misfortune of others: 'Perish if you will, I am secure.'"[29] In this reversal lies an insight that plays an important role in Rousseau's philosophy of history. According to this construction, not only do needs and interests further thought; rational understanding also affects needs: with increasing understanding new needs arise. Needs and reason interact, providing the point of departure for the dynamic of history.[30]

Through reason, finally, needs are transformed into those fatal "passions" that Rousseau criticizes:

> Whatever moralists may hold, the human understanding is greatly indebted to the passions, which, it is universally allowed, are also much indebted to the understanding. It is by the activity of the passions that our reason is improved; for we desire knowledge only because we wish to enjoy; and it is impossible to conceive any reason why a person who has neither fears nor desires should give himself the trouble of reasoning. The passions, again, originate in our wants, and their progress depends on that of our knowledge; for we cannot desire or fear anything, except from the idea we have of it, or from the simple impulses of nature. Now savage man, being destitute of every species of enlightenment, can have no passions save those of the latter kind: his desires never go beyond his physical wants.[31]

The History of Female Reason: The Golden Age in One's Own Home

It is only against the background of Rousseau's philosophy of history, as enunciated in the Second Discourse, that his criticism of female passion and reason becomes intelligible. When Rousseau seeks to prevent abstract thought and the development of needs into passions in women, it is not simply a matter of female socialization. The critique of female reason and passion is no mere "women's problem." What is at stake, rather, is the good of society as a whole, within which women are to fulfill a particular role. This role is defined according to the difficulties that, in Rousseau's view, the society faces.

Here we can see the inadequacy of an interpretation that views women's situation—whether in theory or in the social realities of the eighteenth century—in isolation. Gender relations do not suffice to explain the devel-

opment of theoretical concepts about woman either. These opinions become interesting and illuminating, however, when viewed as components of a total theory of social development.

Woman evidently embodies a sphere of bourgeois society that must be spared the "war of all against all." It is the sphere that has not yet been penetrated by society's "perversions" and "alienations." Rousseau's theoretical strength is that he not only claims this for the present but explains it within his philosophy of history. It is precisely in those parts of his theory of human development where he expounds on the particular history of woman that it becomes clear the extent to which the portrayal of woman makes sense only within his general theory.

It thus remains to be shown that woman's depravation runs a different course from that of man. In the course of human development, female reason had evidently not been instrumentalized for competition in the way that male reason has. In the first phase of settlement, the pastoral age, the emergence of the family established a division of labor. The woman took over household work and tended the family. "The sexes, whose manner of life had been hitherto the same, began now to adopt different ways of living. The women became more sedentary, and accustomed themselves to mind the hut and their children, while the men went abroad in search of their common subsistence."[32] From then on human history became divided into a history of man and a history of woman—or so one might assume. In his account, however, Rousseau speaks only of *homme* in the gender-neutral sense. He does not explicitly follow woman from her emergence from the natural state to the first division of labor and the beginnings of a life different from man's, to her development into a civilized being, as he does for man. All that he gives us are a few hints and a history of man against which to contrast a possible history of woman. It seems clear to me though, that Rousseau, with his constant emphasis on the different natures of the sexes, proceeds from a divergent anthropology of the sexes as well, for the results of the development from "natural" to civilized woman are quite different from those of the development from "natural" to civilized man. Only the historical development of man is described in a systematic fashion, however. In contrast, he conceives of the historical dimension of the feminine only as a deviation from or negative side of male history. This aspect of human history must be reconstructed from the silences in Rousseau's account.

If we begin with the assumption that the ways of life of man and woman differed in the period of their first emergence from the state of nature,

we may conclude that female cognition developed within another framework and under other conditions from that of men. Woman's capacity for thought develops not through hunting, war, or agriculture but, rather, within the microcosm of the family, where emotions unfold:

> The first expansions of the human heart were the effects of a novel situation, which united husbands and wives, fathers and children, under one roof. The habit of living together soon gave rise to the finest feelings known to humanity, conjugal love and paternal affection. Every family became a little society, the more united because liberty and reciprocal attachment were the only bonds of its union.[33]

The character of this "little society" did not change to the same extent as the world of men.

Entering the house of Sophie's parents, Emile encounters circumstances similar to those described for the golden age. Nevertheless, women evidently cannot escape the process of human depravation. The transformation of *amour de soi* into *amour-propre*, which characterizes the transition from the second state of nature to the state of civilization, also occurs in woman. The end point of this development, however, is not the egoistic businesswoman who cheats her competitors but the shameless lady of the Parisian aristocracy who no longer fulfills the duties of her sex. The trajectory must therefore be a different one from that followed by man. It is, apparently, not calculating, egoistic reason which makes women immoral.

Female reason does not develop to the same extent as man's. Sophie provides the best example: incapable of abstract thought, she remains on the level of the concrete and tangible, as we have seen. All women's attempts to use their intellectual capacities as men do are doomed to failure. Woman becomes a ridiculous caricature of the man she seeks to emulate.

