WHERE THE BODY TOUCHES THE SPIRIT: 
THE ROLE OF IMAGINATION IN JEAN-JACQUES 
ROUSSEAU’S EMILE: OR ON EDUCATION AND CHRISTOPH 
 MARTIN WIELAND’S GESCHICHTE DES AGATHON 

by 

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Abstract

This dissertation offers a re-evaluation of the role of the imagination in Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Emile: or On Education* (1762) and Christoph Martin Wieland’s *Geschichte des Agathon* (1794). My central claim is that both novels develop a pedagogy of the imagination in order to overcome the dilemmas of Cartesian dualism, that is, to form a beautiful soul in whom sensuality and reason, the body and the spirit, coexist in harmony. I demonstrate that both texts highlight the important but potentially damaging role played by the imagination in the development of religious thought, moral sentiments, and sexuality. The texts suggest that while a malformed imagination results in materialism, egotism, libertinism, and despotism, a well-formed imagination provides the foundation for natural religion, cosmopolitan enthusiasm, sentimental love, and a just political constitution. Consequently, I argue that for Rousseau and Wieland, harnessing the power of the imagination becomes the key to reconciling human nature and civil society.

In addition to elucidating the role of the imagination in *Emile* and *Agathon*, this dissertation also contributes to an understanding of the intellectual affinities between Rousseau and Wieland more generally. In preparation for the comparative reading of *Emile* and *Agathon*, I survey Wieland’s private and public responses to Rousseau and contend that although the two authors differ significantly in their narrative and
philosophical approach, they nevertheless share similar moral and political ideals. Both authors acknowledge the ability of the imagination to drive a wedge between the individual’s natural inclinations and moral duties, causing fragmentation of the self and society in turn. Yet the imagination, the motor of cultural progress, is not only the source of man’s alienation, it is also the remedy for his dividedness. If properly harnessed, the imagination can cease to be the cause of human depravity and become the basis of peaceful human relations, both at the level of the individual and that of society as a whole. In conclusion, I propose that the role of the imagination in forming the beautiful soul has consequences for the collective, and that we can read the moral constitutions of Emile and Agathon as negotiating the possibilities of various political constitutions, including that of a democratic state.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Pedagogies of the Imagination

Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Emile: or On Education* (1762) and Christoph Martin Wieland’s *Geschichte des Agathon* (1794) both explore the conflict between human nature and social existence, between natural inclinations and moral duties.\(^1\) Furthermore, both texts promote narratives of education as a means of overcoming man’s dualistic nature, of creating a beautiful soul in whom nature and culture, sensuality

\(^1\)The first version of *Agathon* was published in 1766/67, followed by a second in 1773, and a third in 1794. I focus on the third and final version from 1794, the so-called “Ausgabe letzter Hand.” Although many scholars agree with Friedrich Sengle in assigning superior aesthetic value to the novel’s first version (*Wieland* 196), I follow Klaus Schaefer’s and Walter Erhart’s proposal to assess the aesthetic qualities of each version in its own right (*Wieland* 44 and *Entzweiung* 19, respectively). The main thesis of Erhart’s *Entzweiung und Selbstaufklärung: Christoph Martin Wielands ‘Agathon-Projekt’* is that each version should be viewed as a different answer to the same question: “Die formal-ästhetischen Abweichungen der einzelnen Fassungen gewinnen ihre Bedeutung [...] zurück, wenn man sie nicht als Ausdruck wachsender Skepsis oder einer gewandelten Philosophie, sondern als unterschiedliche literarische Antworten auf eine mit der ersten ‘Geschichte des Agathon’ gestellte – moralphilosophische und literarische – Frage versteht” (*Entzweiung* 19). I have chosen the version from 1794 because I believe that it provides the most interesting comparison with Rousseau’s *Emile*.

All Wieland quotations are taken from the Hamburg edition *C.M. Wieland Sämtliche Werke* (1984), abbreviated *SW*, unless otherwise stated. The first number refers to the volume, the second to the page number. For example *SW* 3:242 refers to volume 3, page 242. I employ a similar notation system for Wieland’s *Briefwechsel, Der Teutsche Merkur*, and other multivolume works.
and reason, coexist in harmony. Yet despite similar goals, Rousseau and Wieland differ significantly in their basic portrayals of education. With respect to the foundations and the trajectories of their protagonists’ development, Rousseau and Wieland offer contradictory educational models. Moreover, they also assume widely differing positions on the structure and function of narrative. However, what remains constant in Emile and Agathon is the pivotal role assigned to the imagination in the formation of a moral individual. The central claim of this dissertation is that despite fundamental differences in pedagogical and narrative method, Rousseau and Wieland ultimately come to similar conclusions about how to reconcile human nature and civil society. Both authors develop their own pedagogy of the imagination in an effort to move beyond the nature/culture dichotomy.

2When discussing Emile, I do not avoid the masculine term “man” or the corresponding masculine pronoun “he.” Although I believe Rousseau’s analysis has relevance for all human beings irrespective of gender, it is important to remember that Rousseau did not. The following quotation suffices to demonstrate the strength of his gender stereotypes: “When women are what they ought to be, they will limit themselves to things within their competence and will always judge well. But since they have established themselves as the arbiters of literature, since they have set about judging books and relentlessly producing them, they no longer know anything” (Emile 341). I will not allow the sexist aspect of Rousseau’s thought, which would have prohibited me from writing this dissertation, to be overlooked by conforming my language to contemporary standards of gender neutrality. Joseph R. Reisert takes a similar approach to the use of masculine pronouns in Jean-Jacques Rousseau: A Friend of Virtue (8).

3With reference to its narratology, Michael Bell calls Emile a “transitional” text, situating it between the literalistic illusionism of sentimental novels such as Samuel Richardson’s Clarissa and the formal self-consciousness of modern novels such as Agathon (Open Secrets 47). I offer an in depth comparison of Rousseau’s and Wieland’s differing narrative approaches in section 4.2. At the moment, however, I would like to address another possible objection to the comparison of these two texts. Emile, one could argue, is set in eighteenth-century France, whereas Agathon is set in ancient Greece, a time period heavily idealized by eighteenth-century German Classists. However, although Wieland may be regarded as a co-founder of Weimar Classicism, Agathon does not contain an idealized portrait of ancient Greece. That the Greek trappings of Wieland’s novel conceal a thinly veiled allegory of eighteenth-century Europe is a fact well established in scholarly discourse on the topic. As Friedrich Sengle argues, “diese ganze griechische Welt hat allegorischen bzw. emblematischen Charakter, d.h. sie läßt sich vollständig in die Moderne auflösen” (Aufklärung und Rokoko 161). For other examples, see Jutta Heinz (“Wielandizität” 461), Klaus Schaefer (“Schluss” 50), and Horst Thomé (“Menschliche Natur” 219). Emile and Agathon can be read as reacting to similar intellectual environments, i.e., as attempting to mediate between the extremes of eighteenth-century forms of materialism and idealism.
For both, the imagination plays a definitive yet potentially devastating role in the development of moral beauty. Rousseau and Wieland suggest that a malformed imagination results in materialism, egotism, libertinism, and despotism, whereas a well-formed imagination provides the foundation for natural religion, cosmopolitan enthusiasm, sentimental love, and a just political constitution. In *Emile* and *Agathon*, harnessing the power of the imagination becomes the key to reconciling nature and society, inclination and duty. Rousseau and Wieland argue that the laws of morality develop, with the aid of reason and imagination, out of the laws of human nature. What is more, they locate the points of tangency between nature and society, the body and the spirit, in three separate spheres of human existence, which they link to the imagination, namely religion, moral sentiments, and sexuality. Read in tandem, *Emile* and *Agathon* shed new light both on each other and on the role of the imagination in the theory of aesthetic morality.

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4The terminology used to discuss aesthetic morality differs from author to author. In general, I employ the term “moral beauty” when referring to the philosophical abstraction and “beautiful soul” for the personification.

5I have taken the term cosmopolitan enthusiasm or “kosmopolitische[r] Enthusiasmus” directly from *Agathon*, but it is also relevant for *Emile* (SW 3:133). I will demonstrate how the imagination helps to promote cosmopolitan enthusiasm, which Rousseau calls a “passion for virtue,” through its involvement in the development of compassion. For now, it is enough to know that Emile and Agathon not only devote themselves to the good of humanity, they also have a passion for goodness, i.e., their altruism has an emotional as well as a rational premise.

Wieland offers the following definition of cosmopolitanism in “Das Geheimniss des Kosmopoliten-Ordens” (1788): “Die Kosmopoliten führen den Nahmen der Weltbürger in der eigentlichsten und eminentesten Bedeutung. Denn sie betrachten alle Völker des Erdbodens als eben so viele Zweige einer einzigen Familie, und das Universum als einen Staat, worin sie mit unzähligen andern vernünftigen Wesen Bürger sind, um unter allgemeinen Naturgesetzen die Vollkommenheit des Ganzen zu befördern” (SW 30:167).

6I use the term “sentimental love” to express the commingling of spiritual and sensual longing described in a similar fashion by both Rousseau and Wieland. Some scholars use the term “romantic love” to refer to this particular concept. See, for example, Joel Schwartz’s *The Sexual Politics of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (27). However, because use of the term “romantic” is technically anachronistic for Rousseau’s and Wieland’s conception of love, I have chosen the more historically appropriate term “sentimental.”
1.2. NATURE AND EDUCATION

In order to better articulate my argument, I need to define and contextualize some key terms, in particular the eighteenth-century conceptions of the beautiful soul and the imagination. The goal of this introduction is thus threefold. First, I define and contextualize Rousseau’s and Wieland’s understanding of the beautiful soul, both within the framework of Enlightenment thought and within existing scholarship on the topic. I ask why scholarship on the beautiful soul has restricted itself to a discussion of Rousseau’s *Julie, or the New Eloise* (1761) and how it might benefit from including a study of *Emile* (1.2). Second, I outline the place of the imagination in eighteenth-century discourses on epistemology. I argue that Rousseau and Wieland contribute to the eighteenth-century project to align the imagination with reason, thereby bridging the gap between the body and the spirit, nature and culture (1.3). Lastly, I outline the structure of my main argument with an overview of the subsequent chapters (1.4).

1.2 Nature and Education in the Formation of a Beautiful Soul

Friedrich Schiller famously defines the beautiful soul as a harmony of sensuality and reason, of duty and inclination. In his philosophical essay “Über Anmut und

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7The title of my dissertation points to the imagination’s role in overcoming the division between the body and spirit, not the body and soul, not the body and mind. The terminology is important but by no means exact. There are no clear distinctions between the terms spirit, soul, and mind. In the entry on *Geist* in the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Oeing-Hanho compiles the challenge of defining the term *Geist* to the challenge of washing dirty dishes with dirty towels in dirty water (154). In truth, many encyclopedic definitions of spirit, soul, and mind use the terms more or less interchangeably. Still, I have chosen to concentrate on the term spirit for the following reasons. I avoid the term soul, except where it is forms part of the term “beautiful soul,” because it carries with it Christian connotations of immortality (Vidal 105). Furthermore, I use the term mind only in reference to rationalistic theories, as in the set expressions “mind-body dualism” of “mind-body problem.” I have chosen the term spirit, because it refers to the animating force of body, but it is, to my mind, neither as Christian as “soul” nor as rationalistic as “mind.” For Rousseau and Wieland, the spirit derives from the body but is not equal to it.
Würde” (1793), he writes:

Eine schöne Seele nennt man es, wenn sich das sittliche Gefühl aller Empfindungen des Menschen endlich bis zu dem Grad versichert hat, daß es dem Affekt die Leitung des Willens ohne Scheu überlassen darf und nie Gefahr läuft, mit den Entscheidungen desselben im Widerspruch zu stehen[...]. In einer schönen Seele ist es also, wo Sinnlichkeit und Vernunft, Pflicht und Neigung harmonieren. (468, my emphasis)

For Schiller, the morally beautiful person is someone who not only acts in accordance with moral principles but follows his feelings and desires in doing so: “moralische Schönheit [...] tritt nur alsdann ein, wenn ihm die Pflicht zur Natur geworden ist” (“Kallias-Briefe” 407). Because Schiller’s definition has achieved canonical status, it is easy to forget that it marks the end rather than the beginning of a century of developments in the theory of aesthetic morality. It is also tempting to project Schiller’s understanding of the beautiful soul onto the works of other authors, including those of Rousseau and Wieland.

