

## Judging Well without a Personal Authority?

### On a Humean Possibility in Rousseau's Pedagogical Project

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### Abstract

This paper examines the epistemic foundation of Rousseau's pedagogical project. I argue that Rousseau's account of sensations and empirical judgments presented in Books II and III of *Emile* resembles Hume's model of causal judgment delineated in *A Treatise of Human Nature* and *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. I will show that despite the lack of historical evidence for Hume's direct intellectual influence on Rousseau, the similarities between the two thinkers' epistemology, based on textual evidence, are hard to ignore. Given that the Humean model does not require the presence and intervention of personal authority, I argue that Rousseau's resemblance to Hume indicates that judging well without a personal authority is a genuine possibility for Rousseau. However, this possibility is limited to empirical relations between objects and between objects and the judging agent. In other words, this possibility does not apply to the moral relations between the judging agent and other individuals. I further argue that the reason why Rousseau limits his endorsement of the Humean model to the amoral affairs alone is that, when viewed in light of Rousseau's philosophy as a whole, the Humean model can only dispel the influences of superstitions on judgments concerning natural phenomena, while remaining incapable of discerning prejudices and deceptions in social affairs. This, I argue, poses a critique of applying Hume's epistemology to social and moral affairs, a practice commonly seen among contemporary political theorists who dub themselves as "realist liberals."

## Contents

I.	Introduction: Causal Judgment and Personal Authority in Rousseau’s <i>Emile</i> .....	1
II.	The Humean Model of Causal Judgment.....	7
	1. Causation as a Lively Belief Generated by Repetitive Observations .....	7
	2. The Scientific Model for Making Credible Causal Judgments.....	12
III.	The Humean Model in Books II and III of <i>Emile</i> .....	17
	1. The Nature and Typology of Judgment.....	19
	2. Components of Judgment: Priority of Sensations/Impressions to Ideas/Concepts	20
	3. Experience, Memory, and Induction: A Twofold Dependence .....	22
	4. Hume’s Scientific Custom and Rousseau’s “Negative Education” .....	25
IV.	Rousseau’s Limited Endorsement of the Humean Model .....	29
V.	Conclusion: A Rousseauian Critique of “Realist Liberalism” .....	36
VI.	Bibliography .....	39

## I. Introduction: Causal Judgment and Personal Authority in Rousseau's *Emile*

One of the most famous moments in Rousseau's theory is his attribution of the establishment of property-holding society to a wrong causal judgment made under deception. While Rousseau imagines the proclamation of property rights to be made by the rich in the primitive human community (*DI*, 91),<sup>1</sup> he nonetheless sees the acceptance of the proclamation by the poor as the final cause of the institution of property (*DI*, 102-3). In Rousseau's account, the poor accept the proclamation because they were deceived by the rich's rhetoric that such an institution would protect them from violence and oppression, and, as a result, failed to foresee that property will only perpetuate the existing economic inequality and justify its expansion. Civil society, with the "exploitation and socioeconomic enslavement" it later generates, is thus founded on, on one side, the success of a deception by the rich, and on the other, a fatally wrong causal judgment by the poor, who failed to foresee the true consequences of the institution of property (Sagar 2018, 140, 153).

Given the hypothetical nature of Rousseau's account of the origin of inequality, it is unlikely that anyone has ever witnessed the institution of property as a single event. Nevertheless, what is dramatized in this episode of Rousseau's hypothetical history is a real challenge that still confronts ordinary citizens in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: it is hard to foresee the consequences of a proposed institution or policy, without being biased or manipulated by the opinions of the rich and the powerful, in a society where the mutual dependence of

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<sup>1</sup> The following abbreviations are used to denote the following works by Rousseau, Kant, and Hume cited in this paper: C = *Confessions*; DI = *Discourse on Inequality*; E = *Emile*; ES = *Emile and Sophie*; EHU = *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*; EPM = *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*; Prolegomena = *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*; THN = *A Treatise of Human Nature*; EMPL = *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*.

countless agents creates “complex chains of causation” (Pitts 2017, 141); yet the cost of failing to make good causal judgements on social matters can be devastating – such cognitive failures may result in significant harms to both social and individual well-being.

Both the difficulty and the political significance of making good causal judgments are embedded in what may be called “the paradox of independent judgment.” This paradox first came into the horizon of Enlightenment thinkers in the 18<sup>th</sup> century: almost at the same time when “think for yourself!” becomes the zeitgeist of the Enlightenment (Fleischacker 1999, 7), Enlightenment thinkers find the then emerging “commercial society” has started to “[generate] chains of causation that exceed the capacities of their agents to judge well about them” (Pitts 2017, 144). How to cultivate individuals into agents capable of judging well by and for themselves in this paradoxical situation of the commercial society thus becomes a central concern among thinkers in the Enlightenment era (Soni 2010, 363).

This concern is particularly prominent in Rousseau’s *Emile*. In *Emile*, which he sees as his “best and most important” work (C 529-30), Rousseau develops an pedagogical project aiming to transform us – the modern individuals who are inflicted by the contradictions between being a human being and being a citizen (E I, 40) – into “sociable men” (E I, 49), who acquire the agency to overcome the tensions between private inclinations and public duties through a progressive training of judgment. This progressive training is designed in accordance with what Rousseau sees as the natural process of the development of our capacity to judge well on our surroundings: “at first according to whether they are pleasant or unpleasant to us, then according to the conformity or lack of it that we find between us and these objects, and finally according to the idea of happiness or of perfection given us by reason” (E I, 39). In *Emile*, Rousseau makes Emile, the ideal

product of his pedagogical project, demonstrate the “suitable perfection” (*E II*, 158) at each stage of this progressive process.

While the ultimate goal of Rousseau’s educational project is a moral or ethical one, i.e. the attainment of “true happiness” (*E II*, 80) by removing the abovementioned “contradictions of men” (*E I*, 41), recent scholarship has recognized the importance of “the epistemological dimensions” in Rousseau’s project (Hanley 2012, 261). After Soni (2010) recognizes the training of “judging by senses” as a part of Rousseau’s solution to the “crisis of judgment” (368-9), Hanley (2012) develops a systematic account of Rousseau’s epistemology based on texts mainly from *Emile*, *Moral Letters*, and *Letter to Beaumont*. In Hanley’s construction of Rousseau’s “virtue epistemology,” “the cultivation of epistemic virtue” serves as the necessary precondition to “the cultivation of ethical virtue” (241, 259). This means that one’s moral maturity depends on one’s cognitive maturity, because the capacity of making moral judgments by associating and comparing moral ideas presupposes the prior development of the cognitive capacity of making empirical judgments by associating and comparing ideas of objects of experience (251). Hence the cultivation of good causal judgments, as a major part of empirical judgments, can contribute to the making of good moral judgments.

However, while showing that the cultivation of causal judgments is indispensable for moral development, the existing literature on Rousseau’s epistemology does not specify what kind of cultivation is necessary for making good causal judgments. In particular, given the prevalent tension between freedom and authority in all of Rousseau’s political works, we may want to ask if, in Rousseau’s educational project, the cultivation and exercise of good causal judgments require a continuous presence and intervention of a personal

authority whose judgments are always sound and thus should be relied on. More specifically, this paper asks: does the education that Emile receives at his early age enable him to judge well after he enters into the society as an independent individual, or it only makes him constantly in need of the tutelage of a tutor even when he ought to exercise his own judgments? In short, with respect to causal judgments, can Rousseau's pedagogical project really create independent "sociable men" capable of judging well in absence of any forms of personal authority?