> Outside her home she always makes herself ridiculous and she is very rightly a butt for criticism, as we always are when we try to escape from our own position into one for which we are unfitted. These highly talented women only get a hold over fools. We can always tell what artist or friend holds the pen or pencil when they are at work; we know what discreet man of letters dictates their oracles in private. This trickery is unworthy of a decent woman.[34]

To the extent, however, that woman remains excluded from male reasoning, her spontaneous feelings and compassion remain untouched by "alienation." Her "politeness" is more natural than man's, closer than

man's politeness to the original "goodness" of natural human beings. While rational considerations often hinder man from acting compassionately, woman acts spontaneously, unencumbered by "cold" reason.

Iring Fetscher has pointed out that Rousseau has a dual concept of "reason": alongside the Hobbesian notion of egoistic calculation he includes a second meaning, *understanding* reason (i.e., moral reason), which "leads to an understanding of the (beautiful and objectively reasonable) order"[35] and which allows civilized, depraved people to overcome their low sensual appetites and to put the common good before their own interests. Both forms of moral action, that resting on the natural "goodness" of natural human beings and that arising from understanding reason exist side by side in civilized society. "Alongside the higher morality of virtue, Rousseau . . . also reserved a place in communal life for unspectacular, instinctive 'bonté.' He did not trace moral life back to a single principle, instead placing simple 'bonté' next to 'vertu.' . . ."[36] These two forms of morality appear to me to be unevenly distributed between the two sexes, however. While woman has retained premoral goodness, man acts on the basis of rational understanding. This behavior requires him to struggle with his passions. It is precisely this process of overcoming bad tendencies with rational understanding that characterizes Emile's "apprenticeship." Matters are different when it comes to Sophie's upbringing. She is taught to be virtuous by constraint:

> They must be trained to bear the yoke from the first, so that they may not feel it, to master their own caprices and to submit themselves to the will of others. If they were always eager to be at work, they should sometimes be compelled to do nothing. Their childish faults, unchecked and unheeded, may easily lead to dissipation, frivolity and inconstancy. To guard against this, teach them above all things self-control.[37]

This rigorous training is apparently necessary in order to achieve in girls through force and habit a conduct they could not attain through their own understanding. If—as Rousseau asserts—man's ability is to set up moral principles, then woman's is to follow them obediently. This absolute obedience compensates for woman's weakness, her tendency to fall victim to the vices surrounding her, and her inability to control her passions by her own efforts. This does not mean that women's moral actions proceed without any understanding reason whatsoever. It is precisely the goal of virtuous behavior that Rousseau sees as the only justification for training women's minds. When he speaks of the "art of thinking" in rela-

tion to women, it is always in the context of fulfilling their *moral* duties as wives and mothers: "[I]f a woman is quite unaccustomed to think, how can she bring up her children? How will she know what is good for them? How can she incline them to virtues of which she is ignorant, to merit of which she has no conception?"[38] He leaves no doubt in the reader's mind, however, that the necessity for even this most rudimentary training of women's minds is already the unwelcome consequence of humanity's depraved condition. Were it not for society's decadence, women would not require reason in order to be virtuous:

> I would not altogether blame those who would restrict a woman to the labours of her sex and would leave her in profound ignorance of everything else; but that would require a standard of morality at once very simple and very healthy, or a life withdrawn from the world. In great towns, among immoral men, such a woman would be too easily led astray; her virtue would too often be at the mercy of circumstances; in this age of philosophy, virtue must be able to resist temptation; she must know beforehand what she may hear and what she should think of it.[39]

Ultimately, however, women's understanding reason has its natural limits. Because of their underdeveloped moral understanding, women are helpless to resist the corruption of great cities, the very epitome of moral decay. "Women of Paris and London, forgive me! There may be miracles everywhere, but I am not aware of them; and if there is even one among you who is really pure in heart, I know nothing of our institutions."[40] Thus woman lacks both the egoistic reason to participate as man does in the process of social decay and its opposite, the higher moral understanding which could prevent this process of depravation. Like human beings in the state of nature, she is driven by her (premoral) desires and inclinations.

In woman's case, unlike man's, what regulates these instinctive inclinations is not reason but "modesty." Rousseau compares this female characteristic with the female animal's "negative instinct," thus underlining woman's primitive nature:

> The Most High has deigned to do honour to mankind; he has endowed man with boundless passions, together with a law to guide them, so that man may be alike free and self-controlled; though swayed by these passions man is endowed with reason by which to control them. Woman is also endowed with boundless passions; God has given her modesty to restrain them.[41]

Woman is more subject than man to drives that Rousseau likens to animal instincts. In this context he speaks of the "female of man" (*femelle*

de l'homme).[42] The female sense of modesty—half natural drive, half "civilized" feeling—is the main determinant of female virtuousness. One may judge the depravation of the female sex according to the degree or absence of modesty, which corresponds to man's moral understanding reason. Man contains his passions through his capacity for reason, woman with the help of her *feeling of modesty*. The shameless woman represents the counterpart to the egoistic calculating man. Woman's depravation is the depravation of her modesty (*pudeur*).