Although Schiller’s definition of the beautiful soul synthesizes many aspects of eighteenth-century thought on moral beauty, the discussion as a whole does not end there, and in truth, neither does Schiller’s essay. Schiller’s “Über Anmut und Würde” does not conclude with an explanation of the harmonious reconciliation of sensuality and reason but goes on to advocate the primacy of reason over sensuality. Schiller’s discussion of grace (Anmut), the outward manifestation of moral beauty, is followed by an equally important discussion of dignity (Würde), the physical correlate of sublimity. Similarly, Rousseau and Wieland unite both of these concepts, grace and dignity, in their descriptions of the beautiful soul. For them, moral beauty is not just a flawless coming together of sensuality and reason. Although it is true that both authors seek to overcome the mind-body dualism which characterizes Platonic,
Christian, and (eventually) Kantian doctrines, the so-called “despotism of reason,” they are not willing to grant sensuality and reason equal footing in their conceptions of morality. For them, the harmonious reconciliation of sensuality and reason is a necessary stepping-stone to virtue. Expressed in Schillerian terms, the grace of a beautiful soul becomes a prerequisite for the dignity of sublime self-mastery. Virtue itself, however, continues to be defined as the wilful sacrifice of one’s natural inclinations in the service of one’s moral duties. For Rousseau and Wieland, it is the combination of moral beauty and virtue, grace and dignity, which makes morality beautiful.8

Furthermore, the Rousseauian and Wielandian beautiful souls are not, as has been repeatedly argued, uniquely the products of nature (Grosse 683; Schmeer 27). This claim constitutes, again, only half the story. If one extends the conversation about Rousseau’s beautiful soul from *Julie* to *Emile*, it becomes clear that education and nature both have a role to play in the moral development of the individual. The reassessment of Rousseau’s beautiful soul to reflect the influence of education as well as nature provides the foundation for my comparative study of *Emile* and *Agathon*. Only after acknowledging the importance of education for the attainment of moral beauty, can one start to examine the facets of that education, for example, the authors’ various strategies for forming the imagination. By questioning the general consensus that Rousseau’s and Wieland’s beautiful souls are natural phenomena, I am able to

8Marie Wokalek and Annabel Falkenhagen both come to a similar conclusions, emphasizing the discrepancy between Schiller’s canonized definition of the beautiful soul and the discussions found in the texts of other authors, including those of Rousseau and Wieland (Wokalek 369; Falkenhagen, “schöne Seele” 542). Falkenhagen summarizes the wide variety of definitions associated with the beautiful soul as follows: “Konkret kann eine solche Ordnung durch eine mehr oder minder gleichberechtigte Übereinstimmung von Gefühl und Verstand, Geist und Sinnlichkeit, Pflicht und Neigung, aber auch durch die Herrschaft der rationalen, die Prädominanz der emotionalen Seite oder das Aufgehobensein aller Kräfte in Gott verwirklicht werden” (542).
demonstrate that the beautiful soul is more than just an abstract notion of a harmony between sensuality and reason. In tracing the development of the imagination in *Emile* and *Agathon*, the previously abstract notion of the beautiful soul takes on a more concrete form. If the imagination develops correctly, it constructs a bridge between sensuality and reason at three distinct moments in human existence: religion, moral sentiments, and sexuality. Rousseau and Wieland guide the development of the imagination, so that their protagonists’ natural inclinations coincide with their moral duties in relation to these three aspects of life: belief in the divine, commitment to humanity, and sentimental love. In the novels of Rousseau and Wieland, the beautiful soul descends from the spheres of theoretical abstraction to walk amongst mortals.

The history of moral beauty itself dates as far back as classical antiquity and the Hellenic ideal of *Kalokagathia*, which means beauty-and-goodness. In ancient Greece, *Kalokagathia* is both an educational and humanistic ideal, denoting the unity of moral and physical perfection. It is central to the writings of Socrates, Plato, and Xenophon (Grosse 682). Anthony Ashley Cooper, the 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, revives the Greek concept of *Kalokagathia* in the early eighteenth century, adapts it to his own needs, and ensures its European-wide reception. For Shaftesbury, beauty is no longer an attribute exclusive to the physical world. He asks: “Is Beauty founded then in Body only; and not in Action, Life or Operation?” (321). Shaftesbury sees the principles of harmony, symmetry, and proportion, which traditionally characterize physical beauty, as transferable to conceptions of morality. Human beings, he believes, are born with an innate “moral sense,” which seeks to balance their egotistical and altruistic drives and thus establish a state of inner beauty. Shaftesbury’s moral-aesthetic ideal finds expression in his concept of the “virtuoso,” a forerunner of the beautiful soul.
His “virtuoso” is, by definition, an educated nobleman. For Shaftesbury, having a beautiful soul is “the product of constant, active effort, [...] the final result of a highly conscious and deliberate shaping of character” (Norton 163). For him, moral beauty requires moral autonomy, and moral autonomy in turn requires education. As I will demonstrate, Rousseau and Wieland develop a more open, i.e., less aristocratic, understanding of the beautiful soul. For them, the beautiful soul combines the gifts of nature with those of education. It is open not only to the aristocracy but to anyone whose imagination develops in a certain manner.

Reading Rousseau’s *Emile or On Education* as a treatise on the formation of a beautiful soul does not constitute an original argument as such. On the contrary, it corresponds, in fundamentals though not in terminology, to Immanuel Kant’s seminal interpretation of *Emile* from 1786. In a short text entitled “Mutmaßlicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte,” Kant describes Rousseau’s educational programme as striving to harmonize the contradictory sides of human nature, that is, to solve the problem of “wie die Kultur fortgehen müsse, um die Anlagen der Menschheit als einer sittlichen Gattung ihrer Bestimmung gehörig zu entwickeln, so daß diese jener als Naturgattung nicht mehr widerstreite” (367). Over the course of the last two hundred years an overwhelming number of scholars, including such prominent names as Allan Bloom, Ernst Cassirer, and Tzvetan Todorov, have helped to flesh out the various implications of Kant’s interpretation. My goal is to take the well-established arguments surrounding Kant’s reading of *Emile* and place them into a new context, namely the

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9I refer to *Émile*, depending on the context, both as an educational treatise or a novel because it contains elements of both genres. For an interesting discussion of genre, see chapter 8 of Peter D. Jimack’s *La Genèse et la rédaction de l’Émile de J.J. Rousseau.*

10For examples, see: Bloom (“Introduction” 3), Buck (6), Charvet (39), Cassirer (“Das Problem” 75), Dent (“Integral” 27), Fetscher (“Ethik und Politik” 5), Jimack (*Rousseau: Emile* 28), Horowitz (212), O’Hagan (32), Rang (79), Reisert (113), Spaemann (79), Starobinski (36), Todorov (55-67). All of these interpretations align or engage with Kant’s interpretation to varying degrees.
1.2. NATURE AND EDUCATION

discourse surrounding aesthetic morality in the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{11} I argue that viewing *Emile* as the making of a beautiful soul provides a useful foil for understanding Wieland’s notion of moral beauty in *Agathon*. In particular, I focus on the ambivalent role assigned to the imagination in the protagonists’ moral development.

Although existing scholarship on the beautiful soul includes discussions of Rousseau’s work, it focuses primarily on his novel *Julie, or the New Eloise*, effectively disregarding *Emile*.\textsuperscript{12} Indeed the limited number of published monographs on the beautiful soul, Hans Schmeer’s *Der Begriff der “schönen Seele” besonders bei Wieland und in der deutschen Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts* (1967), Robert E. Norton’s *The Beautiful Soul: Aesthetic Morality in the Eighteenth Century* (1995),\textsuperscript{13} and Marie Wokalek’s *Die schöne Seele als Denkfigur: Zur Semantik von Gewissen und Geschmack bei Rousseau, Wieland, Schiller und Goethe* (2011), all juxtapose the moral ideals of Rousseau’s

\textsuperscript{11}Iring Fetscher, Martin Rang, and Jean Starobinski all make cursory statements connecting the character of Emile and the concept of “beautiful soul” (Fetscher, “Ethik und Politik” 11; Rang 76; Starobinski 36). But nothing in depth has been done to explore the implications of the classification “beautiful soul” for the text itself or its place in literary history.

\textsuperscript{12}Michael Bell’s *Open Secrets: Literature, Education, and Authority from J-J. Rousseau to J.M. Coetzee* contains the only comparative study of Rousseau’s *Emile* and Wieland’s *Agathon* of which I am currently aware (65-86). However, because Bell’s study explores the role of the educator rather than the educated, it is not relevant to my discussion here. That said, Bell’s argument has been very influential on my reading of *Agathon* and will receive significant attention in chapter 4.

\textsuperscript{13}Norton also names two unpublished doctoral theses devoted to the topic: Heinrich Pohlmeier’s “Untersuchungen zum Begriff der schönen Seele im achtzehnten Jahrhundert und in der Goethezeit” (University of Münster, 1954) and Jeffery Scott Librett’s “Rhapsodic Dispositions: Engenderments of the Ground in the Discourse of the ‘Beautiful Soul’ (Shaftesbury, Kant, Hegel, Heidegger)” (Cornell University, 1989). His list of secondary literature does not include a published monograph by R.D. Miller entitled *The Beautiful Soul: A Study of Eighteenth-century Idealism as Exemplified by Rousseau’s ‘La Nouvelle Heloise’ and Goethe’s ‘Die Leiden des jungen Werthers’* (1981)(Norton 6). However, this is perhaps a conscious oversight, as Miller does not operate with a standard definition of the beautiful soul. Instead, Miller uses the term “beautiful soul” as a synonym with a “sensitive-” or “idealistic soul” (2). Thus, despite its promising title, Miller’s monograph is not germane to this discussion.
Julie and Wieland’s Agathon. Yet a comparison of Rousseau’s and Wieland’s respective moral philosophies is incomplete without an analysis of Emile. Rousseau’s educational treatise expands and refines the philosophical arguments from his sentimental novel, thus providing additional points of comparison with works such as Agathon. Rousseau elaborates, for example, on the centrality of education for the formation of a beautiful soul, a notion which, although inherently present, remains underdeveloped in Julie (Sosso, Jean-Jacques Rousseau 132).

Based on his reading of Julie, Schmeer claims that Rousseau’s beautiful soul is a product of nature and thus utterly unaffected by education (Schmeer 9). Schmeer attempts to differentiate Rousseau’s “belle âme,” which he claims is a product of nature, from Schiller’s “schöne Seele,” which he argues is a product of education. In support of his argument, Schmeer cites Lord Bomston’s description of the sentimental lovers, Julie d’Etange and Saint Preux, as natural phenomena: “These two beautiful lovers, Julie d’Etange and Saint Preux, as natural phenomena: “These two beautiful

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14I view Irving Babbitt’s discussion of the Rousseauian beautiful soul in Rousseau and Romanticism (1919) as a case in point (131-144). Babbitt argues that Rousseau advocates a sentimental approach to morality, which Babbitt believes is best summarized with the Faustian quotation “feeling is all” (115). He maintains that Rousseau’s “beautiful soul acts aright, not through any effort of its own but because nature acts in it and through it” (133). Needless to say, Babbitt draws solely on Julie when making these conclusions. Furthermore, he mistakenly confuses Saint Preux’s views for those of his author. Babbitt fallaciously claims it is Rousseau, rather than the sentimental lover, who explains that Julie “never had any other guide but her heart and could not have a surer one, she gives in to it without scruple, and in order to do good, she does whatever it requires of her” (Julie 435). This truncated reading of Rousseau’s morality is comparable to a reading of Schiller’s “Über Anmut und Würde” which discusses grace but neglects to mention dignity. Rousseau does indeed theorize a morality based on emotion; but his thoughts on moral beauty are always complemented by a discussion of rationally affirmed virtue. In fact, just such a discussion is found in the letter directly preceding the letter quoted by Babbitt. In this earlier letter, which Babbitt conveniently ignores, Lord Bomston describes Julie as a virtuous woman who has “won out over herself” and calls on Saint Preux to show the same type of sublime self-mastery demonstrated by his female lover (430). In sum, neither Julie nor Emile make moral decisions based on feeling alone. If Babbitt had looked at Emile or offered a more comprehensive reading of Julie, it would have been impossible for him to make such a simplification of Rousseau’s moral theory.

15Rousseau describes the complementary nature of the texts: “Everything that is daring in Émile was already to be found in Julie” (Confessions 397).
souls came forth one for the other from the hands of nature” (Julie 158). What Schmeer’s interpretation fails to do, however, is to acknowledge that Julie and Saint Preux, in addition to their natural goodness, are also highly educated characters. Julie is an aristocrat and Saint Preux her bourgeois tutor. They devote their lives to the pursuit of self-betterment and the education of Julie’s children. Their role as educators prompts the question as to why the novel would emphasize education if its moral ideals were dependent on nature alone and thus impervious to cultural influence.

Schmeer’s monograph is admittedly dated, but his understanding of Rousseau’s beautiful soul as a product of nature rather than education continues to represent the scholarly consensus. Standard reference works such as the Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie (1976) and Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik (2007) reiterate Schmeer’s contrast between Rousseau’s and Schiller’s theories of moral beauty (Grosse 683; Falkenhagen 555). It is curious that scholars have overlooked the educational component of Rousseau’s beautiful soul considering that Julie d’Etange and Saint Preux are not the only characters Rousseau refers to as beautiful souls. Rousseau also employs the term beautiful soul, or “belle âme,” in reference to Emile, the embodiment of his educational theory (Emile 435; Émile 804). In truth, Rousseau’s “belle âme” being a product of nature does not preclude it from also being a product

\[\text{\footnote{In general, I quote all Rousseau texts in translation but all other French-language texts in the original and, when possible, also in translation (e.g., Voltaire, Claude Adrien Helvétius, etc.). This decision is based on my desire to ease the work of the reader. In cases where I find it important to have both the original Rousseau and the translation, I highlight that fact either in the main text or in footnotes.}}\]

\[\text{\footnote{Annabel Falkenhagen’s insightful article on the beautiful soul in Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik emphasizes the ties between education and the beautiful soul for the eighteenth-century in general but neglects to mention the importance of education for Rousseau and Wieland. On the contrary, it continues to stress the natural dimension of Rousseau’s beautiful soul: “Als wesentliche Kennzeichen der S. [Rousseau’s beautiful soul] erscheinen weniger Vernunft und Verstand […] sondern Gefühl, Sensibilität und Menschenliebe” (555).}}\]
of education. Indeed the main thesis of Rousseau’s *Emile* is that education can, and should, be conducted in accordance with nature. Man is naturally good, but it is up to education to keep him that way.