Earlier studies tend to give negative answers to these questions. For example, Shklar (2001[1964]) argues that in almost all his social and political works, Rousseau pins the "hope of salvation" ultimately to "the personal authority of great men" (154). Such an authority, as the only possessor of extraordinary "intelligence" and "moral strength," can break the ordinary trajectory of social and moral degeneration, "restructure the environment," and thus rescue individuals from corrupting social dependence and from contradictions between natural inclinations and moral duties (155). Also, because "the threats from within and without are so great," the "superhuman" authorities have to be always present and able to intervene into human affair whenever needed, so that the people under their tutelage won't fall back into the ordinary, corruptive trajectory (171). In her later study on Rousseau's social thought, Shklar (1969) incorporates Rousseau's unfinished novel *Emile and Sophie, or The Solitary Ones* into her analysis, and argues that Emile's corruption in Paris, his break with Sophie, and his enslavement under the dey of Algeria depicted in the novel just demonstrate the doomed failure of independent judgments in absence of a personal authority (235).

Recent Rousseau scholarship challenges Shklar's claim about the indispensability of

a personal authority in the cultivation and exercise of judgments in Rousseau's pedagogical project. This is done by distinguishing the education of *Emile* from the education of Emile (Schaeffer 2014, 9) and shifting the focus of examination from the relationship between the tutor and Emile to the one between Rousseau and his readers. According to Schaeffer (2014), there is indeed a possibility for cultivating a genuine capacity for independent judgments in Rousseau's pedagogical project, but it is fulfilled not in Emile, but among the readers of *Emile*. In Schaeffer's reading, the key to the development of independent judging capacity is to attain a judging stance of "partial detachment" from "the experience of the particular to be judged", which allows the judging individual to be "seduced by" and "immersed in" that experience, while simultaneously maintaining "some degree of detachment that makes critical reflection possible (8). According to Schaeffer, this stance of "partial detachment" can be established not through arguments but only through "moment[s] of collision or transformation," and Emile and other characters in *Emile* are "chimeras" that Rousseau creates to trigger such moments among his reading audience (14). These moments enable the readers to travel between imaginations and reflections, experiencing the charms of multiple illusions without being absorbed into any of them.

My paper takes the same basic position as these recent readings, agreeing that Rousseau indicates that individuals can judge well without the continuous presence and intervention of personal authority. However, unlike Schaeffer, who sees the possibility not within Emile but in readers' interactions with Emile, I argue that Rousseau actually embeds a limited but genuine possibility of exercising independent judgments within *Emile* and that the preconditions for fulfilling this possibility can be found in Books II and III of *Emile*, through the training of Emile's sensations and causal judgment. More specifically, I will

argue that this possibility is identifiable because Rousseau's understanding of sensations and causal judgments presented in Books II and III of *Emile* bears striking similarities with Hume's model of causal judgment delineated in *A Treatise of Human Nature* and *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. I will show that despite the lack of historical evidence indicating Hume's direct intellectual influence on Rousseau (Popkin 1978), the similarities between the two thinkers' epistemology, based on textual evidence, are hard to ignore. Given that the Humean model of causal judgment does not require the presence and intervention of personal authority, the similarities that Rousseau shares with Hume on matters of sensations and causal judgment indicate that judging well without a personal authority is a genuine possibility for Rousseau. However, for Rousseau, this possibility is limited to empirical relations between objects and between objects and the judging agent. Due to Rousseau's insights into the fundamental difference between one's interactions with the physical or natural world and one's interactions with other human beings in social life, he does not apply the Humean model of causal judgment moral relations between the judging agent and other individuals.

In what follows, I will first offer an overview of Hume's theory of causal judgment. Then I will show that all the key features in the Humean model of causal judgment can find their correspondence in Books II and III of *Emile*. Then I will situate the Humean possibility of judging well on causal relations without a personal authority in Rousseau's entire pedagogical project and argue that the fulfillment of this possibility is depicted at the end of Book III of *Emile* and further illustrated in the novel *Emile and Sophie*. However, I will also show that this Humean possibility, though desirable for Rousseau, does not and cannot represent the fullest development of human faculties in the latter's vision, in part



because Rousseau's endorsement of the Humean model of causal judgments is limited to amoral judgments concerning natural necessities of the physical world and utilities of objects to human beings, but not extended to moral relations between human agents. Finally, I will explore the contemporary relevance of Rousseau's limited endorsement of the Humean model of causal judgments. I will do so by constructing an internal criticism, based on Rousseau's insights, of applying Hume's epistemology to social and moral affairs. This Rousseauian critique may help reveal the deficiencies involved in how the relationship between power and interests is perceived in contemporary "political liberalism" or "realist liberalism," which are influenced by or grounded on Hume's epistemology (Forrester 2019, 263-266; Sabl 2017).

## **II. The Humean Model of Causal Judgment**

To judge is to apply general concepts to specific cases. A causal judgment occurs when the mind applies the concept or idea of causation to a particular relation it perceives. In history of modern epistemology, it is Hume that first develops a systematic, empiricist account that explains the nature and origin of the idea of causation as well as how to make good causal judgments. Because of the systematicity of Hume's account, we will begin with a brief examination of his account, with an aim to construct a model of causal judgment. This model can serve as the theoretical framework with which Rousseau's epistemology can be identified and compared.

### **1. Causation as a Lively Belief Generated by Repetitive Observations**

For Hume, the idea of causation arises from "the repeated activation" of a mental

response to a certain kind of sensual stimulus (Garrett 2015, 129). Like all concepts based on mental responses to sensual stimuli, causation is categorized by Hume as a perception, which is defined right at the beginning of *Treatise*:

“All the perceptions of the human mind resolve themselves into two distinct kinds, which I shall call Impressions and Ideas. The difference betwixt these consists in the degrees of force and liveliness, with which they strike upon the mind, and make their way into our thought or consciousness. Those perceptions, which enter with most force and violence, we may name impressions; and under this name I comprehend all our sensations, passions and emotions, as they make their first appearance in the soul. By ideas I mean the faint images of these in thinking and reasoning...” (*THN* 1.1.1.1)

This passage lays the foundation of two basic principles in Hume’s empiricist and naturalistic epistemology. The first one is the “copy principle,” which asserts that all ideas resemble and are derived from sensual impressions (*THN* 1.1.1.4-12).<sup>2</sup> In other words, the copy principle admits no innate, non-logical concepts possessed *a priori* by the mind. I call the second principle “liveliness principle,” which asserts (a) that perceptions always exert “force and liveliness” on the mind, (b) that the liveliness can be transferred between perceptions that resemble each other (*THN* 1.3.8.5-6), (c) that ideas from reasoning differ from impressions from sensing only in their degrees of liveliness, and (d) that impressions usually exceeds ideas in their degrees of liveliness. Hume traces this principle to what he sees as a phenomenological fact that can be confirmed in everyone’s experience – “Every one of himself will readily perceive the difference betwixt feeling and thinking” (*THN* 1.1.1.1). The liveliness principle, along with the copy principle, underlie all the succeeding parts of Hume’s philosophy, including his theory of causal judgment.

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<sup>2</sup> Given that Hume treats ideas as the synonymous of concepts and impressions as the synonymous of sensations, this paper follows Hume’s usage of terms, using “ideas” interchangeably with “concepts” and “impressions” interchangeably with “sensations.”

In sections 6-7 of Book I, Part Three of *Treatise*, after reviewing the two principles, Hume makes two arguments concerning the nature of causation. First, because a causal judgment, although always triggered by a present impression of an object, nonetheless always points toward an idea of another object that is *not* present at the moment but only *imagined* to be necessarily connected to the present impression, causation is in nature “an opinion or belief, that ’tis an idea related to or associated with a present impression” (*THN* 1.3.6.15). Second, since in “every one’s feeling,” a belief differs from “a fictitious idea” only in its “superior force, or vivacity, or solidity, or firmness, or steadiness” (*THN* 1.3.7.7), a belief is not simply any idea, but “a lively idea related to or associated with a present impression” (*THN* 1.3.7.5). More simply put, the two arguments are: (1) the idea of causation is a direct product of imagination, even though both its formation and application are triggered by and related to a given impression; (2) the idea of causation, as a belief, carries a high degree of liveliness, a “sensual violence” (*THN* 1.3.11.4) that is so powerful that it makes the mind unable to perceive any alternatives but a necessary connection between the two sets of objects.