Woman lives in a more primitive and natural manner than man. She continues to dwell, at least partially, in the premoral state of savages who could be neither good nor evil because they did not exist as social beings. To be sure, woman living in society is part of a community, but because of her biological role and the social role derived from it, she is closer than man to the immediately natural side of humanness. From this, Rousseau not only derives his well-known demands that her life be limited to the domestic-reproductive sphere. He also relegates the moral sex phylogenetically to a precivilized stage in which human beings still acted instinctively, a capacity that the state of civilization has destroyed. In his view, only elemental, animalistic expression could ensure the human qualities necessary to the family sphere. Rousseau intentionally writes of woman's "inclination" (*goût*), not of her "virtue" (*vertu*), when discussing her duties within the family, whereby the term *goût* is intended to signal greater primitivity, in conscious contrast to the rationally formed *vertu*: "What loving care is required to preserve a united family! And there should be no question of virtue in all this, it must be a labour of love, without which the human race would be doomed to extinction."[43] Rousseau creates the paradoxical situation in which woman living in seclusion, and devoting herself solely to the family, becomes the incarnation of nonegoistic action and thought. To the extent that human compassion is banished from the public sphere to the familial, private sphere, it takes up residence in a genuinely nonsocietal realm, woman's biological nature.

His phylogenetic classification of woman not only makes Rousseau's aim of keeping her in relative ignorance seem logical; it also offers an explanation for the systematic curbing of woman's passionate nature to which I referred at the beginning of this chapter. In Sophie Rousseau recovers the lost golden age, that stage of human history when property was held in common and human beings lived in harmony with one another

and nature. We find in her the anthropological qualities of humanity at the first stage of socialization.

When Emile and his tutor leave Paris like "knights-errant"[44] and move on to the provinces to look for a suitable spouse, they are also embarking on a journey into mankind's past, in search of human nature that has not yet been corrupted.

To describe this process of relegating woman to an earlier stage of civilization as a "domestication program"[45] is tautological. Against the background of Rousseau's anthropological assumptions, however, astonishing parallels appear between the development of the sexes in the course of individual and collective histories. Phylogenetically, the emergence of the passions runs parallel to the alienation of human beings from their original nature. The passions arise from and accompany human egoism. Rousseau speaks of

> man in the state of society, for whom first necessities have to be provided, and then superfluities; delicacies follow next, then immense wealth, then subjects, and then slaves. He enjoys not a moment's relaxation; and what is yet stranger, the less natural and pressing his wants, the more headstrong are his passions, and still worse, the more he has it in his power to gratify them; so that after a long course of prosperity, after having swallowed up treasures and ruined multitudes, the hero ends up by cutting every throat till he finds himself, at last, sole master of the world. Such is in miniature the moral picture, if not of human life, at least of the secret pretensions of the heart of civilized man.[46]

It is against this background that we must reevaluate the rules set down for Sophie's upbringing. Rousseau's attempt to organize the girl's education in such a way that her passions have no opportunity to develop in the first place expresses his objective of leaving woman in a stage of relative savagery that humanity, or rather its male component, has long since left behind. Silvia Bovenschen's argument that Rousseau denies woman the capacity for perfection[47] should be modified to read that this capacity, which he recognized as a permanent danger, should be inhibited. He fixes woman at a particular stage of human historical development, the second stage of the state of nature, the precivilized phase of the golden age. This stage was the precondition for the later depravation of the human race, and this depravation occurred, as Rousseau shows in the *Second Discourse*, with a dynamic of its own inherent to human perfectibility. To halt this dynamic was, it appears, a difficult undertaking,

as the "attacks" on Ninon de Lenclos and other learned women demonstrate.[48] Force is necessary for the creation of conditions under which capacities—women's included—are inhibited from further development, that is, from becoming perverted. The motto of Sophie's upbringing as a woman, "desire mediocrity in all things,"[49] points to the structures set up to contain development. Scarcely a theoretician of the eighteenth century formulated as vehemently as Rousseau the demand that the development of female personality be thwarted, because no other thinker saw so clearly, or felt so keenly, the negative consequences of the competitive society.

The exercise of force, which marks girls' education in contrast to boys', is a sign of woman's immaturity, an immaturity born of the anachronistic character of the nature Rousseau's system attributes to her. As a "being from another time" she is in no position to brave the adversities of the depraved society. Thence her dependence on man, who possesses the capacity for moral action based on rational understanding. Only in a protected space like the golden age can her instinctively good nature unfold. When, however, woman is allowed to develop her natural inclinations, it is—and this is significant—with a moral power far surpassing man's reason-based morality. Only woman's less civilized moral sensibility can create human ties in a strife-ridden society. Without her spontaneous humanity all male rational considerations would come to nought. This requires an environment, however, in which woman's natural feelings have not already been perverted.