According to Schmeer, Rousseau’s portrayal of the beautiful soul as a purely natural phenomenon directly influences Wieland in his creation of Danae, Agathon’s primary love interest. Correspondingly Schmeer, along with several other scholars, argues that Danae’s goodness is morally irrelevant because it is derived from nature and not from a conscious or deliberate shaping of character on her part (Schmeer 27; Buddecke 215; Norton 163). To illustrate their point, these scholars cite a passage from *Agathon* which describes beauty of the soul as both natural and immutable: “Eine schöne Seele, welcher die Natur, die Lineamenten der Tugend (wie Cicero es nennet) eingezeichnet hat […] kann sich verirren, kann durch Blendwerke getäuscht werden: aber sie kann nicht aufhören eine schöne Seele zu seyn” (*SW* 3:242-43).

Wieland’s assertion about the indestructibility of the beauty of Danae’s soul does indeed align with Rousseau’s conviction that Julie and Saint Preux are born beautiful souls and that they remain beautiful souls despite their moral transgressions, i.e., their illicit love affair. However, it is possible to argue that the narrator’s descriptions of Danae outweigh his narratorial judgments. After all, to conclude that beautiful souls are the product of nature and therefore unaltered by education is to disregard all

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19 Similar to my argument, Norton does not find Wieland’s claim of Danae’s natural beauty of the soul very convincing. He questions: “What, in short, makes her [Danae] a beautiful soul? Instead of confronting this issue directly, however, Wieland fled from the potentially uncomfortable questions that Danae’s identity raised by making the unconvincing assertion that her qualities were simply somehow natural” (163). Unlike Norton, I do not attribute Wieland’s decision to a desire to avoid the issue. Instead, I read it as part of his dialogical thought process.
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evidence to the contrary. One of the primary concerns of Agathon is education. If
the beauty of Danae’s soul is attributable exclusively to nature, why does Wieland
add a lengthy account of her education to the second and third versions of his novel?
Moreover, the narrator also refers to Agathon as a beautiful soul (SW 3:240).\textsuperscript{20} Is one
then to conclude that his education is equally irrelevant to his moral constitution?
This seems highly unlikely given Wieland’s belief in the morally edifying power of the
Enlightenment.\textsuperscript{21}

In truth, education is just as central to Wieland’s understanding of the beautiful
soul as it is to Rousseau’s. As I will demonstrate in chapters 3 and 4, the main dif-
fERENCE is that Rousseau’s educational programme is based on preempting deviations
of the imagination that could lead to fragmentation of the self, whereas Wieland’s
is based on correcting the deviations of the imagination that have already occurred
and thus already caused fragmentation. In short, Rousseau guides a child along the
path to perfect morality, while Wieland portrays the struggle of an adult to educate
himself, more specifically, to overcome the failures of his education in Platonic ideas
with an education in experience.

\textsuperscript{20}Norton is mistaken in his claim that Danae is the only character whom the narrator refers to
as a beautiful soul (162). Wolfgang Paulsen also claims that the term is only used in reference to
female characters (105). In truth, Agathon, Psyche, Danae, and Kritolaos are all described as having
beautiful souls (SW 3:182; SW 3:232).

\textsuperscript{21}In a short article for Der Teutsche Merkur entitled “Sechs Antworten auf sechs Fragen” (1789),
Wieland summarizes the definition, aims, and methods of the Enlightenment. To the question “Über
welche Gegenstände kann und muß sich die Aufklärung ausbreiten?”, he responds: “Das Licht des
Geistes, wovon hier die Rede ist, ist die Erkenntnis des Wahren und Falschen, des Guten und Bösen.
Hoffentlich wird jedermann zugeben, daß es ohne die Erkenntnis ebenso unmöglich ist, die Geschäfte
des Geistes recht zu treiben, als es ohne materielles Licht möglich ist, materielle Geschäfte recht zu
tun. Die Aufklärung, d.i., so viel Erkenntnis, als nötig ist, um das Wahre und Falsche immer und
überall unterscheiden zu können, muß sich also über alle Gegenstände ohne Ausnahme ausbreiten,
worüber sie sich ausbreiten kann” (211). For Wieland, enlightenment, i.e., knowledge, is necessary
in order to distinguish the good from the bad, the moral from the immoral and to act accordingly.
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Rousseau and Wieland are both perspectival thinkers; they illuminate their subject matter from various, sometimes contradictory, perspectives in order to comprehend it more fully. Describing mankind’s moral constitution as a pre-determined product of nature (or God) aligns with contemporary theories of preformation, such as the one espoused by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz in “Considérations sur le Principe de Vie” (1705) or the preface to Théodicée (1710). It constitutes one perspective on the cause and form of human development. Another perspective, diametrically opposed to that of preformation, is offered by the Lockean sensationalism, which understands all human development as arising out of the individual’s sensory experience of the world. Claude Adrien Helvétius, applying the philosophy of sensationalism in his De l’esprit (1758), argues that man is entirely determined by his environment and education. For Helvétius, man is a clean sheet of paper, John Locke’s tabula

22 Rousseau explains his use of polyperspectivity thus: “I made it my rule, while reading each author, to adopt and pursue all his ideas without introducing any of my own or anyone else’s, and without ever challenging him” (Confessions 232). Todorov reads the totalitarian element in the Social Contract as an example of perspectival thinking. He writes “Rousseau does not advocate civic education for his contemporaries. Instead, he presents an ‘if...then’ analysis: if one assumes the perspective of the citizen, then this is what follows. Let those who are committed to this way be aware of the consequences of their actions” (25). Relatedly, Matthew W. Maguire describes Rousseau’s œuvre as “a body of writing that seems to allow for every conceivable perspective but that cannot be reduced to any of them” (70).

For a study of polyperspectivity in Wieland’s early works, see Lieselotte E. Kurth-Voigt’s Perspectives and Points of View: The Early Works of Wieland and Their Background.

23 Leibniz writes: “Je suis donc de l’avis de Monsieur Cudworth […] que les loix du Mechanisme toutes seules ne sauroient former un animal, l’à o où il n’y a rien encor d’organis é ; et je trouve, qu’il s’oppose avec raison à ce que quelques anciens ont imaginé sur ce sujet” (“Considérations” 544).

24 Ironically, it is Buddecke who argues that Wieland explores both Leibniz’s theory of preformation and the theory of social environment in order to strike a balance or middle ground: “Der Mensch ist Schicksal und Schöpfer zugleich, ein Wesen zwischen Fatum und Freiheit. Er findet Anlagen vor, die er nicht wählte, er sieht sich ausgeliefert an eine Welt, die er ebensowenig wählte, und doch ist er nicht starr und festgelegt wie eine Pflanze oder das instinktgebundene ‘Tier’ (63). Accordingly, Buddecke assigns Agathon a degree of responsibility for his own moral development but not Danae. Buddecke does not recognize that the quotation referring to the immutability of Danae’s beautiful soul forms part of Wieland’s exploration of Leibniz’s preformation theory. It is not the final word on the form of her development, but merely a single perspective. I aim to adjust his analysis to include Danae.
rasa, who passively responds to the sensory information, without will and without the ability to actively judge: “Juger n’est jamais que sentir” (78).²⁵

In addition to their statements about moral beauty that align with preformation, Rousseau and Wieland also explore elements of sensationalism. Indeed the first three books of Rousseau’s *Emile* portray the child’s development as resulting directly from his interaction with the material world. The tutor does not assign Emile moral agency until adolescence. In childhood, Emile is a primarily physical being. This is not to say that morality is absent from his early education; on the contrary, the tutor’s response to his first cries for help have ramifications for his moral being.²⁶ However, Emile’s moral conscience, i.e., his ability to wilfully make moral decisions, develops much later.

In *Agathon*, Wieland likewise pays tribute to the philosophy of sensationalism by having Danae suggest that the only difference between herself and Psyche is the milieu in which they were raised: “Die Umstände machten den ganzen Unterschied. Zu Delfi erzogen, würde sie eine Psyche geworden seyn” (*SW* 3:254). Furthermore, Agathon’s initial Platonic *Schwärmerei* can be understood as a sensationalist response to his idyllic childhood home, Apollo’s temple at Delphi. Wieland argues, as Plato did before him, that one who grows up surrounded by images of the good and the beautiful will naturally identify with the good and the beautiful. Along these lines,

²⁵ “To judge is only to sense” (*Helvétius, De l’esprit* 78). According to Rousseau, Helvétius took sensationalism too far (Jimack, *Rousseau: Emile* 41). He responds to Helvétius’s notion that judgement is nothing more than sentiment thus: “In perception or idea, judgement 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” (*Emile* 203).

²⁶ Rousseau describes the moral effect of how parents react to their child’s tears: “The first tears of children are prayers. If one is not careful, they soon become orders. Children begin by getting themselves assisted; they end by getting themselves served. Thus, from their own weakness, which is in the first place the source of the feeling of their dependence, is subsequently born the idea of empire and domination” (*Emile* 66).
Agathon describes Delphi as a “Schutzorte, wo ich, seitdem ich mich selbst empfand, von Bildern der Götter und Helden umgeben, mich einzig beschäftigt hatte, ihnen ähnlich zu werden” \( (SW\ 1:53).^{27}\) Finally, one could argue, as Hans-Jürgen Schings does, that the novel’s narrative method actually reflects Hippias’s point of view, i.e., the sensationalist perspective. Schings reads \textit{Agathon} as an anthropological novel, in which the hero is led step by step “auf den Gleisen des Hippias/Helvétius” from the metaphysical world into physical reality (“Pathologie” 47).\(^{28}\)

Rousseau and Wieland both explore the consequences of preformation (nature/God dictates human form) and sensationalism (environment dictates human form). Ultimately, they resolve on a balance between the two. Wieland summarizes the synthesis of preformation and sensationalism in his essay “Das Geheimniss des Kosmopoliten-Ordens.”

Die Natur [. . .] hat einem jeden Menschen die besondere Anlage zu dem, was er seyn soll, gegeben, und der Zusammenhang der Dinge setzt ihn in Umstände, die der Entwicklung derselben mehr oder weniger günstig sind: aber ihre Ausbildung und Vollendung hat sie ihm selbst anvertraut. \( (SW\ 30:170)\)

Nature and society both affect human character, but the individual must wilfully respond to their influence, must actively participate in the formation of his own

\(^{27}\)Wieland follows Plato’s \textit{Republic} in his suggestion that beautiful surroundings promote beauty of the soul: “So the philosopher, spending his time with what is divine and ordered, in fact becomes as ordered and divine as it is possible for a human being to be” (205).

\(^{28}\)In his longer work on the development of the anthropological novel \textit{Melancholie und Aufklärung}, Schings employs an eighteenth-century definition of anthropology from Ernst Platner, a professor of medicine and philosophy in Leipzig and the author of \textit{Anthropologie für Aerzte und Weltweise} (1772). Platner and, by extension, Schings define anthropology as the science “Körper und Seele in ihren gegenseitigen Verhältnissen, Einschränkungen und Beziehungen zusammen zu betrachten” (24). I also use this definition when referring to the anthropological aspects of Wieland’s novel.
Conceptions of Rousseau’s beautiful soul which emphasize the natural component and deny a cultural influence fail to acknowledge the distinction between naive and reflective goodness. For Rousseau, all men possess natural or naive goodness. In fact, the first line of *Emile* reads: “Everything is good as it leaves the hands of the Author of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man” (37). Rousseau’s natural man lives wholly for and within himself. His psychic life is unified and harmonious because no moral duties divide him from his natural inclinations (*Emile* 39). Bourgeois man is, by contrast, characterized by fragmentation and disharmony. His duties to society often run counter to his natural inclinations:

Swept along in the contrary routes by nature and by men, forced to divide ourselves between these different impulses, we follow a composite impulse which leads us to neither one goal nor the other. Thus, in conflict and floating during the whole course of our life, we end it without having been able to put ourselves in harmony with ourselves and without having been good either for ourselves or for others. (*Emile* 41)

29 Timothy O’Hagan sees Rousseau’s originality in his anticipating some elements of Gestalt Psychology: “The ideas of the environment and of the imagination are the keys to Rousseau’s theory, according to which one encounters, and at the same time constructs, one’s identity by interacting with one’s environment” (14). Furthermore, O’Hagan also highlights Rousseau’s perspectivism. He reads Rousseau as exploring the tension between feeling and reason, inclination and duty, not in hopes of finding a “specious reconciliation” but in hopes of finding something more fruitful in the tension than an artificial “syncretism” (32). O’Hagan’s reading of Rousseau is one I wish to apply to Wieland’s *Agathon*. In *Der “Moral-Sense” bei Gellert, Lessing und Wieland: zur Shaftesbury und Hutcheson in Deutschland*, Jan Engbers also articulates the need to reevaluate the importance of environment and education for Wieland’s moral philosophy (152).