Two questions naturally follow. First, if, according to the copy principle, all ideas are copied from impressions, then what is the impression that serves as the original model of the idea of causation, given that this idea does not come from any present impressions at the moment? Second, if, according to the liveliness principle, ideas are usually less lively than the impressions they are copied from, then how is the idea of causation a highly lively belief that admits nothing but necessity? In other words, “what bestow the vivacity on the idea” (*THN* 1.3.8.1)? Given that the liveliness principle also asserts that liveliness can be transferred between resembling perceptions (*THN* 1.3.8.5-6), which means that ideas can

be “enlivened” by the impressions they are copied from (*THN* 1.3.8.4), we can combine the two questions into one: from what impression is the idea of necessity in a causal belief derived?

Hume’s answer, as commonly known, is that the idea of causation is produced by custom. In his account, custom “proceeds from” repetitive or “constant conjunctions” of similar instances of impressions (*THN* 1.3.8.10) on the “supposition” about the uniformity of nature, i.e. “that the future will be conformable to the past” (*EHU* 4. 30). Yet custom is not itself a single impression. As Hume soon points out (*THN* 1.3.14.16-18), the idea of causation, as a belief in a *necessary* connection between two sets of objects taking place in sequence, can be reduced neither to the impressions of these objects *per se*, nor to the conjunctions of these impressions, because these conjunctions, however repeated, are not equivalent to a necessary connection. Therefore, in addition to the repetitive conjunctions that custom “proceeds from,” custom must contain some other repetitive impressions that directly give rise to the belief in a necessary connection. What are these additional impressions, through the process of habituation, produce the idea of necessity in a causal belief? Hume’s answer is that, “we must, therefore, turn ourselves to some other quarter to seek the origin of that idea” (*THN* 1.3.14.19):

“Tho’ the several resembling instances, which give rise to the idea of power, have no influence on each other, and can never produce any new quality in the object, which can be the model of that idea, yet the *observation* of this resemblance produces a new impression *in the mind*, which is its real model. For after we have observ’d the resemblance in a sufficient number of instances, we immediately feel a determination of the mind to pass from one object to its usual attendant, and to conceive it in a stronger light upon account of that relation.” (*THN* 1.3.14.20, italics original)

In short, it is the human activity of observing the repetition of resembling conjunctions,

that gives rise to “a new impression in the mind”; and it is this “new impression” generated through observing that gives rise to the idea of necessity in a causal belief.

In a later paragraph in the same section, Hume further clarifies the nature of this new impression:

“The idea of necessity arises from some impression. There is no impression convey’d by our senses, which can give rise to that idea. It must, therefore, be deriv’d from some internal impression, or impression of reflection. There is no internal impression, which has any relation to the present business, but that propensity, which custom produces, to pass from an object to the idea of its usual attendant. This therefore is the essence of necessity.” (*THN* 1.3.14.22)

The two quotations indicate that Hume identifies the “internal impression” that gives rise to the idea of necessity as simultaneously a product of the activity of observing, “a determination of the mind,” and a result of custom. How can this “internal impression” be the three things at once? This is because, for Hume, the mind of a human individual is not an independent entity but only a “bundle or collection of different perceptions” (*THN* 1.4.6.4). There is no “blank slate” underlying the “bundle”: The mind is the bundle itself. Therefore, the mind is structured by perceptions from the past experience, which are already in the bundle, and by one’s physiological constitution, in that both previous experience and physiological constitution form “enduring background structures pertaining to the mind,” which “influence and facilitate [future] mental operations” (Garrett 2015, 84).

In the generation of a causal belief, the activity of observing similar conjunctions engenders an internal impression about the transition between the two sets of resembling objects that the conjunctions involve. Once such an activity is repeated for many times, the internal impressions engendered in all previous activities of observing, along with the abovementioned supposition of the uniformity of nature, constitute a particular background

structure in the mind. This background structure in turn influences the new impressions engendered in future activities of observing. This process, in which the previous perceptions, on the basis of one's physiological constitution and the supposition of the uniformity of nature, interact with and shape future perceptions, is habituation. Through habituation, the original internal impression is enhanced as a determinate "propensity." The belief in a necessary connection between two sets of objects in constant conjunctions is thus nothing but this determinate propensity in the mind. Therefore, causal judgment, for Hume, does not come from any impressions passively received by one's sense organs at a moment, nor from any innate ideas or *a priori* concepts, but from the interactions of previous and present impressions engendered by active repetitions of observing similar conjunctions over time. In short, causal judgment, for Hume, is generated by repetitive activities of observing.

## **2. The Scientific Model for Making Credible Causal Judgments**

Given that causal judgments in Hume's system originate from repetitive observations habituated as a custom, it naturally follows that quality of a causal judgment depends on the quality of the observations habituated – in other words, the quality of the custom that produces the judgment – and the quality of the observer.

On the side of custom, Hume suggests that in general, custom based on one's natural experience, i.e. one's own direct observations, tends to produce better casual judgments. This view is grounded on Hume's division of two ways by which "custom, to which I attribute all belief and reasoning, may operate upon the mind" (*THN* 1.3.9.16), one "natural," the other "artificial" (*THN* 1.3.9.19). The natural way is through one's own "past experience," in which "we have found two objects to have been always conjoin'd together,

‘tis evident, that upon the appearance of one of these objects in an impression, we must from custom make an easy transition to the idea of that object, which usually attends it” (*THN* 1.3.9.16). Causal judgements made on the basis of natural experience tend to be credible, because “by means of the present impression and easy transition [we] must conceive that idea in a stronger and more lively manner, than we do any loose floating image of the fancy” (*THN* 1.3.9.16). In other words, causal judgements made on one’s own natural experience can rely on the natural difference in liveliness between actual impressions and imagined ideas. One can use this natural difference in liveliness as an indicator to distinguish credible truths from incredible fictions.

However, the functioning of this indicator may be disturbed by the second kind of custom, an “artificial” kind, which Hume generally calls “education” (*THN* 1.3.9.16,19). Through education, “a mere idea alone” is artificially repeated by others and indoctrinated into one’s mind. And, if the idea is constantly reenforced through a coherent fictional system (*THN* 1.3.9.17; 1.3.10.6), it will become a belief by acquiring a high level of liveliness that is comparable or even eclipses the liveliness of a natural belief gained through own’s own experience (*THN* 1.3.10.3). If the educators are people like “preachers” (*THN* 1.3.9.15) or “poets” (*THN* 1.3.10.6), who aim to “excite the most dismal and gloomy” passions by fictions rather than by truth, then those educated will confuse fantasies with truths, stick to superstitions, and make false causal judgements. According to Hume, the common people are especially vulnerable to such harmful education, as “we may observe, that among the vulgar, quacks and projectors meet with a more easy faith upon account of their magnificent pretensions” (*THN* 1.3.10.4).

On this point, we find Hume, who seeks “the downfall” of “the prevailing systems of

superstition” (*EMPL* “Letter from Adam Smith,” xlvi), shares with Rousseau a similar repulsion against superstitious opinions and inflammatory rhetoric. Also similar to Rousseau, Hume resorts to a corrective education to counteract the harmful effects of the corruptive custom indoctrinated by “preachers” and “poets.” This corrective education is found in Hume’s discussion of probable reasoning (or, in short, induction) and his enumeration of the “general rules” for making credible induction (*THN* 1.3.10-13, 15).