Rousseau creates this situation fictionally in *Julie, ou La Nouvelle Héloïse*. Clarens, the community established by Wolmar, is a golden age island in the midst of a depraved civilization. It is the subject of the rest of the chapter.

The Return of the Golden Age in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*

In 1761, six years after the *Second Discourse*, Rousseau's only novel *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, appeared. In Part IV of this epistolary novel he designs an ideal social community, the country estate of Clarens, which can be seen as the positive answer to the critique of society offered in his two discourses. By looking at the way Clarens functions, I would like in the following section to trace Julie's role within this utopian society, a role intended by the author as a model, and thus of exemplary significance for the place of the feminine in his thought.[50]

Clarens functions as a self-sufficient community. Wolmar's intelligent and intensive farming methods guarantee a life of comfort—but not luxury!—based solely on the community's closed economic circulation. This economic self-sufficiency is emphasized by the geographical location of Clarens, which, enclosed by Lake Geneva and the mountains, appears as an inhabited island amidst virgin nature.[51] In the particular location and self-sufficient existence of Clarens, Rousseau constructs—as he did in the state of nature in the Second Discourse—a field of (literary) experimentation in which to develop his notions of an ideal-typical community.

Economic self-sufficiency is paradigmatic of Rousseau's economic ideas more generally.[52] Rejecting mercantilist notions, he believes that wealth rests on self-made products alone. All the necessities of life are produced on the estate. There is no systematic exchange with the outside world. Trade is reduced to an absolute minimum and consists almost entirely of barter:

> The great secret of our riches . . . is to have little money, and to avoid as far as possible, in using our goods, intermediate exchanges between the product and its use. No such exchange can be made without loss, and these losses, multiplied, reduce to almost nothing a moderate fortune, just as a junk dealer turns a fine golden box into a paltry trinket. We avoid the transport of our goods by using them on site, and avoid exchange by consuming them in kind, and in the indispensible conversion of that of which we have too much into that which we lack, we seek real exchanges where the convenience of each party serves to profit both, instead of sales and purchases for money which double the losses.[53]

The inhabitants of Clarens live in harmony with nature; by living self-sufficiently and shielding themselves from the deleterious effects of refined civilized existence, they have recovered the golden age on a higher plane. For Rousseau the progress of civilization (i.e., of scholarship and of the crafts) signifies a progress in human depravation. At Clarens there is thus no progress of this kind. Wolmar's achievement is the maintenance of the status quo, that is, not increasing production beyond the requirements of "natural needs." These needs are a bulwark against human beings' alienation from their true nature. In preventing money exchange, Wolmar also eliminates commodity production. The economy of Clarens is devoted exclusively to producing articles necessary for the daily use of community members:

> Consider, finally, that an abundance of necessities cannot degenerate into abuse, because necessity has its natural measure, and true needs know no excess. One may spend as much on one suit of clothes as on twenty, and eat at one meal the produce of a year, but one cannot wear two suits of clothes at the same time or have dinner twice in one day. Thus opinion is unlimited, while nature everywhere encounters limits, and he of modest means who contents himself with well-being runs no risk of ruin.[54]

Wolmar protects his property against decay, which means both the slide into unproductivity and integration into a larger socially mediated system of exchange. Saint-Preux summarizes his reflections on Clarens thus: "[C]ontent with their fortune they do not seek to increase it for their children, but rather to leave them with the legacy they received, lands in good condition, devoted servants, a taste for work, order, moderation and everything that may render sweet and charming to sensible people the enjoyment of modest means, as well-conserved as they were honestly acquired."[55] Control over physical wants and their restriction to a natural measure are the principles according to which Wolmar runs Clarens. They ensure that the inherent human instinct of self-preservation does not degenerate into selfishness. The law of the accumulation of wealth has been repealed. The social immobility of the community corresponds to this stable and constant equilibrium between human beings and nature. The fact that nobody becomes rich ensures that nobody will aspire to leave his appointed place. "Each, finding in his own station in life everything he needs to be content, and not desiring to leave it, attaches himself to his station as though he were to stay there all his life, and the only ambition one retains is that of performing the duties of one's station well."[56] Since competition among members of the Clarens community has been banished, the master–servant relationship is transformed into one of patriarchal devotion. Saint-Preux, who explains Clarens to his confidant Milord Edouard in the tenth letter of Part IV, likens the relationship between masters and servants to that between parents and children. "Am I wrong, Milord, to compare such beloved masters to fathers and their servants to their children? You see that this is how they regard themselves."[57] The economic interests of day laborers, so Rousseau would have us believe, play only a minor role in their productivity. A more important and decisive motivation for their work at Clarens is devotion to their masters. Thus investment in the estate is also—and decisively—emotional, and it is woman who bears the main responsibility for this aspect of life:

> Nonetheless an even more effective means, the only one economic considerations do not allow as a possibility, and which belongs more to Mad[e] de Wolmar, is to win the affection of these good people by granting them hers. She does not believe that she can repay with money the efforts made on her behalf, and feels that she owes a service to anybody who has done her one. Laborers, servants, all those who have served her, if only for a day, become her children. She participates in their pleasures, their pains, their fate; she informs herself about their affairs; their interests are her own. She takes on a thousand cares for them, giving them advice, settling their differences, and shows them the amiability of her character not with honeyed, ineffective words, but with true services and continual acts of kindness.[58]

At Clarens, the spheres of economic interest and emotional ties, separate in civil society, are united. Family feeling goes beyond the family to encompass the entire economic unit. Relations between masters and farm servants approximate those between parents and children; relations between servants are described as those of siblings. Despite its scale, which extends well beyond family members, work on the estate maintains its quality of a household economy. Clarens still represents the "whole house" (*oikos*) in which household and business are not yet separated from each other.[59]

This unity corresponds to a single standard of morality, which is not divided into a morality of work and a morality of private life. The honesty (*franchise*) prevailing at Clarens is contrasted to the hypocrisy Rousseau laments in his two discourses. Here there is no double standard, either in the literal or the figurative sense. Nobody has secrets from anybody else, all present themselves as they really are. Absolute openness is held up as the most important quality of human relationships. All reveal their feelings to each other.[60] The compulsion to dissemble, which exists both in courtly life and in the bourgeois world of business, has no objective basis at Clarens, because all members are unified by a harmony of interests.

I would like to take a closer look at the moral aspect of life at Clarens, which appears to me closely interwoven with economic practice. Parallel to the economic microcosm of Clarens there is also a moral microcosm, which must be regarded as both consequence and cause of the unusual circumstances prevailing there. Economic self-sufficiency has its counterpart in the moral realm, which I would like to call *moral self-sufficiency*. Rousseau emphasizes at several points that particular virtues can only develop within the protected world of Wolmar's estate, secluded

from the outside world. The community watches over morality by constantly constructing a barrier against hostile outside influences. Just as they avoid trade with their (urban) surroundings, in order not to destroy their subsistence economy, they also view social contacts with city dwellers as detrimental. This becomes particularly clear in the novel's treatment of personal servants. In literature, servant figures are frequently used to portray urban customs and morals. The master's frivolity, it seems, is always reflected as a matter of course in his servant. Rousseau adopts this cliché. As a result, no servants from outside Wolmar's sphere of influence are hired to work at Clarens:

> Here they do not follow the maxim I have seen reigning in Paris and London, of choosing domestic servants who are already fully trained, that is, fully fledged scoundrels, those runners from one position to the next who adopt in each house through which they pass the faults of valets and masters, and make a practice of serving everyone, but attaching themselves to no one. Neither honesty, nor loyalty, nor zeal can be found among such persons, and this bunch of rascals ruins the master and corrupts the children in all wealthy houses.[61]

Furthermore, the masters of the house take a number of precautionary measures to keep servants from spending their leisure time outside the estate. Dances, entertainments, and games are organized to prevent the moral decay emanating from the *cabarets*. Even the children's governess is a "simple and credulous, but attentive, patient and clever peasant woman." Saint-Preux concludes that "they have spared nothing to prevent the vices of the city from penetrating a house whose masters neither have them, nor suffer them in others."[62]

This conscious seclusion from the outside world is based on the life experiences of the inhabitants of Clarens. All members of the community—except Julie!—have chosen to stay in Clarens in order to distance themselves from their previous lives. They have lived in the most diverse social circles in various places—Saint-Preux has even traveled around the world—but without finding the inner peace they hope that life in Clarens will bring them. A recognition that the world is evil is, however, the precondition for an individual's acceptance at Clarens. In order to live in the community, they must first reject society. Moving to Clarens entails not merely a change of place; it signifies a change from the corrupt world of the aristocratic and bourgeois struggle for

survival to the intact world of peaceful communal life among like-minded people. Those who live at Clarens have been purified by their own experiences.[63]

Settlement at Clarens as the high point of a life, the end of a long development, in the course of which the soul has undergone purification—all this smacks of a secular return to Paradise. This construction is based on Rousseau's notion that progressive human corruption can only be halted by reflection on, and a return to, true (i.e., original) human nature. This process takes place at Clarens. When defending his economic methods, Wolmar invokes human beings' "natural needs." These must be continually differentiated from artificial, socially produced needs in order to prevent the slide into luxury production and consumption.