30 Although the terms naive and reflective goodness are of my own creation, the idea has been discussed elsewhere, as, for example, in Todorov’s essay *Frail Happiness* and Fetscher’s article “Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Ethik und Politik.” Todorov notes that social man’s status as a “relative” being precludes the goodness of natural man (naive goodness) but makes possible a new notion of goodness (reflective goodness), which is distinct from virtue, and which “encourages us to abandon ourselves to our desire to please others” (ix). Fetscher likewise contrasts man’s “bonté naturelle” and a social condition which resembles it: “Durch sittliche Anstrengung (und entsprechende institutionelle Vorkehrungen) soll – wenigstens einigermaßen – ein Zustand hergestellt werden, der Ähnlichkeit mit dem der ursprünglichen (instinkthafte) bonté besitzt” (“Ethik und Politik” 5).
The goal of *Emile* is to overcome the problems facing bourgeois society, more specifically, to recreate man’s natural goodness within a social context. Rousseau raises Emile to be good, that is, to experience a harmony between his moral duties and his natural inclinations; however, he does not raise him to be naively good. Naive goodness assumes that man is living in social isolation, i.e., that he has no moral duties. Emile’s goodness is reflective: it resembles natural goodness, but it is actually a cultural recreation of it. The happiness of the naively good man arises from the pursuit and fulfilment of his natural inclinations. The same is true for the happiness of the reflectively good man. The difference is that, in the case of the latter, man’s natural inclinations are simultaneously his moral duties. To clarify, although the reflectively good man’s natural inclinations have been modified by life in society, they continue to be natural. Rousseau differentiates between what is natural for natural man and what is natural for civilized man: “One must not confound what is natural in the savage state with what is natural in the civil state” (*Emile* 406). For Rousseau, society as such is not antithetical to nature, only bourgeois society is. If a society could educate its members such that they remained whole (i.e., that their natural inclinations coincided with their moral duties), that society would be natural. Correspondingly, the reflectively good man wants to do exactly what morality dictates he should do. He is, in fact, a Schillerian beautiful soul. It is important to note that morality in this context has nothing to do with social conventions. Emile pays no heed to arbitrary political, religious or cultural authority. Reason informs Emile what is moral, not
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men: “Reason alone teaches us to know good and bad” (67).\(^{31}\)

Reflective goodness must also be distinguished from virtue. Virtue involves willfully triumphing over one’s natural inclinations in order to fulfill one’s moral duties.\(^{32}\) In the words of Allan Bloom: “Virtue is strength, the strength, to put it paradoxically, to want to do what one does not want to do” (Love 136).\(^{33}\) Virtue assumes a pre-existing tension between the two sides of one’s nature. The virtuous man is no longer morally beautiful, at least in the Schillerian sense of the term. Although Rousseau and Wieland prefer goodness to virtue, virtue is nevertheless a key component of their theories on moral education.\(^{34}\) In both Emile and Agathon it becomes apparent that the complexities of moral life preclude the reflective goodness which characterizes the Schillerian beautiful soul. As the tutor explains, “goodness is broken and perishes under the impact of the human passions. The man who is only good

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\(^{31}\)Rousseau describes how neither social conventions nor religious dogma should dictate Emile’s actions: “It is especially in matters of religion that opinion triumphs. But we who pretend to shake off the yoke of opinion in everything, we who want to grant nothing to authority, we who want to teach nothing to our Emile which he could not learn by himself in every country, in what religion shall we raise him?” (Emile 260). According to David Lay Williams, the independence of Emile’s notions of goodness and truth from social context speaks to the Platonic nature of Rousseau’s metaphysics (62-125). I explore the Platonic nature of Rousseau’s thought in the section on love and sublimation in Emile.

\(^{32}\)For similar distinctions, see Fetscher (politische Philosophie 78) and Kelly (“Introduction” xiii-xviii).

\(^{33}\)Wieland does not give a precise definition of virtue or “Tugend” in Agathon. In fact, the text offers several contradictory accounts of what it might mean. For now, I draw attention to a definition of virtue from Wieland’s essay “Das Geheimniss des Kosmopoliten-Ordens: “Er [the individual] kann kein angelegneres Geschäft haben, als das Bestreben, der Vollkommenheit in seiner Art, […] so nahe zu kommen als möglich […] Ein hoher Grad dieser Tauglichkeit, in so fern er von Übung, Fleiss, Anstrengung und Beharrung, und also von unserem eigenen Willen abhängt, ist was die Kosmopoliten Tugend nennen, und das Ideal derselben der Massstab, wonach sie den Werth einzelner Personen bestimmen” (SW 30:170-71). Both Rousseau’s and Wieland’s definitions of virtue emphasize the importance of the will. Virtue requires work, i.e., self-mastery.

\(^{34}\)As Rousseau points out, goodness is more conducive to happiness than virtue: “The principles according to which the virtuous man learns to despise his life and to sacrifice it to his duty are very far from this primitive simplicity. Happy are the peoples among whom one can be good without effort and just without virtue!” (Emile 193). Agathon too is happier when he experiences a sensual-spiritual harmony in the arms of Danae than when he exercises virtue under the direction of Archytas (SW 2:233).
is good only for himself” (*Emile* 444). Once man enters society, he can no longer rely on goodness alone. He must also acquire virtue. Emile and Agathon both strive for reflective goodness; but, in the end, when their natural inclinations conflict with their moral duties, they must also have the ability to exercise virtue.

Thus, although both texts thematize the education of a Schillerian beautiful soul, such perfect psychic harmony proves unsustainable. Interestingly, both characters exemplify their newly acquired virtue by separating themselves from their love interests. At the request of his tutor, Emile departs on a two-year journey (a political *Bildungsreise*) prior to marrying Sophie. The tutor separates Emile and Sophie in order to test the strength of Emile’s will. Emile, the tutor explains, must not be a slave to his passions; he must be able to place duty above inclination when the two forces run contrary to one another. Agathon likewise departs on an extended journey in order to separate himself from Danae. According to Agathon’s mentor Archytas, his attainment of moral perfection depends on his ability to purify his love for Danae, that is, to transform his sexual passion for her into an asexual attachment. Hence, both Rousseau and Wieland ultimately advocate the primacy of reason over sensuality, of duty over inclination. As a result, their moral philosophies appear to align

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35Rousseau assigns Emile’s tutor the name Jean-Jacques. Although some scholars view the author and the tutor as one and the same (Dent, *Rousseau* 106), I agree with Reisert who differentiates between the two (141). As Reisert explains, Rousseau portrays Jean-Jacques as an idealized version of himself in order to promote the success of his educational project (141). In the present work, I use either Jean-Jacques or “the tutor” to refer to the person implementing the particulars of Emile’s educational programme. But I use Rousseau to refer to the author’s thought in general.

36Heinrich, the protagonist of Adalbert Stifter’s *Der Nachsommer* (1857), also takes a so-called *Bildungsreise* before his marriage to Natalie. Thus, a separation of lovers that is designed to purify sexual passion into asexual attachment becomes a theme in the *Bildungsroman*. 


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with conventional Platonic and Christian doctrines. But what is unconventional about Rousseau’s and Wieland’s analyses is that reason and duty are self-defined and self-imposed. In Emile and Agathon, the goal of moral education is the grounding of behaviour in one’s own convictions, which are of course based on the foundations of reason. Allan Bloom explains: “If freedom is the essence of man, as the moderns believe, only the capacity to set down laws for oneself that one obeys can demonstrate the possibility and existence of such freedom” (Love 118). Paradoxically, one must enslave oneself with laws in order to prove the freedom of one’s will.

In sum, the struggle for a harmonious reconciliation of man’s dualistic nature reveals itself as a necessary, albeit unrealizable, endeavour. Neither Emile nor Agathon concludes with a permanent reconciliation of duty and inclination. Yet the bulk of both texts is concerned with delineating the path toward such an ideal. Thus, although the attainment of a Schillerian beautiful soul proves unsustainable in the long run, the search for it remains central to both authors’ conceptions of identity formation. Emile and Agathon both end with a categorical imperative that anticipates

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Plato teaches the guardians of his ideal republic to place rational duty above physical desire “Isn’t it appropriate for the rational element to rule, because it is wise and takes thought for the entire soul [...]” (Republic 138). For Christians too, duty to Jesus Christ is placed above physical desires: “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Galatians 5:24). I reference the Platonic and Christian traditions in specific because Rousseau acknowledges their importance for his thoughts on education. He calls Plato’s Republic “the most beautiful educational treatise ever written” (Emile 40) and acknowledges the influence of two clergymen, Jean-Claude Gaime and Jean-Baptist Gâtier, for the “Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar” (Confessions 89 and 117).
Kantian ethics, but the rigid morality that characterizes the novels’ conclusions stands in stark contrast to the conciliatory nature of the texts as a whole. In contrast to Ernst Cassirer, who views Rousseau as a forerunner of Kantian morality, Iring Fetscher argues that Rousseau’s moral ideals are best understood as a synthesis of Kantian morality and Romantic feeling (“Ethik und Politik” 1-23). My analysis of the relationship between virtue and moral beauty aligns more with Fetscher’s reading than with Cassirer’s. What appears in Rousseau to resemble strict Kantian morality is actually a modification of it. For Rousseau, one’s passion for virtue becomes one’s inclination; Kantian morality is achieved because of (not despite) one’s emotional assent. Thus, in the final analysis, moral beauty emerges as a necessary stepping-stone to virtue. Neither Wieland nor Rousseau wants society to “denature” man; neither of them advocates the forceful suppression of man’s natural inclinations by religious, political, or social institutions. Instead, they want man to denature himself. They believe that man, having achieved a harmony of nature and culture, will choose culture of his own volition. Furthermore, man’s choice, having been developed

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38 According to Ernst Cassirer, Rousseau rejected the beautiful soul as a foundation for ethics and thereby influenced Kant’s development of the categorical imperative. For Cassirer, Rousseau’s ethics are not at all subjective or arbitrary: “Vor dem Willen, als Allgemeinwillen, steht die Willkür stille; sie begibt sich, dem Recht des Ganzen gegenüber, jedes eigenen Anspruchs. Hier muß nicht nur der eigene Vorteil schweigen; sondern hier fällt auch jede bloße subjektive Neigung, jedes Pochen auf das Gefühl des Einzelnen weg. Rousseaus Ethik ist keine Gefühls-Ethik, sondern sie ist die entschiedenste Form der reinen Gesetzes-Ethik, die vor Kant ausgebildet worden ist” (“Das Problem” 54). Allan Bloom likewise equates Rousseau’s “general will” with the Kant’s “categorical imperative” (Love 81).

Notably Wieland also remarks on his own anticipation of Kantian philosophy. While working on the final version of Agathon, Wieland writes a letter to his son-in-law, Karl Leonhard Reinhold, in which he highlights his intellectual affinity with Kant: “Mich beschäftigt seit 14 Tagen die Revision des Agathon; aus welchem ich mit // angenehmer Surprise ersehe, daß schon vor 25 Jahren eine Art von Kantischer Philosophie in herba im Schoß meiner Seele herum trug” (Briefwechsel 12.1:54). The passage can be read as a reference to the proximity of Archytas’s moral doctrine with Kant’s categorical imperative (Grimminger 695; Jan-Dirk Müller 87). But one should also be wary of equating Archytas’s viewpoint with the author’s, because Wieland can also be considered one of Kant’s most decisive critics (Erhart, “Geschichte des Agathon” 271).
and sanctioned by his own reason, rather than forced on him by others, will be in
keeping with his nature, thus allowing him to remain whole, i.e., avoid the moral
pitfalls definitive of bourgeois culture. Virtue, as defined by Rousseau and Wieland,
does not automatically mean fragmentation and disharmony. If self-defined and self-
imposed, virtue is, in fact, beautiful. This conclusion prompts the question of whether
the Schillerian definition of the beautiful soul applies to the works of Rousseau and
Wieland. The answer to this question is no. For Rousseau and Wieland, the beauti-
ful soul encompasses both grace and dignity, harmonious moral beauty and sublime
self-mastery. Indeed moral beauty and virtue are complementary inner countenances
which combine to form the moral ideals of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Christoph
Martin Wieland. Emile and Agathon are beautiful soul in this extended sense of the
term.

1.3 Aligning Reason and Imagination: or, “Wehe ihm, wenn seine Ver-
nunft die einzige Führerin seines Lebens ist!”

For the French *philosophes* and German *Aufklärer*, understanding, which consti-
tutes the philosopher’s highest objective, is attained through the combined mental

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39 This quotation is taken from Wieland’s essay “Was ist Wahrheit?” (1778) (*SW* 24:44). Jutta
Heinz uses it, quite appropriately I think, to draw parallels between the scepticism of Wieland and
Rousseau ( “Was ist Wahrheit?” 66). She argues that Wieland’s sceptical approach to reason, as
expressed by the quotation, draws his thought closer to Rousseau’s. She highlights the following
points of tangency: “Dazu zählt die apriorische Annahme einer untraglichen, von Natur gegebenen
inneren Instanz im Menschen […] Zu den Parallelen zählen des Weiteren die Einschränkung des
Wahrheitsbegriffs auf das sinnlich Erkennbare und Lebensnotwendige bei gleichzeitiger Ausgrenzung
der ‘großen’ metaphysischen Fragen sowie die unbedingte Orientierung an der Natur als Inbegriff
von Wahrheit” (“Was ist Wahrheit” 72). To extend Heinz’s analysis, I argue that these last two
points of tangency, the emphasis on sensual perception as well as the grounding of truth in nature,
make way for Wieland and Rousseau to reevaluate the importance of the imagination for human
understanding.
faculties of memory, imagination, and reason (Chambliss 45; Bell, *Psychology* 16-53). Yet, as Voltaire explains, these three faculties are neither easily defined nor clearly distinguishable:

[... ] par ces mots perception, mémoire, imagination, jugement, on n’entend point des organes distincts, dont l’un a le don de sentir, l’autre se ressouvient, un troisième imagine, un quatrième juge. Les hommes sont plus portes qu’on ne pense à croire que ce sont des facultés différentes & séparées; c’est cependant le même être qui fait toutes ces opérations, que nous ne connoissons que par leurs effets, sans pouvoir rien connoître de cet être. (“Imagination, imaginer” 563)

According to eighteenth-century sensationalist philosophy, reason and imagination are not separate, contradictory faculties. On the contrary, the sensationalists view the imagination as a power that could either replace or, at the very least, complement the mind’s ability to reason (Engell 20). In order to understand how the two concepts overlap, it is helpful to compare Rousseau’s definition of intellectual reason with Voltaire’s definition of the active imagination. In the following, Rousseau differentiates sensual reason from intellectual reason, while at the same time positing their mutual dependence on sensory information: “What I would call sensual or

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40In *The Light of Nature Pursued* (1768-1778), Abraham Tucker points out that the relationship between understanding and imagination is more than one directional. On the one hand, imagination supplies the raw material (i.e., the images) upon which understanding is based. On the other, the understanding then relays images back to the imagination (Engell 164). However, the simplification, which views understanding as derivative of imagination, is reasonable in the context of the present discussion.