At the first glance, probable reasoning, which proceeds through “reflection” and according to “general rules,” does not look like a form of custom, which, according to Hume, in general “operates before we have time for reflection” (*THN* 1.3.8.13). However, Hume soon rephrases his view of probable reasoning, that “more properly speaking,” it is not that probable reasoning does not produce custom, but “that the reflection produces the custom in an *oblique* and *artificial* manner” (*THN* 1.3.8.14, italics original). For Hume, this kind of probable reasoning, which “arise[s] not *directly* from habit, but in an *oblique* manner” (*THN* 1.3.12.7, italics original), is epitomized in philosophers’ explanation of “the probability of causes” (*THN* 1.3.12). In their reflection of the probability of causes, philosophers design experiments that can illustrate the instances of phenomena of their interests and establish their causal beliefs only according to the amount of observations they gain from experiments. By designing experiments, philosophers insulate themselves from the influence of the harmful custom advocated by “preachers” and “poets”; by making experiments and observing experimental results, philosophers open their minds only to impressions of the phenomena of their interests while filtering out all other sensual disturbance. In this sense, philosophers, through their action of experimenting and observing, establish a custom that counters against the custom of “preachers” and “poets.”



This philosophical or scientific custom thus serves as a correction to false causal judgment produced in the harmful custom and help to restore the superiority of credible beliefs over incredible fantasies in the degrees of liveliness.

However, while an environment free of prejudices and superstitions, created by the scientific custom of observation-making, is a necessary condition for an observer to restore the natural liveliness of credible beliefs in her perception, it alone does not guarantee credible causal judgments. To be capable of sensing or perceiving the natural liveliness of credible beliefs, the observer also needs to have a good physiological constitution as the “hardware” of sensing. While Hume does not emphasize the quality of the observer’s sensation when discussing causal judgments in *Treatise*, in the essay “Of the Standard of Taste,” he notes: “The organs of internal sensation are seldom so perfect as to allow the general principles their full play, and produce a feeling correspondent to those principles. They either labour under some defect, or are vitiated by some disorder; and by that means, excite a sentiment, which may be pronounced erroneous” (EMPL 241). To overcome such defects, he notes in the essay that for one to be “a true judge,” one’s “strong sense,” conditioned on well-functioning sense organs, should also be “united to delicate sentiment, improved by practice, perfected by comparison, and cleared of all prejudice” (EMPL 241). Although the essay is about aesthetical judgments, given that “Hume’s treatments of both causation and probability” are “analogous in many crucial respects to his treatments of both beauty and virtue” (Garrett 2015, 117), the traits of “a true judge” in arts may also be the characters of “a true judge” in causal relations.

To sum up, for Hume, the key to make credible causal judgments is to maintain the natural liveliness of the impressions and beliefs obtained through the observer’s own

natural experience. For experience to be considered “natural,” observations need to be done by oneself, through a well-functioning sensation (or in Hume’s words, “sense organs” that can produce “strong sense”), and in an environment free of the harmful custom created by artificial manipulations. Yet given that we are living in an environment with prejudices and superstitions, Hume seeks to counter these confounders to one’s natural experience through a corrective education based on the model of scientific experiments. To adapt the scientific custom through this corrective education, one need not be put under the constant tutelage of a scientist or philosopher like Hume, however. Since a causal belief arises from a determinate “propensity” produced through repetitive activities of observations habituated as a custom, the key is to cultivate a scientific propensity or disposition in one’s mind,<sup>3</sup> through one’s own activities of observations, to ensure one to stick only to one’s natural experience, instead of encouraging a passive reliance on a constant protection by an external authority. To that end, from the previous success of induction in “experimental philosophy” (i.e. physics), Hume induces eight “general rules” of induction to facilitate the making of credible causal judgments (*THN* 1.3.15). He intends to show the utility of these rules through his philosophy, and believes that once the utility of these rules is confirmed in people’s experience, people will internalize scientific rules in their practice and abandon their prejudice that they “rashly form” in previous causal judgments, such as “an Irishman cannot wit, and a Frenchman cannot have solidity” (*THN* 1.3.12.1). With his “[endeavor] to open the eyes of the public” (*EMPL* “Letter from Adam Smith,” xlvi), Hume hopes that once the scientific disposition is established in people’s mind under the guidance of

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<sup>3</sup> Stroud (1981) points out that Hume tends to use “tendencies,” “instincts,” “feelings,” “emotions,” “appetites,” “propensities,” and “dispositions” interchangeably. For Hume, they are all “passions” that fall under the category “impressions of reflection” (*THN* 1.2.3.3; 1.3.2.16; 1.3.10.1; 1.3.14.22; 2.3.3.5).

enlightened philosophers like him, people will be able to make good causal judgments by and for themselves.

### III. The Humean Model in Books II and III of *Emile*

No evidence shows that Rousseau had read Hume's *Treatise*, which was finished fourteen years before the publication of Rousseau's first philosophical work, *Discourse on The Science and The Arts*, and twenty-five years before *Emile*. In fact, it seems that none of Hume's philosophical works were familiar to Rousseau: the existing evidence suggests he had only read Hume's *History of the Stuarts* and regarded Hume as a historian (Popkin 1978, 302).<sup>4</sup> Yet, after the publication of *Emile* and before his trip to England, Rousseau praised Hume in their correspondence as "the most illustrious of my contemporaries whose kindness exceeds glory,"<sup>5</sup> which suggests that at the least he had no aversion to Hume's ideas before their quarrel. Moreover, Rousseau's stances on epistemological issues have been shown to be strongly influenced by contemporary French sensationalists, especially Condillac (Hanley 2012, note 10, 242). In his discussion on "negative education" in Book II of *Emile*, by praising Condillac as "[an] excellent head ripened in silence," who learns slowly but soundly through his own senses without relying on others' opinions, Rousseau sees Condillac as a real-life example that can illustrate the virtue of his "negative education" and believes that Condillac's way of learning will ultimately win "him an honorable and

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<sup>4</sup> Susato (2019) suggests that Rousseau is also likely to have read Hume's *Political Discourses*. Yet this likelihood is only inferred from a short sentence in *Confession* that seems to summarize Rousseau's overall impression of Hume's social and political theory: "M. Hume associated a very republican soul with the English paradoxes in favor of luxury." Other than this sentence, there is still no direct evidence suggesting that Rousseau had read Hume's *Political Discourses*, not to mention Hume's philosophical works.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted from the French original in Popkin (1978, 306), English translation mine. Originally from Rousseau's letter to Hume, Strassbourg, Dec. 4<sup>th</sup>, 1765, letter 4874, in Rousseau's *Correspondance*, Vol. 28 (Oxford, 1977). The original French of the sentence reads: "plus illustre de mes contemporains dont la bonté surpasse la gloire."

distinguished place among the best reasoners and the most profound metaphysicians of his age” (*E* II. 107). Like Hume, Condillac develops an empiricist account of human cognition, and his “radically empiricist” explanation on the association of ideas in judgment is usually compared with Hume’s as a “very impoverished” version than the latter’s more refined one (Falkenstein & Grandi 2017). Given Rousseau’s debt to a philosopher whose basic stance on epistemology is similar to Hume’s, even though there is no historical evidence showing any direct intellectual influence between Rousseau and Hume, it is no wonder that Rousseau’s discussion on human cognition bears some similarities with Hume’s.

These similarities are prevalent in *Emile*, especially in Books II and III. There, despite a lack of a systematic articulation of his epistemology, Rousseau demonstrates a strong resemblance with Hume on almost every key matter of epistemology, including the nature and typology of judgment, the priority of impressions to ideas, the liveliness of impressions, the origin of ideas in experience, and the dependence of induction on sensation and memory. In other words, what Hume sees as a theoretical priority, such as the priority of impressions to ideas, Rousseau agrees with, whereas the only major difference between the two is that the theoretical priority in Hume’s epistemology is also treated as a temporal priority in the natural development of human cognition in Rousseau’s account of child education. For Rousseau, to cultivate cognitive faculties in one’s early age, including one’s capacity of causal judgment, is thus to follow this natural sequence of cognitive development. In the rest of this section, I will first trace the similarities between the two thinkers on all issues relevant to causal judgment. On the basis of these similarities, I will then compare Hume’s scientific model for making credible judgments to Rousseau’s “negative education.”