We find this principle of need reduction duplicated in the moral sphere. The physical needs regulating economic life have their counterpart in the "natural feelings" (*sentiments naturels*) or "natural passions" (*passions naturelles*), which are contrasted with the artificially created feelings and passions.[64] Control over material production corresponds to control over feelings, passions, and perceptions. Julie's use of the "Apollo Hall" is characteristic. This room, which is particularly pleasant, and whose particular location and cosy character produce an unusually intimate atmosphere, is seldom used. Julie's justification for this regulation is that "it would be much too pleasant" and that "the surfeit of comfort is, in the end, the most disagreeable of all." The commodification of articles of everyday use is congruent with the commodification of comforts. Only through abstinence can one achieve full enjoyment. When Claire praises the wise way of life of the inhabitants of Geneva in a letter to Julie, mentioning the distant relationships between husbands and wives in particular, it is also a reference to the spirit prevailing at Clarens. Here, too, living and working spheres are strictly separated along gender lines. While this separation is justified in the case of the servants as a means of ensuring virtuous conduct, in the case of the masters Rousseau makes an argument based on natural law:

> [S]he [Julie] maintains that the continual commerce of the sexes is based neither on love nor on the marriage bond. According to her, wife and husband are destined to live together, to be sure, but not in the same way; they must act in concert without doing the same things. A life that delights the one, she says, is unbearable to the other; the inclinations bestowed upon them by nature are as different as the functions she imposes upon them; their amuse-

> ments are as different as their duties; in a word, the two work towards their common happiness along different paths, and this sharing of labor and cares is the strongest tie of their union.[65]

Claire, who makes similar observations in Geneva, concludes:

> Your system is well confirmed here. The two sexes benefit in many ways from occupying themselves with different work and pastimes, which prevents their becoming bored with each other and ensures that they reunite with more pleasure. Thus is the sage's pleasure sharpened: abstain to heighten enjoyment is your philosophy; it is the Epicureanism of reason.[66]

This "philosophy" rests on the principle of controlling the passions. In order to reach the state of lasting happiness as it exists at Clarens, the grand passions, which soon cool, must be transformed into gentle but more lasting emotions. This is the key to Julie's happiness. Although she does not love Wolmar with the same passion as she once loved Saint-Preux, she is happy in her marriage to him. As she informs Saint-Preux, "Love is accompanied by a continual restlessness of jealousy or privation, ill-suited to marriage, which is a state of enjoyment and peace."[67] Love, like all grand passions, does not last long:

> No passion produces such illusions as love. One takes its violence for a sign of its durability. The heart, overfull of such sweet emotion, projects it, so to speak, into the future, and as long as this love lasts one believes it will never end. Quite the contrary is the case, however; it is consumed by its very ardor; it declines along with youth, it fades along with beauty, it is extinguished by the frosts of age, and since the world began two white-haired lovers have never been seen sighing for each other.[68]

From the perspective of Clarens, love as passionate projection, an image we also find in *Emile,* appears as an illness. Julie speaks of wanting to cure Saint-Preux, referring implicitly to her own "cure," initiated by Wolmar, which freed her from the error of believing that only passionate love (*amour-passion*) could bring true happiness.[69]

Wolmar also sets in motion this process of moral purification in Saint-Preux: "My successes encouraged me, and I wanted to attempt to heal you as well, just as I had healed her."[70] Saint-Preux's continuation as a teacher at Clarens depends on the success of this attempt. Wolmar already knows the stages Saint-Preux will need to pass through in his development. He plans, in step-by-step "therapy," to disabuse him of the illusion that Madame de Wolmar is still his beloved Julie:

> Instead of his mistress I force him to see always the wife of an honest man and the mother of my children: I replace one picture with another, covering the past with the present. One takes a skittish horse up to the object which frightens it, until it is no longer afraid. One must do the same with young people whose imaginations still burn when their hearts have already cooled, showing them monsters in the distance which disappear when approached.[71]

Wolmar's task is to transform the love between Julie and Saint-Preux, the element with the greatest potential to disturb the collective happiness of Clarens, into a friendship. With the gift for cool reflection inherent in his own dispassionate nature he regulates the passions as he does his estate. He may be considered the creator of the spirit of Clarens. It is he who sets up in programmatic form not only the principles ruling economic life there but also communal social life, and who creates the preconditions for their realization. The purification of Julie's and Saint-Preux' passions is his work.[72] "Could we ever have come this far by our own efforts?" asks Julie at the end of this evolution—at a point when she realizes that "this is the first time in my life when I can write to you without fear or shame," only to answer her own question: "Never, never my good friend; the mere attempt would have been audacity. . . . I saw your sensitive heart, filled with the acts of generosity of the best of men, imbued with love for him."[73] In the end it is Wolmar who engineers Saint-Preux's reunion with Julie and decides to hire him as a tutor.