41*[... ] by the words perception, memory, imagination, and judgment, we do not mean distinct and separate organs, one of them which has the gift of perceiving, another of recollecting, the third of imaging, and the last of judging. Men are more inclined, than some are aware, to consider these as completely distinct and separate faculties. It is, however, one and the same being that performs all these operations, which we know only by their effects.” (Voltaire, “Imagination” 124)

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” (Emile 158, my emphasis). In a similar vein, Voltaire defines the active imagination as the mind’s ability to combine and rearrange the images it receives from the senses: the active imagination “arrange ces images reçues, & les combine en mille manières” (“Imagination, imaginer” 561). Furthermore, Voltaire claims that active imagination cannot function properly without the aid of reason: “elle ne peut agir qu’avec un jugement profond. Elle combine sans cesse ses tableaux, elle corrige ses erreurs, elle éleve tous ses édifices avec ordre” (“Imagination, imaginer” 561). According to these definitions, both intellectual reason and the active imagination produce ideas by compounding other ideas or images which have been previously derived from the senses. They both fabricate truths or untruths depending on the manner in which ideas or images are fused. Thus, in a sense, the active imagination is nothing more than a reasoning with images and, to a

43The active imagination is the mind’s ability to “arrange[ ] the images received, and combine[ ] them in endless diversity” (Voltaire, “Imagination” 118).
44“It can only act in union with profound judgement. It incessantly combines its pictures, corrects its errors, and raises all its édifices” (Voltaire, “Imagination” 121).
45Engell also emphasizes the tendency in early eighteenth-century English thought to unite reason and imagination: “In English thought the imagination becomes less diametrically opposed to reason and more the working partner of reason, the act of reasoning itself, a process so complex that it cannot be broken down into logical and ‘rational’ steps of ‘method’” (20).
46Similar to intellectual reason, the active imagination produces ideas. Rousseau explains the difference between the simple images of the passive imagination and complex ideas of the active imagination in the following terms: “The difference between the two is that images are only absolute depictions of sensible objects, while ideas are notions of objects determined by relations. An image can stand all alone in the mind which represents it, but every idea supposes other ideas. When one imagines, one does nothing but see; when one conceives, one is comparing” (Emile 107). Thus, as soon as the active imagination compounds or compares images, it is, by definition, forming ideas. In fact, for both Voltaire and Rousseau, all ideas are ultimately images. Voltaire questions: “Qu’est-ce qu’une idée? C’est une image qui se peint dans mon cerveau” (“Idée” 223). “What is an idea? It is an image painted in my brain” (“Idée, Idea” 308). Rousseau likewise asserts that “all my ideas are in the form of images” (Confessions 170).
lesser extent, with other forms of sensory information.\footnote{Although Joseph Addison argues that sight is the only sense which furnishes the imagination with ideas (Kurth-Voigt 21), both Rousseau and Voltaire believe that the other senses contribute as well. Rousseau explains that “[taste] is the only one [i.e., of the five senses] which says nothing to the imagination, or at least it is the one into whose sensations the imagination enters least, whereas imitation and imagination often mix something moral with the impression of all the others” (Emile 152). Similarly, Voltaire claims that “Un aveugle né entend dans son imagination l’harmonie que ne frappe plus son oreille” (Imagination, imaginer” 561). “A man born blind still hears, in his imagination, the harmony which no longer vibrates upon his ear” (“Imagination” 118).}

Indeed the sensationalist ideal of the “rational” or “classical” imagination is the basis of foresight.\footnote{To further illustrate the definition of the imagination with which we are working, I find it helpful to introduce the terminology used by Irving Babbitt. Babbitt contrasts the “classical imagination” with the “romantic imagination.” He says that “the classical imagination […] is not free to fly off at a tangent, to wander wild in some empire of chimeras. It has a centre, it is at work in the service of reality […] To say that the classicist […] gets at his reality with the aid of the imagination is but another way of saying that he perceives his reality only though a veil of illusion” (102). The “romantic imagination” is, of course, the exact opposite: it flies off on tangents, produces chimeras, and serves ideals rather than reality (70-113). Essentially Rousseau uses his own personal “romantic” imagination to develop an education for Emile which will furnish him with a “classical” one.} It allows human beings to extend themselves into the future, that is, to create and rehearse possible scenarios which could occur at a later time and place. The problem with imaginative foresight is that in contemplating the future one becomes aware of new possibilities and develops new desires, many of which outstrip the limits of what reason deems attainable. Rousseau believes that regulating the imagination’s prophetic abilities poses the single greatest challenge to the happiness of the human race: “From this foresight, well or ill controlled, is born all human wisdom and all human misery” (Emile 177).

In The Conversion of Imagination: From Pascal through Rousseau to Tocqueville, Matthew W. Maguire describes the relationship between reason and imagination in eighteenth-century thought as inherently volatile (50). At times, he says, reason displays an “almost unreserved mastery” over the imagination; but at other times the imagination inflames desires that run contrary to reason (50). When reason directs the imagination, it imposes order on the human experience; but, when the imagination
trumps reason, it creates disorder. The German author Jean Henri Samuel Formey, in an article on dreams/fantasizing ("Songe") for Encyclopédie, summarizes the struggle between reason and imagination with a political metaphor:

L’imagination de la veille est une république policée, où la voix du magistrat remet tout en ordre; l’imagination des songes est la même république dans l’état d’anarchie, encore les passions sont-elles de fréquents attentats contre l’autorité du législateur pendant le temps même où ses droits sont en vigueur. (355)49

Rousseau insists that the unruly passions are an unavoidable part of the human experience. But he also believes, paradoxically, that “this disorder can be controlled” (Maguire 51). Indeed the notion of a “controlled disorder” is a trenchant description of Rousseau’s and Wieland’s goal for the imagination in Emile and Agathon. Rousseau and Wieland concede that imagination creates desires which are at odds with reason. That said, they take great pains to sublimate such “disorderly desires” into socially laudable, rationally affirmed activities.

In Rousseau’s Emile and Wieland’s Agathon, bridging the gap between man’s social existence and his nature, between his moral duties and his natural inclinations, means aligning the faculties of reason and imagination. Rousseau and Wieland both believe that when reason and imagination diverge from one another, they speak two fundamentally different languages. Pure reason, they say, uses words and speaks to the mind, while pure imagination uses images and speaks to the heart.50 Rousseau

49 “The waking imagination is a policed republic, where the voice of the magistrate restores everything to order. The imagination during a dream is that same republic in a state of anarchy, with the passions making frequent forays against the legislator’s authority even while his law is in force” (qtd. in Goldstein 37). The original article did not name an author, but it has since been attributed to Formey.

50 I use examples from Rousseau’s Emile to illustrate this point, but Wieland expresses the same thoughts in Agathon. See, for example, Hippias’s “Theorie der angenehmsten Empfindungen” (SW 1:117-21). I will save my analysis of these passages for chapter 4.
locates a source of social man’s dividedness in his overemphasis on rationality, that is, in his penchant for using intellectual reason to the exclusion of the imagination:

One of the errors of our age is to use reason in too unadorned a form, as if men were all mind. In neglecting the language of signs that speak to the imagination, the most energetic of languages has been lost. The impression of the word is always weak, and one speaks to the heart far better through the eyes than through the ears. (*Emile* 321, my emphasis)

Rousseau and Wieland are not Romantic writers insofar as their ultimate goal is to communicate with the mind and not the heart. However, they both believe that the mind and the heart work best in concert. Rousseau suggests to “clothe reason in a body [. . .] Make the language of the mind pass though the heart, so that it may make itself understood” (*Emile* 323, my emphasis).

Rousseau’s insistence that reason be “clothed” in a body helps to explain the novelistic elements of *Emile* and *Agathon*. Rousseau and Wieland do not develop their education programmes in a wholly abstract manner. Instead, they demonstrate their philosophical ideas on fictional prot´ég´es. Emile’s presence in Rousseau’s text can be read as an attempt to speak to the reader’s imagination, that is, to help the reader’s mind create images which will aid in the understanding of abstract arguments. The fictional elements of *Agathon* too demonstrate Wieland’s conviction that reason works best with aligned with the imagination. Paulsen grounds Wieland’s combination of fictional and philosophical argument in his desire to address himself to the senses (and, by extension, the imagination) as well as to the mind: “weil für Wieland der Bereich des Geistes kein Sonderbereich ist, sondern erst mit dem der Sinne zusammen ein Ganzes ausmacht, das den Menschen als Menschen konstituiert” (203). In the so-called “Age of Reason,” Rousseau and Wieland both emphasize the importance of the imagination.
1.3. ALIGNING REASON AND IMAGINATION

To exemplify an effective alignment of reason and imagination, Rousseau and Wieland both reference the exact same anecdote from classical antiquity, namely Diogenes’s refutation of Zeno’s arguments on motion (Emile 322; SW 1:XX). According to classical legend, Zeno gave a lecture denying the existence of motion, which Diogenes refuted simply by getting up and walking away. Both Rousseau and Wieland express admiration for Diogenes’s embodied argument. Using Diogenes’s refutation of Zeno as an example of effective reasoning with images is consistent with their overarching pedagogical methods, that is, with their emphasis on learning through experience rather than pure erudition.

Rousseau’s desire to replace words with images also supports Jean Starobinski’s reading of Rousseau as fundamentally concerned with the possibility of unmediated communication (139-67). Diogenes’s demonstrative leave-taking obviates the need for language and thus the arbitrary relationship between the signifier (signifiant) and the signified (signifié). Wieland expresses a similar fascination for unmediated communication. His “beautiful souls” continually demonstrate their ability to communicate without words: “Der Gebrauch der Sprache hört auf, wenn sich die Seelen einander unmittelbar mittheilen, sich unmittelbar anschauen und berühren” (SW 1:38). In an ideal world, communication would be direct; it would not be channelled through an arbitrary system of signifiers, but arise directly out of one’s experience with the signified.

Rousseau’s and Wieland’s suspicion of language does not, however, constitute a distrust of reason in general but rather an aversion to the type of reason that
distances itself from experience and thus from the sensory information. They reject the seventeenth-century understanding of reason as a sensorially independent method of deduction. They view it, instead, as an intuitional power with a direct connection to nature (cf. Engell 7). They replace Descartes’s rationalist conclusion “Cogito ergo sum” (“I think therefore I am”) with its empirical counterpart “I feel therefore I am” (Masters, Political Philosophy 59; McCarthy, Wieland 79; Willey 108). The Savoyard Vicar’s exact words to this effect are: “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” (Emile 270). Rousseau advances the exact same principle, perhaps even more clearly, in the Moral Letters: “For us, to exist is to feel; and our sensitivity is incontestably prior to our reason itself” (On Philosophy 94). Wieland puts the same ideas in the mouth of his Schwärmer. Agathon, finding no logical way to counter Hippias’s attack on the existence of God, responds: “Ich erkenne sein Daseyn nicht bloß durch Vernunftschlüsse; ich fühle es, wie ich fühle daß eine Sonne ist, wie ich fühle daß ich selbst bin” (SW 1:91). Although the narrator declares Hippias the winner of this particular debate, it is not because Agathon’s insistence on the importance of sensation is wrong. It is more that feeling alone is not enough. After all, as Hippias retorts, even crazy people feel. Sensation is a necessary precursor and counterbalance

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51 Starobinski explains: “When Rousseau attacks reason, his target is primarily discursive reason. Whenever he can rely on intuitive reason, immediate illumination, he becomes, once more, a rationalist. The crucial choice is not between reason and feeling but between immediacy and mediation. Rousseau opts for the immediate, not the irrational. Immediate certainty may be associated with either emotion, sensation, or reason” (41).