## 1. The Nature and Typology of Judgment

While Rousseau's discussion about judgments can be found throughout *Emile*, it is in the "Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar" that he comes closest to a definition: "the distinctive faculty of the active or intelligent being is to be able to give a sense to the word *is*" (*E* IV, 270, italics original). Judgment is thus a mental faculty to determine a specific thing to *be* a member of a set of things that fall under a general category, or, in other words, it is a faculty to apply a general idea to a particular case. Under this definition, Rousseau divides judgment into what may be called "simple judgment" and "complex judgment":

"Simple ideas are only compared sensations. There are judgments in simple sensations as well as in the complex sensations which I call simple ideas. In sensation, judgment is purely passive. It affirms that one feels what one feels. In perception or idea, judgment is active. It brings together, compares, and determines relations which the senses do not determine. This is the entire difference, but it is great. Nature never deceives us. It is always we who deceive ourselves." (*E* III, 203)

Simple judgment is thus to apply a simple idea to a simple sensation (e.g., "Its color is blue.") or a group of sensations (e.g., "he is young," in which the application of the concept of "youth" depends on a synthesis of several sensations, such as sensations about one's hair color, skin condition, etc.). In contrast, complex judgment involves two or more ideas, each representing an object or one of the traits of an object, and it concerns not just traits of one object, but the relations between objects. Rousseau also calls this complex form of judgment the "sixth sense" or the "common sense":

"It remains for me to speak in the following books of the cultivation of a sort of sixth sense called *common sense*, less because it is common to all men than because it results from the well-regulated use of the other senses, and because it instructs us about the nature of things by the conjunction of all their appearances. This sixth sense has consequently

no special organ. It resides only in the brain, and its sensations, purely internal, are called *perceptions* or *ideas*. ... It is the art of comparing them among themselves that is called *human reason*. Thus what I would call sensual or childish reason consists in forming simple ideas by the conjunction of several sensations, and what I call intellectual or human reason consists in forming complex ideas by the conjunction of several simple ideas.” (*E* II, 157, italics original)

Causal judgment is thus a complex judgment or the result of one’s use of the “common sense” for Rousseau, because a causal relation, as something itself invisible, cannot be directly captured by one’s physical senses, but instead is inferred as a part of “the nature of things” based one’s observation of “the conjunction of all their appearances.” In this sense, causal judgment is a result of an “active” operation of “*human reason*.”

This understanding of the nature of causal judgment resembles Hume’s. As shown above, causation for Hume cannot be reduced to any impressions present at a moment, but instead is “a determination of the mind” in the necessary connection between two sets of objects, one of which is “precedent and contiguous to another” (*THN* 1.3.14.31). For Hume, as it is for Rousseau, what we can observe is just repetitive conjunctions of the two sets of objects, each represented by concepts, whereas the belief in their necessary connection is the mind’s active determination at the end of a probable reasoning about their relation.

## **2. Components of Judgment: Priority of Sensations/Impressions to Ideas/Concepts**

Rousseau resembles Hume not only in their definitions of causal judgment, but also in their understandings of the relation between the two basic components of judgment: sensations and ideas. Interestingly, in *Emile*, we can find echoes to both of Hume’s two basic epistemic principles concerning the relation between impressions and ideas.

As discussed above, Hume’s copy principle grants a more primordial existential status

to impressions. By claiming that ideas are “copied” from impressions, Hume insists that ideas have no origin independent from experience, that ideas only have a secondary, derivative status of existence, and that ideas are derived from impressions, which alone have “original existence” (*THN* 2.3.3.5). This priority of impressions to ideas can also be found in *Emile*. More specifically, Rousseau argues that impressions (in Rousseau’s words, “senses,” “sensations,” and sometimes “sentiments”) take place temporally in advance to the formation of ideas:

“At first our pupil had only sensations. Now he has ideas. He only felt; now he judges...”  
(*E* III, 203)

“I exist, and I have senses by which I am affected. This is the first truth that strikes me and to which I am forced to acquiesce.” (*E* IV, 270)

“To exist, for us, is to sense; our sensibility is incontestably anterior to our intelligence, and we had sentiments before ideas.” (*E* IV, 290)

In addition to the temporal precedence, Rousseau also makes it clear that ideas, as basic components of knowledge, are derived from impressions:

“...his sensations are the first materials of his knowledge...” (*E* I, 64)

“Since everything which enters into the human understanding comes there through the senses, man’s first reason is a reason of the senses; this sensual reason serves as the basis of intellectual reason.” (*E* II, 125)

Besides echoing Hume’s copy principle, Rousseau further resembles Hume’s liveliness principle in his characterization of sensations. According to Hume’s liveliness principle, the basic character of impressions is not that they can represent objects, but that they carry “liveliness,” an affective force on the sensing subject. For example, internal impressions, i.e. passions, do not represent any objects as visual images, but they

nonetheless carry a liveliness, which constitutes an affective, motivating force. It is because of this force of passions that Hume makes the famous claim that “[r]eason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions” (*THN* 2.3.3.4). Rousseau, too, prioritizes this affective aspect to the representative or visualizing aspect of impressions, as he writes:

“Children’s first sensations are purely affective; they perceive only pleasure and pain. Able neither to walk nor to grasp, they need a great deal of time to come little by little into possession of the representative sensations which show them objects outside of themselves.” (*E* I, 64)

Because sensations impress us first and foremost through their forces rather than through any visual representations, Rousseau believes that it is through touch, rather than sight, that we gain the most immediate, unbiased information about the external environment: “The touch, being of all the senses the one which best informs us about the impression foreign bodies can make on our own, is the one whose use is the most frequent and gives us most immediately the knowledge necessary to our preservation” (*E* II, 138). It is on the grounds that “tactile judgments are surer” that the training of Emile’s senses starts with touch rather than with sight (*E* II, 138). It is also for this reason that Rousseau insists that the first training of sight should be combined with touch, so that impressions gained from sights can always be compared with and adjusted to those gained from touch. By doing so, Rousseau seeks to anchor the far-reaching but error-prone judgments through sight to the solid foundation provided by the limited but correct judgments through touch (*E* I, 64; II, 133, 138).

### **3. Experience, Memory, and Induction: A Twofold Dependence**

Under the framework of judgment discussed above, the priority of impressions to



ideas means that on the macro level, experience and the memory about the experience are the foundation on which one can conduct probable reasoning that leads to causal judgments, or in short, induction. It also means that the quality of one's causal judgments depends on the quality of one's experience and memory. For Hume, this dependence is twofold: first, experience, or more precisely, the perceptions that constitute or affect the mind (i.e. "the bundle") are the "raw materials" for induction. More specifically, causal judgments are done on the premise of previous experience (in the form of observation) of repetitive conjunctions. However, the contribution of experience to the Humean model of induction is not limited to being its raw materials. As noted above, previous perceptions also constitute the background structures in the mind that determine *how* new perceptions are going to be processed by the mind. In other words, given that there is no *a priori* "algorithm" besides logic in the mind, *how* the mind does induction is determined by the background structures formed through previous experience on the supposition of the uniformity of nature.<sup>6</sup> In short, in the Humean model, experience and memory determine not only *what* is processed in an induction, but also *how* an induction is done.