The Function of the Feminine in the Utopia of Clarens

What was Julie's function in the constellation of Clarens, or, more generally, the function of the feminine in this ideal utopian situation? In *Emile*, as I have tried to show, the feminine represents the ethical values of the golden age in the midst of a depraved civilization. By her very nature, woman brings *homme naturel*'s spontaneous natural sympathy into a society whose members no longer live for, but rather against, each other. In Clarens, in contrast, the separation of male and female life principles appears to have broken down. The harmonious coexistence of all members functions without the selfish behavior of individuals at the expense of the community. Wolmar, too, possesses the feminine virtues paradigmatically displayed in *Emile*. It is he who brought about the return of his self-sufficient estate to the precivilized golden age. He appears as

Julie's true preceptor; Rousseau accords her no active role. Julie's moral uniqueness, as expressed in the letters of the other members, appears at first as a paradox.

In order to explain this peculiarity, one must take into account that Rousseau is thinking of Clarens' *inception*, even if the state he describes is presented as a final one. Clarens appears as an ideal final stage, whose specificity lies in its very stasis, in the impossibility of further development. He does, however, describe the road which led there in the novel's first three parts. The two central protagonists and representatives of the "Clarens principle," Julie and Wolmar, arrive there by different routes. Wolmar has been forced by outer circumstances to build a new life for himself. His extensive experience of life and thoroughly virtuous character lead him to choose the economic methods just described. His renunciation of profitable market-oriented surplus production rests on his insight into the unfortunate autodynamics of capitalist business methods. Wolmar creates conditions which do not permit the perversions of *amour de soi* described in the Second Discourse. Julie's case is a different one. For her, it is only the conditions created by Wolmar that allow her to be virtuous. While Wolmar places his reason in the service of his moral sentiments and rejects the selfish way of life of those around him of his own volition, Julie is unable to create the preconditions for her own virtuousness. She marries Wolmar against her will, and Clarens is the realization of Wolmar's ideal of social life, whose wisdom she comes to understand only gradually. It is against this background that her development begins.

This break becomes visible in the separation of her person into Julie d'Etanges and Mme de Wolmar. Marriage marks the beginning of the development of her moral capacities and not, as in Wolmar's case, its culmination. The recognition that Mme de Wolmar is no longer identical to Julie d'Etanges is the crucial experience that allows Saint-Preux to overcome his passion and live in friendship with his former lover. The reality of the married woman replaces the image of the lover in his mind. While the memory of Julie arouses fantasies of passion, the lived reality of Mme de Wolmar evokes calm and peace. Saint-Preux experiences this metamorphosis for the first time in the *Elisée*, the artificial garden created by Julie: "I thought I saw the picture of virtue where I sought that of pleasure. That image became confused in my mind with the features of Mad^{e} de Wolmar, and for the first time since my return I saw Julie in her

absence not as she once was for me, and as I still love to imagine her, but as she appears before my eyes every day."[74]

I have shown that this process was set in motion by Wolmar. He is omnipresent in Saint-Preux's meditations: "I thought I saw his intelligent, piercing eye looking into my innermost heart, making me blush with shame once again."[75] But it is the presence of Mme de Wolmar that finally brings this purification process to a successful conclusion. She is the incarnation of Wolmar's principles. Herein lies her uniqueness, which at the same time underlines the specificity and function of the feminine within the novel. Only the experience of her lived virtue allows Saint-Preux himself to follow Wolmar's moral commandments. The figure of Mme de Wolmar enables him to experience the moral code prevailing at Clarens as true happiness, in contrast to which sexual love reveals itself as "aberrant fantasy" (*écarts d'imagination*) and the "base transports of an illicit passion" (*vils transports d'une passion criminelle*). It is Mme de Wolmar's presence that first allows Saint-Preux to experience the *pleasure* of virtue (*la jouissance de la vertu*), which Wolmar had only conveyed through precepts.[76] Wolmar holds influence over Saint-Preux's rational understanding, but it is only through Mme de Wolmar that this process of understanding becomes a moral sentiment, and thus relevant for concrete practice. The virtuous woman's presence is indispensable for the durability of this sentiment, and it alone can suppress the passions of years gone by. "When the formidable Julie pursues me, I take refuge in the company of Madame de Wolmar, and I find peace. Where would I flee to if this asylum were taken away? All times, all places are dangerous when I am far from her."[77] Saint-Preux feels himself a man divided. The struggle between virtue and passion runs straight through his person. He does not have the power within himself to overcome the "unrest of the passions." "In truth, Julie, I believe that I have two souls; you keep the good one as a pawn in your hands."[78] Woman is the center of virtue. Her own person breathes life into the Clarens philosophy. She can do this because the process of moral insight occurs in her neither as a rational act (as in the case of Wolmar) nor as the struggle between two opposing souls (as in the case of Saint-Preux) but, rather, as a spontaneous sympathetic understanding of the moral climate of Clarens. Her virtuousness does not result from effort but, rather, from the realization and development of her nature. She is the only person at Clarens who does not choose seclusion out of a painful experience of life in society. The ad-