52 John A. McCarthy interprets the shift from “I think therefore I am” to “I feel therefore I am” as indicative of the shift from rationalism to sensibility and attributes the French original “je sens; donc, je suis” as to Charles Bonnet (“Criticism and Experience” 18). Jutta Heinz, however, assures us that Wieland does not advance “Gefühl” i.e., emotions and passions as the foundation of truth, but rather “Gefühl” in the sense of sensual perception (“Was ist Wahrheit?” 58).
to rational thought, but not an adequate substitute.\textsuperscript{53}

Rousseau and Wieland believe that rational thought presupposes sensory experience, and this belief entails an overlapping of reason and imagination. Indeed, beginning as far back as Aristotle, the imagination occupied a “middle position” between perception and thought. It was believed to provide a link between the senses, whose information it stored, and reason, for which it furnished material (Homann 358). Leibniz revives the Aristotelian understanding of the imagination as the precursor to reason during the late seventeenth century as a means of overcoming Descartes’s dualism (Bell, \textit{Psychology} 16-22).

Leibniz’s follower Christian Wolff, continues this line of thought, differentiating between two forms of active imagination, or “Manier der Einbildungs-kraft,” the first of which runs contrary to rational thought, and the second of which aligns with it (134-36).\textsuperscript{54} Both forms of imagination constitute the mind’s ability to create new images by dismantling and reassembling other images which have entered the mind by way of the senses. Hence, both forms fall under Voltaire’s definition of the active imagination. For Wolff, the first type of imagination runs contrary to reason and thus produces “leere Einbildungen,” i.e., objects that neither exist nor could ever exist and thus bear

\textsuperscript{53}Wieland summarizes this necessary progression from feeling to thought in his essay “Was ist Wahrheit?”: “Die Wahrheit ist weder hier noch da [. . .] ihr Tempel ist die Natur, und \textit{wer nur fühlen, und seine Gefühle zu Gedanken erhöhen, und seine Gedanken in ein Ganzes zusammenfassen und ertönen lassen kann}, ist ihr Priester, ihr Zeuge, ihr Organ” (SW 24:50). Agathon’s emphasis on feeling represents only the first step in this progression. According to Wieland, the search for truth requires that one translate one’s feelings into thoughts and one’s thoughts into a coherent whole. In contrast to Agathon, Hippias neglects feeling all together, favouring pure reason. Thus he too is missing a necessary component of the search for truth.

\textsuperscript{54}Wolff developed terminology for the imagination in both German and Latin. I avoid introducing his terms, because they are, for my purposes, close enough to Coleridge’s well-known distinction between fancy and imagination to not warrant the added confusion.
no relevance to the real world (134). Coleridge would later describe this concept under the term “fancy” (Engell 177). Wolff’s second “Manier der Einbildungs=kraft” is the mind’s “ability to abstract from experience by compiling the best examples of a given object and creating from them its ideal form” (Bell, Psychology 22-23). The second “Manier” produces images which, although not currently in existence, remain within the realm of possibility and therefore contain at least some element of truth. Coleridge would later distinguish this concept from fancy, referring to it simply as “imagination” (Engell 177). For Rousseau and Wieland, the imagination, as a link between sensory perception and intellectual reason, should be carefully constructed (i.e., should accord with Wolff’s second “Manier” or Coleridge’s “imagination”), but it should never be fully overcome.

In sum, eighteenth-century sensationalists, with whom Rousseau and Wieland may be conditionally associated, bound the faculties of reason and imagination closer together than their rationalist predecessors (Engell 79). For Descartes and Malebranche, the imagination, with its indestructible association with the senses, was a source of error and confusion (Denby 259). As rationalists, Descartes and Malebranche attempted to marginalize information derived from the senses in order to achieve “pure mind” (Denby 258). They viewed imagination as an obstacle to be

55 “Die erste Manier bestehet darinnen, daß wir diejenigen Dinge, welche wir entweder wirklich gesehen, oder nur im Bilde vor uns gehabt, nach Gefallen zertheilen, und die Theile von verschiedenen Dingen nach unsern Gefallen zusammensetzen: wodurch etwas heraus kommt, dergleichen wir noch nie gesehen. Auf solche Weise hat man die Gestalt der Melusine, so halb Mensch und Fisch ist” (Wolff 134).
56 “Die andere Manier der Einbildungen=Kraft Dinge hervorzubringen, die sie niemahls gesehen, bedient sich des Satzes des zureichenden Grundes, und bringet Bilder hervor, darinnen Wahrheit ist” (Wolff 136).
57 As Goldstein points out, the sensationalists continued to express anxiety about the powers of the imagination, even after having acknowledged its importance (34). For a summary of how attitudes toward the imagination changed between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, see Thomas McFarland Romanticism and the Heritage of Rousseau (200-28).
overcome, not a potential ally in the pursuit of understanding.

Descartes’s and Malebranche’s belief that one has to separate oneself from the body in order to attain pure knowledge is reminiscent of Socrates’ description of the true philosopher in Plato’s *Phædo*: “The desire to free the soul is found chiefly, or rather only, in the true philosopher. In fact the philosopher’s occupation consists precisely in the freeing and separation of soul from body” (50). Rousseau and Wieland, by contrast, participate in the eighteenth century’s effort to rehabilitate the status of the imagination. They believed that “the imagination could, in its dialectic, synthesize soul and body. It could unite man’s spirit and affections with the concrete reality of nature. The imagination would solve the dilemma of dualism” (Engell 7).

That Rousseau and Wieland differ from Plato and the rationalists when assessing the importance of the imagination is key to my argument as a whole. In general, I want to describe how Rousseau and Wieland modify Platonic and rationalist thought with a more inclusive stance on the role of the body in human behaviour. Their increased respect for the power of the imagination is symptomatic of their desire to integrate the body into some aspects of moral philosophy.

Although Engell constructs his argument in reference to the British and German schools of Enlightenment thought (even giving a brief nod to Wieland), it is equally true for Rousseau. After all, whose work was more concerned with the reconciliation of man and nature than the “Citizen of Geneva”? And who was more explicit

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58 For Descartes, imagination was distinct from understanding. In *Meditationes de prima philosophia* (1641), he writes, “I Consider that this *Power of Imagination* which is in me (as it differs from the *Power of Understanding*) does not appertain to the *Essence of Me*, that is, of my *mind*, for tho I *wanted* it, yet certainly I should be the *same He*, that now I am” (“Meditations” 232). Notably, Descartes’s devaluation of the imagination goes hand in hand with a devaluation of the body. Descartes defines the “I” as consisting only of the mind, effectively negating the importance of the body for defining the self. Relatedly, Rousseau and Wieland, in whose philosophy the body takes on a greater role, elevate the status of the imagination.
1.4. OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

about the pivotal role of the imagination in overcoming the dilemmas of Cartesian dualism? Drawing on a wide range of authors from the British empirical tradition to the German Romantics, Engell argues that “the idea of the imagination dramatized and made articulate a great dialectic between matter and spirit, nature and the inner psyche, materialism and transcendentalism” (viii). Rousseau and Wieland make key contributions to this epoch-making intellectual project. Emile and Agathon are arguably the first novels in the French and German traditions to portray the development of the protagonist’s subjectivity and, by extension, his imagination. It follows, then, that Emile and Agathon are the first European novels to articulate the “great dialectic between matter and spirit, nature and the inner psyche, materialism and transcendentalism” from the perspective of an individual’s imagination (Engell viii). How do their contributions to the debate differ from those offered by philosophical treatises and Romantic poetry? How does the specificity of the novel cast new light on the role of the imagination in unifying the fragmented being that is the eighteenth-century bourgeois? In general, novels offer an increased access to empirical reality vis-à-vis other philosophical and literary genres. Accordingly, Emile and Agathon provide new insights into the process by which an individual might reunite the two sides of his nature. To the question “where does the body touch the spirit?” Emile and Agathon offer three answers: in one’s understanding of natural religion, commitment to the ideal of humanity, and experience of sentimental love.

1.4 Overview of Chapters

Thus far, I have introduced eighteenth-century definitions of the beautiful soul and the imagination. In the following chapters, I unite these two concepts by showing
how the attainment of the first depends on the formation of the second. Through
the imagination’s involvement in natural religion, moral sentiments, and sexuality, it
establishes a bridge between the two sides of human nature, sensuality and reason,
the body and the spirit. My analysis of the two primary texts, Emile and Agathon,
is preceded by a discussion of the relationship between their authors.

Chapter 2 provides a survey of critical and historical perspectives on Wieland’s
intellectual affinities with Rousseau. First, I offer a brief overview of the small body of
secondary literature concerning their relationship (2.2). Second, I examine Wieland’s
responses to Rousseau, both those he made in private (2.3) and those he made in
public (2.4). By analyzing Wieland’s personal engagement with Rousseau, I am able
to identify the overarching commonalities and disparities in their thought (2.4.1). I
show that despite Wieland’s marked reservations concerning Rousseau’s philosophical
methodology (2.4.2), their thoughts converge around the following five themes: the
interconnectedness of human vice and virtue (2.4.3), the role of the imagination in
moral development (2.4.4), the nature/culture divide (2.4.5), the definition of moral
beauty (2.4.6), and the inextricable links between morality and politics (2.4.7). In
addition to their shared thematic interests, I argue that Rousseau and Wieland also
demonstrate a similar commitment to perspectival thought (2.5).

Chapter 3 offers a reading of Emile as the making of a beautiful soul. The aim
of the chapter is to flesh out those aspects of Emile that provide a direct comparison
with Agathon (3.1). First, I outline the foundation of Emile’s education, that is, the
tutor’s attempts to align his educational programme with the education of nature
(3.2). Second, I describe the trajectory of Emile’s development from a physical entity
to an increasingly spiritual and moral being (3.3). Third, I elucidate the role of the
imagination in the development of his moral constitution (3.4). Rousseau maintains an ambivalence toward the imagination, viewing it both as the source of man’s alienation from nature as well as the remedy for his dividedness (3.4.1). I illustrate the nature of this ambivalence by analyzing three of the novel’s main themes: natural religion (3.4.2), compassion (3.4.3), and sentimental love (3.4.4). I argue that it is the formation of Emile’s imagination, as exemplified by his spiritual beliefs, his compassionate disposition, and his devotion to Sophie, that makes him a beautiful soul, i.e., that establishes points of tangency between his body and his spirit, his sensuality and his reason. To complete the chapter, I examine the parallels between Rousseau’s moral and political ideals, highlighting the importance of the imagination not just for the individual but for society at large (3.5).

Chapter 4 draws together the results of the previous chapters in a comparative analysis of *Emile* and *Agathon*. The aim of the chapter is to demonstrate that reading *Agathon* in light of *Emile* offers a new perspective on the role of the imagination in the protagonist’s moral development (4.1). However, before drawing attention to the similarities in the novels’ treatment of the imagination, it is important to highlight some key differences. Both texts contain fictional discussions of the role of the imagination in the development of moral beauty, but *Agathon* also contains a metafictional discussion of the role of the imagination in fiction. *Agathon* is a highly self-conscious novel, exploring not only the various functions of the protagonist’s imagination but also the narrator’s. The combination of the novel’s fictional and metafictional layers results in a dialectic of narrated imagination and the narrator’s imagination (4.2). After exposing the novel’s narratological approach to the theme of imagination and the various levels of irony that result from it, I turn my attention to the foundations and
trajectory of Agathon’s education. I argue that whereas Emile proceeds from a purely physical to a progressively spiritual existence, Agathon develops from a uniquely spiritual to an increasingly physical being (4.3-4.4). Furthermore, their opposing paths of development, which ultimately provide similar results, are driven by their changing relationships to the imagination (4.5). Like Rousseau, Wieland takes an ambivalent stance on the role of the imagination in religious thought, viewing it both as the cornerstone of rational belief and a potential catalyst for fanaticism (4.5.1). Rousseau and Wieland also concur in their establishment of generalized compassion and *amour-propre* as the twin pillars of their protagonists’ “passion for virtue” or “cosmopolitan enthusiasm” (4.5.2). In my discussion of sentimental love, I compare Rousseau’s and Wieland’s ideas on sexual sublimation, detailing how each author depicts the role of the imagination in the process of harnessing sexual energy to the service of moral ideals (4.5.3). Following the section on love, I pursue an excursus in which I argue that the solution to the mind-body problem advocated by Rousseau’s Savoyard Vicar and Wieland’s Archytas is not the same as the solution embodied by their protagonists (4.6). I end my comparative analysis of *Emile* and *Agathon* by drawing parallels between Rousseau’s and Wieland’s moral and political ideals (4.7). In *Emile* and *Agathon*, the moral is always already political. Thus, we must look to the imagination to understand not only how we develop as moral individuals, but how we interact as political creatures.
Chapter 2

Rousseau and Wieland: Critical and Historical Perspectives

2.1 Multiple Rousseaus

Wieland’s relationship to Rousseau has received relatively scant critical attention (Jørgensen et al. 213). With the exception of Wieland himself, who wrote quite extensively on the topic, few scholars have explored Wieland’s connection to the self-proclaimed “Citizen of Geneva.”\(^1\) The difficulty of assessing Wieland’s responses to Rousseau is that they are not consistent. One cause for their inconsistency is that

\(^1\)According to Sven-Aage Jørgensen et al., the most important contributions to the body of literature on the subject of Wieland and Rousseau include: Eduard Bodemann’s *Julie Bondeli und ihr Freundeskreis*, Timotheus Klein’s “Wieland und Rousseau,” and Claus Süßenberger’s *Rousseau im Urteil der deutschen Publizistik bis zum Ende der Französischen Revolution – Ein Beitrag zur Rezeptionsgeschichte* (213). To these, I add Wolfram Buddecke’s *C.M. Wielands Entwicklungs begriff und ‘Die Geschichte des Agathon,’* Andreas Mielke’s “Wieland contra Swift und Rousseau-und Wezel,” Walter Erhart’s *Entzweigung und Selbstaufklärung – Christoph Martin Wielands ‘Agathon-Projekt’* as well as his article “Was nützen schie lende Wahrheiten? Rousseau, Wieland, und die Hermeneutik des Fremden.” Jørgensen et al. also mentions the following works, but does not single them out as being of particular importance: Hans Jürgen Ketzer’s “Einige Bemerkungen zu Wielands Rousseau-Aneignung und deren Beurteilung durch die Stürmer und Dränger,” Jacques Mounier’s *La fortune des écrits de Jean-Jacques Rousseau dans la pays de langue allemande de 1782 à 1813*, Raymond Trousson’s “Jean-Jacques Rousseau et son œuvre dans la presse périodique allemande de 1750 à 1800,” and Frédéric Tubach “Perfectibilité. Der zweite Diskurs Rousseaus und die deutsche Aufklärung.”
Wieland did not respond to a single Rousseau but rather to multiple Rousseaus, including Rousseau the philosopher, Rousseau the man, and Rousseau the icon of counter-enlightenment thought.\(^2\) Wieland’s ideas and sentiments differ significantly in regard to these three phenomena that bear, with more or less accuracy, the name Rousseau. To complicate matters still further, Wieland’s estimations of the various Rousseaus change and develop over the course of his long intellectual life. The result of this complicated nexus, consisting of multiple objects of inquiry over multiple decades, is a wide range of contradictory remarks. As I will demonstrate, the Rousseau of Wieland’s personal correspondence differs significantly from the Rousseau of his *Beyträge zur Geheimen Geschichte des menschlichen Verstandes und Herzens* (1770), the collection of polemical responses he wrote to Rousseau’s Second Discourse while working as a professor of philosophy at the university in Erfurt. Indeed, Wieland’s position on Rousseau vacillates between competitive, critical, and acclamatory, but nevertheless reflects a sustained interest in Rousseau’s thought and person.