A similar twofold dependence of causal judgment on experience and memory can be found in *Emile*. First, experience and memory are the "storehouse" of the impressions and ideas that make judgments possible:

"The kind of memory a child can have does not, without his studying books ... remain idle. Everything he sees, everything he hears strikes him, and he remembers it. He keeps in himself a record of the actions and the speeches of men, and all that surrounds him is the book in which, without thinking about it, he continually enriches his memory while waiting for his judgment to be able to profit

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<sup>6</sup> Whether this supposition, known as the uniformity principle, is an *a priori* principle of the mind, or a description of the empirical character of how Humean perceptions are connected to each other, is a subject of debate in Hume scholarship.

from it. It is in the choice of these objects, it is in the care with which one constantly presents him the objects he can know, and hides from him those he ought not to know, that the true art of cultivating in him this first faculty consists; and it is in this way that one must try to form in him a storehouse of knowledge which serves his education during his youth and his conduct at all times.” (*E II* 112)

While experience is certainly the source from which previous sensations and ideas can be retrieved and compared to the present ones in induction, it is not that clear if, for Rousseau, that experience is *the* sole determinate of *how* an induction is done. In other words, it is unclear if, in Rousseau’s account of judgment, the cognitive framework by which empirical materials are processed is also totally empirically formed, as they are in Hume’s system. Here Rousseau seems less an empiricist than Hume: compared to Hume, who limits the active role of reasoning to “bridging the gap” between experience and expectation, Rousseau assigns a more active role to reasoning or understanding:

“When understanding appropriates things before depositing them in memory, what it draws from memory later belongs to it...” (*E III*, 207)

Here, it is not that whatever one senses becomes one’s memory immediately. Instead, sensations become memory only after they are “appropriated” by understanding. This means that when one moves to adolescence, one’s understanding not only begins to compare and judge the “raw materials” from memory and experience one passively received through sensing (*E I*, 107; *III*, 204), but also actively forms one’s memory and experience. This position seems to be more of an anticipation of Kant’s conception of understanding as the faculty that transforms subjective perceptions into objective experience (*Prolegomena*, Part II, §19-20), than an echo to the limited role of reasoning in Hume’s system. Nevertheless, it is clear that for Rousseau, such an active understanding is

not at work at the beginning of one's life. Instead, the operation of understanding is not only triggered by sensations, but also improved by the accumulation of correct sensations and the proper practice of sensual faculties over time:

“I say that children, not being capable of judgment, do not have true memory. They retain sounds, figures, sensations, ideas rarely, the connections between ideas more rarely...

“I am, however, very far from thinking that children have no kind of reasoning. On the contrary, I see that they reason very well in everything they know that relates to their immediate and palpable interest.” (*E II*, 107)

“Since he is constantly in motion, he is forced to observe many things, to know many effects. He acquires a large experience early. He gets his lessons from nature and not from men. ... Thus his body and his mind are exercised together. Acting always according to his own thought and not someone else's, he continually unites two operations: the more he makes himself strong and robust, the more he becomes sensible and judicious.” (*E II*, 119)

These passages suggest that for Rousseau, understanding evolves over time and takes different forms at different stages of life. They also suggest that how well understanding functions in making judgments depends on how well one uses and has used one's sensual faculties. On this basic point, Rousseau again resembles Hume.

#### **4. Hume's Scientific Custom and Rousseau's "Negative Education"**

Given these similarities in their accounts of causal judgment, it is unsurprising that Rousseau's educational plan for cultivating good causal judgments also resembles Hume's in important aspects. We have seen that for both Hume and Rousseau, ideas are derived from impressions and the quality of one's judgments depends on the quality of one's sensations and one's practice of sensual faculties. Correspondingly, both Hume and Rousseau also maintain that, to make good causal judgments, one needs to make induction (a) on the basis of one's own natural experience, (b) using sound sensual faculties, and (c)

in an environment free of prejudices and other external confounders.

With respect to (c), it is only too obvious that Rousseau's "negative education," carried out from Emile's infancy to his adolescence, seeks to insulate Emile from prejudices and unexamined opinions (*E* III, 168, 171, 177, 184). To achieve such an insulation, "negative education" is also a "solitary education" (*E* II, 105), which puts Emile in an "isolated" situation from most social interactions (*E* III, 184). This is a situation similar to the experimental environment in Hume's model, an insulated environment in which a scientist puts herself as to make unbiased observations on the phenomenon of her interest. Also, with respect to (b), passages cited earlier in this section show that although Rousseau calls the proper education that a child should receive up to his adolescence a "negative" one, that education in fact focuses on actively improving one's physiological constitution and exercising one's sensual faculties. Rousseau especially emphasizes that such exercises are not just for the sake of increasing one's strength or physical health, but with a specific aim to form and polish one's capacity of judgment (*E* II 118, 161-162).

Moreover, we can find an active stance in both Hume's scientific model and Rousseau's negative education with respect to (a). For both thinkers, simply being left in a prejudice-free environment, even with a sound physiological constitution, is not sufficient for one to make accurate observations and good judgments. One can only stick to one's own natural experience if one is cultivated or accustomed to do so. For Hume, what drives scientists into experimenting and observing in the first place, given his principle that "the mental action of reasoning produces a want or propensity only if the agent also has some prior want or propensity" (Stroud 1981, 170), is a more general passion, or, a mental disposition, which makes scientists believe that every alternative must have a cause, and

that the cause can only be found by strict observations of constant conjunctions (*THN* 1.3.12.5). It is this mental disposition that distinguishes scientists from “the vulgar,” whose “credulity” makes them vulnerable to superficial explanations given by others (*THN* 1.3.9.12), because they “take things according to their first appearance, [and thus] attribute the uncertainty of events to such an uncertainty in the causes” (*THN* 1.3.12.5). Although Hume does not specify where this scientific disposition comes from, given his theory of custom, it certainly needs some cultivation through the scientific custom discussed above.

Similarly, for Rousseau, one also needs an inner drive that can motivate one to explore the external environment by oneself and thus generate one’s own natural experience, rather than to know the world via others’ opinions. Yet that inner drive is not a static one but evolves over time. In one’s childhood, that drive is “the desires necessary to his preservation” (*E* II, 80), which is manifested as an “immediate and palpable interest” in familiarizing oneself with one’s physical surroundings (*E* II, 107). Yet when one moves to adolescence, as one’s physical and mental strength has both increased whereas one’s *amour propre* has not been awakened, one is able to move from “the state of weakness” to “the state of power and strength” (*E* III, 168) and thus enjoy “a surplus of faculties and strength” (*E* III, 118, 166). This surplus is accompanied with “the desire to extend our beings” beyond ourselves (*E* III, 168), and thus our concern is no longer just to adjust ourselves to the immediate surroundings, but to expand our knowledge about the whole world so as to make use of the world to satisfy “the innate desire for well-being,” which seems to originate from *amour de soi* but grows with the increase of our physical and mental strength (*E* III, 167). Rousseau calls this new desire to extend our beings “curiosity” (*E* III, 167, 192, 205). For Rousseau, to cultivate the desire for preservation and curiosity is to direct these drives to

proper objects that can best satisfy them. The direction of inner drives to proper objects constitutes the core of Rousseau's negative education at the stages of childhood and adolescence (*E* II, 112).

Thereby, Rousseau divides the inner drives for good judgment-making into different desires at different stages of life, and it is only at this point that Rousseau's negative education diverges from Hume's scientific custom. In other words, the theoretical sequence of human cognition in Hume's account of causal judgments is historicized in *Emile*: As simple judgments precede complex judgments and serve as the cognitive precondition that makes the latter possible, negative education focuses on cultivating the capacity for making good simple judgments in childhood and only switches its focus to complex judgments when Emile moves to adolescence (*E* II, 161-63; III, 203-208). Accordingly, Rousseau's educational project for Emile in his childhood concentrates on the training of the five bodily senses that can produce good simple judgments, and only after Emile becomes a teenager that the tutor begins to teach him to use tools and to study more abstract conceptual systems (like "cosmography," geography, astronomy and various other sciences, see *E* III, 169-81) that are necessary for one to expend simple judgments to complex ones. Furthermore, in Rousseau's historicization of the cognitive sequence, we find a concern totally absent in Hume's system: while Hume seeks to cultivate a scientific custom that can enable one to make credible causal judgments with respect to one's interests, he does not show much concern about what these personal interests are. In contrast, Rousseau dubs his pedagogical project up to Emile's adolescence as a "negative" one in part because it tries to delay the awakening of Emile's *amour propre* through the tutor's deliberate manipulation of Emile's surroundings (*E* III, 175, 184; IV, 316). Underlying this intentional delay seems to be a

normative vision about what interests and desires one should have at a certain stage of life, a vision that can only be found in Rousseau but not in Hume. What these differences mean for our understanding of Rousseau's endorsement of the Humean model of causal judgment is the topic of the next section.