vantages of Clarens are not revealed to her in contrast to "outside," as is the case for Wolmar and Saint-Preux but, rather, arouse a natural resonance in her heart. Clarens is, as it were, the materialization of her inner nature. The tension between the production of luxury items and articles of everyday use, moderation and excess, passion and virtue, sympathy and egoism marks both Wolmar and Saint-Preux, if in different ways. Both must master this tension through continual exertion: Wolmar in his economic considerations, Saint-Preux in the repression of the fantasies which continually overtake him. Julie knows no such dichotomy. She is the harmony of Clarens, and is for this reason better able to realize it even than Wolmar. This becomes apparent when we look at the place which has been shaped by her alone: the Elisée, that spot where Saint-Preux's "conversion" from lover to virtuous friend takes place.

In contrast to the estate of Clarens, whose well-ordered economy is always presented as the result of Wolmar's continual exertions, the Elisée appears as a work of nature. Wolmar's (agri)cultural achievements do not extend to this precisely circumscribed part of the former orchard. The Elisée exists in a natural, precivilized state, comparable to that of the South Sea islands.[79] Visitors to the Elisée feel themselves transported back to the beginnings of humanity: "I believed I was seeing the most savage, the most solitary place in nature, and I felt that I was the first mortal ever to penetrate this wilderness."[80] But that which appeared primitive and untouched by human hands was created by Julie. The Elisée is her work; it is the only place in Clarens not subject to Wolmar's management. On the contrary, in the Elisée it is Wolmar who works under Julie's direction. In contrast to the rest of the estate, however, which testifies to Wolmar's circumspect management, in the Elisée all traces of human labor have been effaced. Here Julie reconstructs the long-conquered savage state of nature. Only here is a perfect harmony of humankind and nature achieved. The peaceful atmosphere of the estate finds its fullest expression in the part "cultivated" by Julie. She manages effortlessly, naturally, and unconsciously what Wolmar has only achieved after years of discipline and planning. Her work does not bear the imprint of labor; the role of "administratrix" is an emanation of her own nature and not, like Wolmar's estate management, the conscious exercise of a function. Julie's activity, like the vegetation of the Elisée, is akin to a natural force unfolding within the external circumstances created by Wolmar. Julie creates the primitive state of nature; Wolmar only approaches it in limiting the excesses of civiliza-

tion. This also becomes apparent in the differing functions of the Elisée and the rest of the estate. In contrast to the rest of Clarens, the Elisée is not cultivated according to the principle of maximum efficiency but rather only that of agreeableness and pleasure. The yield of fruits is merely a by-product:

> [O]nly in this one place has the useful been sacrificed to the agreeable, and in the rest of the lands one has taken such care with the plants and trees that even with one less orchard the harvest of fruits does not cease to be greater than before. If you imagine how happy one is sometimes to see wild fruits in the depths of the forest, and even to partake of them, you will understand the pleasure of finding in this artificial wilderness excellent and ripe, if sparse and unattractive, fruits, which in turn affords the pleasure of collecting and choosing them.[81]

Here we find the same juxtaposition of utility (*utilité*) and agreeableness (*agrément/plaisir*) we encountered in the Second Discourse. Primitive nature in its savage state resists systematic exploitation, which is, in turn, the precondition for the complete harmony prevailing there. The danger of egoistic production is still inherent in Wolmar's economy, and he can only banish it by constant efforts to regulate needs. In Julie's world, in contrast, it appears fundamentally excluded. In the Elisée, the ideal utopian state, which Clarens can only approach, becomes reality.

James F. Jones regards the portrayal of the Elisée as only a "textual intensification"[82] of the world of Clarens, a microcosm reflecting Clarens in condensed form. The Elisée seems to have a wider significance, however. It embodies the world of woman in which—in contrast to the male world of work—Rousseau's utopian program of social harmony is more perfectly realized. This difference, however, is not merely gradual, as Jones would have it. Instead, it points to the fundamental differences Rousseau sets up between the female and male life principles. Female nature is more natural than male nature. Assuming that external circumstances do not inhibit her development, woman does intuitively what man does consciously, following his enlightened reason. Woman is incapable of creating these conditions by her own efforts; she depends on male preparations. Julie is confronted with conditions at Clarens, but she is not the mere executrix of Wolmar's philosophy of life. Rather, she is the stabilizing factor in the world of Clarens. Jones correctly points out the cracks in the edifice of Clarens,

such as the discussion of disciplining domestic servants. It is no accident that Julie is responsible for mediating such conflicts when they arise. She embodies perfectly the social harmony which Wolmar's sense of justice can never approach. The utopian moment of Clarens, which Jones analyzes as the novel's principal element, is most fully realized in the person of Julie.