Of the scholars who have devoted thought to Wieland’s relationship to Rousseau, the works of Thimotheus Klein, Wolfram Buddecke, Andreas Mielke, and Walter Erhart stand out for their particular insightfulness. I briefly review this small body of scholarship before exploring what Wieland himself has to say on the subject. The central claim of this chapter is that Wieland’s relationship to Rousseau is best understood by isolating his criticism of Rousseau’s philosophical method from his connection to Rousseau’s thought as a whole. Wieland’s affinities with Rousseau run far deeper than he is typically willing to concede. In general, Wieland attacks the speculative

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\(^2\)Wokalek and Erhart also stress the multiplicity of Wieland’s Rousseau portraits. Wokalek claims that Wieland’s argumentation in the *Beyträge* mixes “Erkenntnisse der eigenen Lektüre mit Gemeinplätzen der deutschen Rousseau-Rezeption” (139). And Erhart suggests that Wieland formulates “ein ganzes Kompendium der seit dem Erscheinen der beiden *Discours* kursierenden Einwände gegen Rousseaus Kulturkritik” (“schielende Wahrheiten” 48).
method of Rousseau’s philosophy without paying sufficient tribute to the similarities between their moral and political ideals.

2.2 The Critical Reception of Wieland’s Relationship to Rousseau

Thimotheus Klein’s doctoral dissertation “Wieland and Rousseau” (1903/04) contains a comprehensive survey of Wieland’s responses to Rousseau. The crux of Klein’s argument is that Rousseau’s influence on Wieland is stronger than previously recognized, “daß die Beziehungen Wielands zu Rousseau mannigfaltigere gewesen sind, ja daß Rousseaus Einfluß stärker war, als bisher angenommen wurde” (“Wieland and Rousseau I” 426). Klein organizes Wieland’s responses to Rousseau into five main categories, including Wieland’s positions on: the hypothesis on natural man, the cult of nature, political theory, religious and ethical ideals, and the author’s public persona (“Wieland and Rousseau II” 172-74). He contends that Wieland’s first major work, *Agathon*, already contains the better part of his responses to Rousseau, thus undermining the centrality of the polemical *Beyträge* for defining the authors’ relationship (“Wieland and Rousseau I” 444). I agree with most of Klein’s conclusions. He claims, for example, that Wieland’s criticism of Rousseau often centres around questions of philosophical form or method without significantly addressing issues of content, that is, “ohne zum Kern von Rousseaus Verkündigung vorzudringen” (“Wieland and Rousseau I” 452). He also notes a philosophical kinship between

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4L. John Parker agrees that *Agathon* is the strongest demonstration of Rousseau’s influence on Wieland (152).
Rousseau’s Savoyard Vicar and Wieland’s Tarentine statesman Archytas, a point I develop in greater detail in chapter 4.

Where I strongly disagree with Klein is in his assessment of Wieland’s and Rousseau’s political differences, which he views as existing on opposite ends of the political spectrum. He writes: “Es ist kein Zweifel: in den politischen Grundsätzen stehen von vornherein Rousseau und Wieland am weitesten auseinander” (‘Wieland and Rousseau I’ 443). Klein describes Wieland as a strict monarchist, “[der] vom ewigen Rechte des väterlichen Despotismus, trotz seiner konstitutionellen Anwandlungen, ebenso felsenfest überzeugt [ist] wie Rousseau vom Gegenteil” (‘Wieland and Rousseau I’ 478). Neither of these assessments is accurate. Wieland does not support despotism, nor does Rousseau unequivocally favour democracy. Both authors assume a perspectival approach to political thought, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the various forms of government. Indeed, the political discussions from Agathon suggest that Wieland would second the following statement from Rousseau’s Social Contract (1762). Rousseau writes, “In all ages there has been much discussion about the best form of Government, without consideration of the fact that each of them is the best in certain cases, and the worst in others” (109). During the course of the twentieth century, scholars repositioned Wieland as a political thinker (Jørgensen et al. 201). I am fortunate enough to be able to use their work in reassessing the

\footnote{In a footnote, Parker adds: “Wieland steht hier [in Agathon] in vollem Gegensatz zum Contrat Social” (153). However, he offers no textual support for his assertion.}

\footnote{Jan Philipp Reentmsma explains how the publication history of Wieland’s work contributed to the misrepresentation of his political thought. For the most part, the nineteenth century editions, with which Klein would have been working, edited out most of Wieland’s political texts. Only in the second half of the twentieth century was this trend reversed. In 1988, a comprehensive edition of Wieland’s works was published, including three volumes (1,800 pages) of his political writings (“Wieland und die Politik” 95).}
relationship between Wieland’s and Rousseau’s political thought.\footnote{Sandra Pott refers to Wieland the political thinker as “den von Rousseau geprägten Wieland” (239). My analysis adds support to her assessment of their similarities without positing biographical influence.}

In the final analysis, Klein’s comprehensive study of Rousseau’s influence on Wieland provides ample material for further discussion. That said, the editor of *Rousseau in Deutschland* (1995), Herbert Jaumann, encourages studies on German Rousseauism to overcome questions of influence in favour of more general inquiries into intellectual affinities, “Untersuchung auf einer Ebene höherer Allgemeinheit” (14). Relatedly, Klein’s argument, though insightful, is limited by his desire to prove Rousseau’s influence on Wieland rather than to demonstrate the commonalities of their thought.\footnote{For example, Klein quotes Cholevius’s *Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung nach ihren antiken Elementen* (1856) as stating that Rousseau’s influence prompted Wieland to philosophize about “Staatsverhältnisse, Völkerglück und reine Menschlichkeit” (qtd. in Klein, “Wieland und Rousseau I” 426). Klein accepts Cholevius’s argument without question and without biographical support.}

A hundred years after its publication, Klein’s dissertation has yet to prove itself a seminal work. On the contrary, scholarship on Wieland’s relationship to Rousseau has taken a very different direction than the one Klein pursued. With few exceptions, existing scholarship can be grouped into one of two categories: first, general studies on German Rousseauism which include cursory discussions of Wieland’s *Beyträge* and journalistic work,\footnote{In this group, I cite the following works: Karl S. Guthke’s “Zur Frühgeschichte des Rousseauismus in Deutschland” (1958), Hans Jürgen Ketzer’s “Einige Bemerkungen zu Wieland’s Rousseau-Aneignung und deren Beurteilung durch die Stürmer und Dränger” (1985), Jacques Mounier’s *La fortune des écrits de Jean-Jacques Rousseau dans les pays de langue allemande de 1782 à 1813* (1980), Claus Stüssengerger’s *Rousseau im Urteil der deutschen Publizistik bis zum Ende der Französischen Revolution. Ein Beitrag zur Rezeptionsgeschichte* (1974), Raymond Trousson’s “Jean-Jacques Rousseau et son oeuvre dans la presse périodique allemande de 1750 à 1800” (1969), and Frédéric Tubach’s “Perfectibilité. Der zweite Diskurs Rousseaus und die deutsche Aufklärung” (1960).} and second, examinations of the relationship triangle between Wieland, Rousseau, and Julie von Bondeli.\footnote{To this group, I assign Eduard Bodemann’s *Julie Bondeli und ihr Freundeskreis* (1871) and J.J. Schädelin’s *Julie Bondeli, die Freundin Rousseaus und Wielands* (1938).} Because the works belonging to these
two categories deal primarily with Wieland’s explicit responses to Rousseau, they do little to further an understanding of the implicit connections between the two authors. There are, however, several studies that break the confines of these categories. It is to these exceptions that I now turn my attention.

For Wolfram Buddecke, Rousseau’s nature/culture dichotomy forms the basis of Wieland’s understanding of human development. In C.M. Wielands Entwicklungsbe-griff und die Geschichte des Agathon (1966), Buddecke devotes only a short section to Wieland’s reading of Rousseau. However, this section, entitled “Exposition der Problemlage,” explains Wieland’s interest in human development as arising out of his disagreement with Rousseau’s hypothesis on natural man (13-20). In the Beyträge, Wieland criticizes Rousseau’s desire to view nature and culture as two distinct entities (141). According to Buddecke, Wieland’s critique of the Second Discourse exposes a paradox inherent in Rousseau’s nature/culture dichotomy. Wieland questions Rousseau’s ability to portray human culture as distinct from human nature when indeed culture arose from nature (15). As Buddecke explains, Wieland sees Rousseau’s state of nature as nothing more than the childhood of humanity. Wieland does not think that leaving the simplicity of the state of nature is leaving nature as such. Thus, whereas Rousseau talks about man’s social development as the corrup-tion and degradation of his nature, Wieland refers to Agathon’s development as the ultimate fulfilment of his nature, as an “Emporsteigen,” “Vervollkommnen,” or “Fortschreiten” (Buddecke 16). That is not to say that Wieland views culture as a whole uncritically. On the contrary, Buddecke correctly notes the similarity of Wieland’s cultural criticism to Rousseau’s:

Wie kaum ein anderer Schriftsteller der Zeit zeigt er [Wieland] sich bemüht,
seinen Lesern die Augen für das Janusgesicht der Kultur, für die Gebrechen der auf ihre wirklichen oder eingebildeten Vorzüge so stolzen modernen Gesellschaft zu öffnen, ja er zögert nicht, angesichts der Zivilisationsmiserse seine Sympathien Entwicklungsstadien und Lebensformen zuzuwenden, die an das juste milieu Rousseaus erinnern. (138)

Buddecke argues that, despite Wieland’s cultural criticism, he does not follow the Rousseauists in their desire to recreate a sentimental or reflective nature (53). According to Buddecke, Wieland resembles Rousseau in aspiring to strike a more desirable balance between nature and culture; but, unlike Rousseau, he sees culture as playing a definitive role in this process: “eben dies [the balance of nature and culture] kann nur mit den Mitteln der Kultur, nicht im Verzicht auf sie geschehen” (53). Although Buddecke’s argument provides an adequate assessment of Wieland’s relationship to Rousseau’s First and Second Discourses, it does not reflect Wieland’s relationship to Emile.11

In Emile it becomes apparent that the differences that Buddecke claims characterize the authors’ proposed means of balancing nature and culture no longer maintain their validity. Indeed Rousseau, like Wieland, sees culture as playing a pivotal role in reinstating a desirable balance of nature and culture. In fact, his own cultural product, the text of Emile, is supposed to lead the way in this process. Furthermore, Emile does not contain a categorically natural education. As I demonstrate in chapter 3, culture plays an important part in Emile’s development toward moral beauty. In his adolescence, he receives lessons from Thucydidès’s historical texts as well as La Fontaine’s fables (Emile 237-42; 247-48). It is only during his childhood that Emile’s tutor discourages the engagement with books and other cultural products.