#### **IV. Rousseau's Limited Endorsement of the Humean Model**

We have shown that Rousseau's understanding of sensations and empirical judgments, which resembles the Humean model of causal judgment, underlies Rousseau's account of negative education. This negative education completes at the end of Emile's adolescence in Book III. In the last few pages of Book III, Rousseau suggests that before entering a "new order of things," we "cast our eyes on the one we are leaving and see as exactly as possible where we have gotten" (*E* III, 203). In his summary of the fruits of negative education, the Emile at the end of Book III is already depicted in a very positive light: "Emile is laborious, temperate, patient, firm, and full of courage. His imagination is in no way inflamed and never enlarges dangers. He is sensitive to few ills, and he knows constancy in endurance because he has not learned to quarrel with destiny ...since he is accustomed to submitting to the law of necessity without resistance, when he has to die, he will die without moaning and without struggling" (*E* III, 208).

Yet there is still a significant gap between this Emile and the one at the end of *Emile*. The latter is the final product of Rousseau's pedagogical project – as the ideal of the happy "sociable men" (*E* I, 49), he is Sophie's husband, a responsible head of a household, and a moral member of a civil community. The Emile at the end of Book III, however, even though his mind is prepared, via negative education, "all ready to receive" the moral

learning delineated in Books IV and V (*E* III, 208), still lacks the moral dimension possessed by the latter. This deficiency is the result of an intentional strategy of Rousseau's negative education: until the end of Emile's adolescence, the tutor keeps seeking to restrict Emile's causal judgments to the relations between objects and between him and objects, while avoiding introducing him to the moral relations between human subjects. This strategy becomes most explicit when the object of the education of Emile's judging capacity moves from the systems of natural phenomena to the social system of production: after learning "cosmography," geography, astronomy and various other natural sciences, Emile is finally introduced to the division of labor in the commercial society toward the end of Book III. At the moment, Rousseau is particularly cautious in making the tutor only introduce the "industry and mechanical arts which make men useful to one another," while avoiding showing "the mutual dependence of men" to Emile "from the moral side" (*E* III, 185). This delaying strategy in negative education thus enables Emile, until the full formation of his cognitive capacity of complex judgments, to judge everything, including other human beings and their social cooperation, only as objects and only in light of utility, without considering their moral effects and significance.

However, although the Emile at the end of his adolescence is only a semi-finished product of Rousseau's pedagogical project, this does not mean that this amoral Emile cannot stand alone as an independent possibility that indicates how individuals should live as "sociable men" (*E* I, 49). This possibility that Rousseau indicates at the end of Book III seems to be best illustrated in the novel *Emile and Sophie*, the unfinished sequel to *Emile*. In the novel, after knowing Sophie's betrayal (a fault for which Emile is in part responsible), Emile begins to vagabond from one country to another. He is certainly neither happy nor



moral, for all his moral imagination dies with the fall of Sophie, and it seems that the purpose of his continuous vagabonding is just to avoid forming any constant moral relation with any political community. Yet on the other hand, this Emile is not immoral: he does not harm anyone, at the least not intentionally, and he is also continuously working as a carpenter during his vagabonding. Echoing the education he received in adolescence, he explicitly notes that one's duty is "providing for my needs by providing for others" through one's labor and thus being "useful to others in proportion to my subsistence" (*ES*, 713). His working as a carpenter is thus a fulfillment of this social duty. After he is enslaved by "the Pierriers," he bears the oppression as if it is a physical necessity, but when he finds his life is threatened by the increasing amount of labor, he decidedly starts a rebellion against the excessive workload – not against his master but just the overwork – and succeeds (*ES*, 718-19). In a word, he survives, without harming anyone, and still seeks to perform the basic social duty as long as his condition permits.

This means that Shklar's comment on the novel, that "[n]ot a single theme of real importance to Rousseau is left out in these thirty-odd pages" (1969, 235), is perhaps a too hasty judgment. Based on the discussions above, we can see that while the novel shows the fragility of the moral education in Books IV and V of *Emile*, it only confirms the success of the negative education in Books II and III, which focuses on cultivating the capacity of causal judgment according to the Humean model. The Emile in the novel, after abandoning his moral dimension, returns to the Emile at the end of Book III, who is able to interpret everything in light of and only in light of utility or necessity, to identify the threats to his survival accurately, to design effective solutions to the threats, and to execute the solutions successfully. The Emile in the novel has done all these without any direct help of his tutor,

thanks to the training of causal judgment he receives at his early age.

Nonetheless, it is undeniable that this amoral Emile, as the product of negative education, even though he is depicted at the end of Book III and again illustrated in the unfinished novel in a positive light, only represents a deficient possibility of what “sociable men” could be. The perfect capacity of induction-making formed through the Humean model renders Emile “an active and thinking being,” but he still falls short of “a loving and feeling being” (*E* III, 203). He can make complex judgments concerning the relations linking the objects in a scenery of sunset, but he still cannot “hear the sweet harmony of their concord,” i.e. to appreciate the scenery as a “spectacle” and be moved by its beauty (*E* III, 169). From the “Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar” in Book IV, we learn that without the aesthetic imagination, one is also incapable of being awed by the orderliness of the whole cosmos, of feeling proud of being the only species that can appreciate such a divine orderliness, and of imagining a moral order in emulation of the cosmological order and regulating one’s sensual desires accordingly (*E* IV, 277-80). In other words, Rousseau predicates moral imagination on aesthetic imagination, rather than simply causal imagination. For him, both aesthetic and moral imagination cannot be directly derived from the capacity of judging the causal relations between objects and between the utility of an object and the need of the judging subject. This is because, between causal judgments and moral judgments, there is still a decisive step that must be taken in Rousseau’s pedagogical project: the “sublimation” of *amour-propre* (Neuhouser 2008, 229, 261-2, 264).

How this “sublimation” is done is not a topic of this paper. What I hope to show here, instead, is that by detaching causal judgments on natural phenomena and utilities from

moral judgments, Rousseau diverges from Hume decisively. More specifically, Rousseau limits his endorsement of the Humean model to causal relations between objects and between objects and the judging subject; beyond these relations, good judgments require a new form of education that transforms the judging subject from a merely cognitive being into a moral being, to which the Humean model of causal judgment is only a preparation.

Rousseau's qualitative distinction between empirical judgments on whether something can bring about useful effects from normative judgments on whether that thing is moral is not seen in Hume's system. For Hume, the judging subject need not undergo any inherent transformation so as to take the leap from an empirical judgment (i.e. whether there is a causal relation between a utility of a trait or practice and a need of the judging subject) to a normative judgment (i.e. whether the trait or practice should be considered just). Both judgments follow the same cognitive model, as they are both derived from repetitive observations of the utility of a trait or practice. The moral or normative judgment of a trait or practice is merely an empirical judgment of its utility enlarged through sympathy and habituated as a convention. A succinct summary of the procedure of this process can be found in Garrett (2015): thanks to the operation of sympathy, a personal judgment on the utility of a certain quality made on the basis of repetitive observations enhances "a shared appreciation" of that quality among different individuals. This shared appreciation bears "interpersonal consequences" on the person or object that demonstrates the quality, as it triggers "personal engagement" to uphold that quality in other similar circumstances (148-50). The final result is that the term associated with that quality "come[s] to be understood as expressing or 'implying' praise ... as an element of their very meaning," or in other words, the term is socially recognized as a sign of a virtue and thus

acquires its normativity (Garrett 2015, 150).

Therefore, for Hume, a moral judgment is just an empirical judgment concerning causal relations between a socially recognized virtue and its actual utilities. Hence as all causal judgments, moral judgments for Hume can also be biased by prejudices and superstitions (*EPM* III, 30). However, compared to eliminating prejudices and superstitions on matters (such as scientific research on natural phenomena) that do not involve direct connections to social utilities, Hume seems more optimistic about the prospect of controlling these biases in moral judgments:

“Those, who ridicule vulgar superstitions, and expose the folly of particular regards to meats, days, places, postures, apparel, have an easy task; ...Such reflections as these, in the mouth of a philosopher, one may safely say, are too obvious to have any influence; because they must always, to every man, occur at first sight; and where they prevail not, of themselves, they are surely obstructed by education, prejudice, and passion, not by ignorance or mistake.” (*EPM* III, 30)

“It may appear to a careless view, or rather a too abstracted reflection, that there enters a like superstition into all the sentiments of justice; and that, if a man expose its object, or what we call property, to the same scrutiny of sense and science, he will not, by the most accurate enquiry, find any foundation for the difference made by moral sentiment. ...

“But there is this material difference between superstition and justice, that the former is frivolous, useless, and burdensome; the latter is absolutely requisite to the well-being of mankind and existence of society.” (*EPM* III, 31)

For Hume, the harmful “education, prejudice, and passion” that prevent one from making correct moral judgments can be easily controlled, as the utility of a moral virtue is too obvious to be ignored in one’s experience of social interactions. Therefore, while philosophers may need to retreat into solitude to free themselves from previous metaphysical prejudices on the real foundation of all causal judgments, citizens need not be insulated from social interactions to make correct moral judgments: indeed, prejudices

and superstitions are transmitted through social interactions; but once the very foundation of virtues in social utility is revealed by philosophers, everyone should be able to judge correctly on whether a behavior can truly benefit the society on the basis of their own experience, as the high liveness of the natural experience about utilities can easily overcome the passions caused by “frivolous, useless, and burdensome” prejudices and superstitions. In fact, for Hume, insulation from social interactions is not only unnecessary but also harmful for good moral judgment making, as an increase in social interactions will lead to more observations and experience of “the general interests of the community” that “render our sentiments more public and social” (*EPM V*, 49). Thereby, individuals become less limited to the partial utilities perceived through their self-interests while more capable of perceiving and caring about the common interests or social utilities. It is due to his causal judgment on the positive moral effects of social interactions that Hume makes an optimistic evaluation on the commercial society, believing that the increased social connection and interdependence brought about by commerce can promote “industry, knowledge and humanity” (*EMPL*, 271).

As commonly known, Rousseau does not share Hume’s optimism about the moral implications of the commercial society. In Rousseau’s view, increased social interactions and interdependence, which characterize the commercial society, will always lead to a higher likelihood of being deceived and subject to the dominance of the “empire of opinions” (Rasmussen 2008, 11), if individuals are left unguided by an infallible moral authority, such as an ideal tutor (like Jean-Jacques) and an ideal partner (like the Sophie in Books IV and V). Interpreters usually attribute Rousseau’s pessimism with the commercial society to the corrupting effects of *amour propre* (e.g., Sagar 2018). Such a reading implies

that if we see individuals as being driven by the Humean pride, a much less complicated passion than the Rousseauian *amour propre*, and if we put more emphasis on the role of sympathy in social interactions, then many of Rousseau's worries about pathologies of the commercial society will turn out to be exaggerated. Different from that reading, this paper would like to suggest that Rousseau's concerns about the prevalence and harms of prejudices and deceptions in the commercial society are not only grounded on his unique view of *amour propre* and his ignorance of the workings of sympathy; rather, they stem from Rousseau's insights into the fundamental difference between one's interactions with the physical or natural world and one's interactions with other human beings in the social world: for Rousseau, a natural, unbiased experience of utility can be found and relied on as the basis of credible causal judgments in the former but not in the latter. Rousseau's resemblance of Hume on the epistemological ground means that we can appreciate the rigor of these insights without leaving the Humean model of causal judgment. In other words, Rousseau's limited endorsement of the Humean model constitutes an internal rather than external criticism of applying the Hume's epistemology to social and moral matters. Based on what has been discussed, I will try to articulate the criticism in the final section.

## **V. Conclusion: A Rousseauian Critique of "Realist Liberalism"**

This paper has shown that Rousseau's account of sensations and empirical judgments presented in Books II and III of *Emile* resembles Hume's model of causal judgment delineated in *A Treatise of Human Nature* and *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. Given that the Humean model does not require the presence and

intervention of personal authority, I argue that Rousseau's resemblance to Hume indicates that judging well without a personal authority is a genuine possibility for Rousseau and that this possibility is presented at the end of Book III of *Emile* and echoed in the novel *Emile and Sophie*. However, this possibility is limited to empirical relations between objects and between objects and the judging agent. In other words, Rousseau's endorsement of the Humean model is limited: while Hume's moral theory is also built on his model of causal judgments, Rousseau refuses to apply the Humean model to the moral relations between the judging agent and other individuals.

Why is Rousseau's endorsement of the Humean model only limited to amoral judgments concerning natural necessities of the physical world and utilities of objects to human beings, but not extended to moral relations between human beings? While multiple answers can be given, I would like to suggest that Rousseau's limited endorsement is at least in part due to his insights into the impossibility of achieving the very foundation for making credible causal judgments in the Humean model – the natural experience or one's unbiased repetitive observations of the utilities of the external world – in social life. Rather than relying on any idiosyncratic pessimism, Rousseau's insights about this impossibility is grounded on two facts whose significance is not fully appreciated in Hume's epistemology:

First, in social affairs, there is no “natural experience” of utilities unbiased by opinions, and the sources of these biases are not just “the opinions of mankind” (Sagar 2018), but the opinions of “the rich and the powerful,” given that even Hume admits that individuals have “a greater tendency” to sympathize with “the rich and the powerful” (*THN*, 2.2.5.1). Therefore, what we believe to be useful for us, are likely to resemble what “the rich and

the powerful” believe to be useful, or what they want us to believe as our own utility.

Second, judgments biased by others’ opinions concerning natural phenomena cannot reproduce natural phenomena according to those opinions. At most, people blinded by superstitions will ignore new natural evidence, but their ignorance can be corrected by the force majeure of nature, which is indifferent to human wills. In contrast, in social life, biased judgments, through human actions, can produce new social reality in line with their visions, and hence prejudices and deceptions involved in them will also be duplicated and reproduced into the future. Given the unique reproductive feature of opinions in social life, simply increasing social interactions, unlike what Hume suggests, is less likely to correct the biases caused by the opinions of “the rich and the powerful” on common people’s judgment concerning their true interests; instead, it may enlarge such biases and make the unequal power relations between different social actors persistent in both public opinions and social practices.

While we may not accept Rousseau’s own solutions given in *On The Social Contract* and Books IV and V of *Emile* to the structural bias in favor of the opinions of “the rich and the power” that affects individual judgments, his limited endorsement of the Humean model of causal judgments can be seen as posing an effective critique to the various forms of contemporary “political realism” or “realist liberalism,” which are influenced by or grounded on Hume’s epistemology. In one of the most recent accounts of realist liberalism, Sabl (2017) follows Hume’s emphasis on utility and argues that “interest,” rather than “power,” is “the more fundamental category” for realist liberals (378) while conceding that “[l]iberal institutions ought to favor everyone’s interests equally, in spite of unequal social power and to a great extent in ways that render power less salient” (377). To this argument,



the Rousseauian critique presented here suggests that realist liberals should not simply focus on reducing the negative impact of unequal social power on the equal opportunity for everyone to pursue their perceived interests, but also need to consider the biasing influence of unequal social power on the very formation of everyone's judgments of what their true interests are and how best to fulfill them.

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