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11 The full titles of Rousseau’s discourses are Discourse on the Sciences and Arts (First Discourse) and Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of the Inequality (Second Discourse) (1750/54). When I refer to them collectively, I use the short-form the First and Second Discourses.
2.2. THE CRITICAL RECEPTION OF WIELAND’S RELATIONSHIP TO ROUSSEAU

Andreas Mielke’s article, “Wieland contra Swift und Rousseau – und Wezel” (1987) offers an interesting answer to the question of why Wieland devotes an entire volume, i.e., the *Beyträge*, to an attack on Rousseau’s Second Discourse. Mielke explains Wieland’s attacks on Rousseau as having less to do with the man or his thought and more to do with the misanthropic Rousseauism of the *Sturm und Drang*:

> Der Zeitpunkt [the publication of the *Beyträge* in 1770] kann ein Hinweis darauf sein, daß es ihm [Wieland] tatsächlich in erster Linie überhaupt nicht um Rousseaus Schriften selbst geht. Sein Angriff richtet sich eigentlich gegen die Nachahmer Rousseaus, gegen die wilden Rousseauisten. (29)

Rousseau’s cultural pessimism inspired the misanthropic individualism espoused by the “Genies und Möchtegern-Genies” of the *Sturm und Drang* (30). Mielke sees the *Beyträge* as attempting to stem that tide: “Wielands Anti-Rousseauismus ist programmatische Anti-Misanthropie” (30). Of particular importance to my argument is the way in which Mielke dismisses Wieland’s references to *Emile*. Mielke argues that Wieland had either not read *Emile* or not read it very carefully because he neglects to acknowledge its affinities with his own work: “da sich vieles darin [in *Emile*] mit seinen eigenen Anschauungen eher deckt als mit Anschauungen des frühen Rousseaus” (21).

Yet one need not question Wieland’s having read or understood *Emile* in order to note the similarities between the two authors’ thoughts. In fact, Mielke’s argument would be even stronger if he had demonstrated that Wieland had read and appreciated *Emile*. It would buttress the argument that the target of Wieland’s polemics was the pop-Rousseauism of the *Stürmer und Dränger*, not the sophisticated philosophy of his Genevan counterpart.¹² To strengthen Mielke’s argument, I therefore offer the following passage from Wieland’s *Briefwechsel* as proof that Wieland studied and

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¹²For more on the relationships between, Wieland, Rousseau, and the *Sturm und Drang*, see Ketzer.
2.2. THE CRITICAL RECEPTION OF WIELAND’S RELATIONSHIP TO ROUSSEAU

valued *Emile*, albeit with some reservations. The passage comes from a letter to Friedrich Justus Riedel dated 16 December 1768. In it, Wieland attempts to garner support for the publication of a friend’s pedagogical treatise, which was to serve as a response to Rousseau’s *Emile* and Formey’s “Anti-Emile”.


Mielke is correct in describing the motivation for Wieland’s anti-Rousseauism as external to Rousseau’s oeuvre. Wieland’s position on *Emile* is, at the very least, ambivalent. He lauds his friend’s text for offering a balanced response to Rousseau’s educational theory and for defending it against Formey’s “Anti-Emile.” Furthermore, he claims that he would have been proud to have written such a balanced account himself. However, as we will see in our discussion of the *Beyträge*, Wieland’s own response to Rousseau was anything but balanced.

Walter Erhart is, in my estimation, the scholar who has contributed the most to the body of literature on Wieland’s relationship to Rousseau. His article “Was nützen schielende Wahrheiten? Rousseau, Wieland und die Hermeneutik des Fremden” (1995) is one of two recently published studies to focus on Wieland’s *Beyträge*. Furthermore, his monograph *Entzweigung und Selbstaufklärung – Christoph Martin* ...

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13Formey, whose article on dreams from the *Encyclopédie* I quoted in my introduction, wrote two answers to Rousseau’s *Emile*, one entitled “Anti-Emile” (1763) and the other “Emile chretien” (1764). The former has been reprinted as recently as 2011 by Nabu Press.

14The second is Kristina Kuhn’s article “Das augenfällig Geheime – Zur vermittelten Unmittelbarkeit spätAufklärerischer Historiographie. Wielands *Beyträge zur geheimen Geschichte der Menschheit*.” As is clear from the title, Kuhn does not concentrate on the relationship of Wieland’s text to Rousseau’s philosophy and her article is therefore irrelevant to the present discussion.
2.2. THE CRITICAL RECEPTION OF WIELAND’S RELATIONSHIP TO ROUSSEAU

Wieland’s ‘Agathon-Projekt’ (1991) devotes an entire section to “Das Rousseausche Problem” (189-206). Because I engage with Erhart’s article throughout my own analysis of the Beyträge, I will limit myself here to a discussion of the relevant points from his monograph. Erhart argues that despite the focus of the Beyträge on the First and Second Discourses, Wieland did indeed register the ethical impulses from Rousseau’s later work, including Emile. In fact, Erhart regards all of Wieland’s novelistic endeavours as responding to Rousseau’s critique of culture: “seine eigenen Romanexperimente kreisen um den solcherart [the manner of Rousseau’s later works, AS] prekär gewordenen ‘Zustand des Subjekts,’ dem die Sicherheit der ‘natürlichen Existenz’ verwehrt ist” (Entzweiung 206). He emphasizes the similarities between Rousseau’s thought and Agathon in particular:

Rousseaus Kulturkritik ähnelt den Resultaten der Geschichte des Agathon durchaus: Selbstentzweiung und gesellschaftliche Korruption bringen das tugendhafte Potential des Menschen an den Punkt, wo eine Regeneration seiner ‘natürlichen Anlage’ in Frage steht. (190)

Similar to Buddecke, Erhart sees the largest discrepancy between Rousseau and Wieland in their differing conceptions of nature. Rousseau sees nature and culture as distinct entities, which can be isolated from one another through thought experiments. Wieland, on the other hand, regards nature and culture as one and the same: “Die Natur selbst ist es, welche durch die Kunst ihr Geschäft in uns fortsetzt” (Beyträge 144). Hence, whereas Rousseau blames culture for the evils of modern life, Wieland views the ethical issues of modernity as inescapable (Erhart, Entzweiung 191). This disagreement helps to explain certain structural differences between Emile and Agathon. Whereas Rousseau attempts to raise a child to be immune to social
vices, Wieland regards certain moral weaknesses as unavoidable. Instead of preventing the development of his protagonist’s vanity, Wieland demonstrates how Agathon becomes aware of his dangerously inflated ego and wilfully overcomes its influence. I explore these structural differences in greater detail in chapters 3 and 4 of the present work.

Before ending my secondary literature review, I would like to discuss one last aspect of Erhart’s argument. Erhart contends that Wieland’s attack on Rousseau is an extension of his larger critique on the imagination, the so-called “Schwärmerkritik” (Entzweiung 194). Erhart’s argument, which connects Wieland’s anti-Rousseauism and his critique of the imagination, offers perhaps the best answer to the question of why Rousseau becomes the target of Wieland’s polemics. Throughout the Beyträge, Wieland makes several derogatory remarks about Rousseau’s imagination and his reliance on it for the formation of his theories (236, 292). He expresses disapproval of Rousseau’s enthusiastic imagination or “schwärmerische[] Einbildungskraft” (SW 5:128).15 Wieland’s discomfort with the role of the imagination in Rousseau’s thought should be understood in the context of his own biography.

Wieland’s early works, especially those from his time as a poetic protégé to Johann Jacob Bodmer in Zurich, bear witness to a religious or Platonic zealousness (Zaremba 63-80). Lessing, although impressed with Wieland’s poetic talents, finds his work lacking in realism. Referring to the drama Lady Johanna Gray (1758), he describes Wieland’s characters as unrealistically perfect: “Sie sind alle in einer Form gegossen; in der idealischen Form der Vollkommenheit, die der Dichter mit aus den ätherischen Gegenden gebracht hat” (“Briefe” 645). Lessing predicts a successful literary career

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15In the Oßmannstedter edition, this line reads “enthusiastisch[e] Einbildungskraft” (Beyträge 222). I cite the Hamburg edition above, because the adjective “schwärmerisch” more clearly emphasizes the link to Wieland’s biography.
for Wieland but only if he can manage to see the world as it is, rather than as his imagination would have it be. Wieland, aided by Shaftesburian and materialistic philosophy, eventually replaces the Schwärmerei of his youthful beginnings with the quest for a sensual-spiritual harmony of his mature work (Sengle, Wieland 48). After he has undergone his transformation from a Platonic enthusiast to an earthbound poet, Wieland speaks disparagingly of his formerly unchecked fancy. In a preface he adds to a later edition of “Gesicht des Mirza” (1755), Wieland distances himself from his early works, referring to their author as:

eine[n] dichterischen Jüngling, der die Welt durch das verfälschende Glas der Einbildungskraft ansieht, die Aufwallungen seines Herzens für Empfindungen, seine Empfindungen für Grundsätze, und jede Vorstellung, jede Vermuthung, die mit ihnen übereinstimmt, für Wahrheit hält. (297)\textsuperscript{16}

In 1770, when Wieland publishes the Beyträge, he has left his youthful enthusiasm behind him and thus feels justified in criticizing Rousseau for what he deems is a comparable fault. He derides Rousseau’s fanciful theories as the product of a difficult social milieu, wedged between the extravagance of the aristocracy and the abject poverty of the masses, and, more importantly, an overactive imagination: “einer schwärmischen Einbildungskraft, einem warmen Herzen und etwas galliger Reitzbarkeit” (SW 5:127-28). Erhart, for his part, does not posit a direct connection between Wieland’s criticism of Rousseau’s imaginative theories and the Biberach poet’s own biography. However, he does note the affinities between Wieland’s critique of the imagination in the Beyträge and Agathon’s Schwärmerei, which amounts to more or less the same thing. Wieland himself emphasizes the biographical component

\textsuperscript{16}I have quoted the above passage from an earlier edition of Wieland’s Gesammelte Schriften because the preface to “Gesicht des Mirza” was not included in the 1984 Hamburg edition, from which I generally quote.
of Agathon’s character: “Ich schildre darinn mich selbst, wie ich in den Umständen Agathons gewesen zu seyn mir einbilde, und mache ihn am Ende so glücklich als ich zu seyn wünschte” (Briefwechsel 3:61). Wieland had first-hand experience with the pitfalls of an overly active imagination. In essence, they define the first phase of his poetic career. Hence, Wieland’s attack on Rousseau’s imagination should be understood in light of his own poetic development. Wieland criticizes Rousseau for something about which he himself had received criticism.\footnote{Notably, recent scholarship on the Enlightenment’s portrayal of the Schwärmer continues to juxtapose Wieland’s literary depiction of Agathon and Rousseau’s various autobiographical descriptions, thus adding support to the claim that Wieland was merely rebelling against elements of his former self (Engel 469-95).}

What Wieland does not realize, or at least does not concede, is that Rousseau, similar to himself, also uses his eccentric imagination to advocate control over the imagination. Indeed, in their mature works, Emile and Agathon, both authors seek to negotiate the ambivalent aspects of the human imagination, a task for which their biographies have furnished them particular insight.

In sum, Klein and Buddecke both draw attention to the connections between Wieland’s Agathon and Rousseau’s thought as a whole. Mielke and Erhart go one step further, highlighting the similarities between Agathon and Emile in specific. The scholarly consensus is that Wieland and Rousseau differ in their assessment of whether nature and culture can be understood as separate entities, but agree that culture itself is an ambivalent concept. My dissertation furthers this discussion by comparing Rousseau’s and Wieland’s efforts to minimize the adverse effects of culture on the individual and, by extension, on society. Both authors view the imagination as contributing simultaneously to the moral improvement and deterioration of humankind. By harnessing the imagination, they hope to enhance its benefits and curb
2.3. THE ROUSSEAU OF WIELAND’S PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE 51

its negative repercussions.

Klein, Buddecke, Mielke, and Erhart are not the only scholars to have devoted thought to Wieland’s relationship to Rousseau. Wieland himself dedicated over five hundred pages to the subject, including passages from his personal correspondence, a volume of essays entitled *Beyträge zur Geheimen Geschichte des menschlichen Verstandes und Herzens*, and a set of journal articles defending Rousseau’s reputation and moral integrity entitled “Briefe an einen Freund: Ueber eine Anekdoten von J.J. Rousseaus geheimer Geschichte seines Lebens” (1780). It is important to see how Wieland positions himself with reference to Rousseau before conducting a comparative analysis of their works. Wieland offers a historical perspective that will help us to understand how he engaged with Rousseau’s work. Which of Rousseau’s ideas did he find interesting? Where did he agree or disagree with Rousseau’s perspective? The following review of Wieland’s historical responses to Rousseau sets the stage for my comparative reading of *Emile* and *Agathon* by outlining where Wieland himself saw the similarities and disparities in their thought.

2.3 Private Responses: the Rousseau of Wieland’s Personal Correspondence

In his private correspondence from the late 1750s and early 1760s, Wieland repeatedly references Rousseau as a standard of excellence and thus as his foremost intellectual competition.\(^{18}\) In a letter to Johann Georg Zimmermann dated July 4, 18

\[^{18}\text{In addition to the two examples I discuss here, see Wieland’s letter to Sophie von La Roche from February 2 1763, in which he expresses dissatisfaction that Sophie believes him “incapable de bien imiter un Rousseau” (“incapable of imitating a [man like] Rousseau well”) (*Briefwechsel* 3:144). Translations are my own unless otherwise stated.}\]
2.3. THE ROUSSEAU OF WIELAND’S PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE

1759, Wieland voices concern that his extensive teaching duties with the Sinner family in Bern adversely affect his ability to compete with intellectuals of Rousseau’s stature:

> Wenn das Amt die Büblein Sinner alle Tage vier Stunden in den Elementen der Grammatik zu unterweisen lange fortdaurte, so würde der Geist der den Cyrus denken und mit Shaftesbury und Diderot und Rousseau wetteifern soll, ganzlich verlöschen oder wenigstens zum Pygmeen werden. (Briefwechsel 1:481)

As this passage indicates, Wieland aspires to distinguish himself among the great minds of his century. His ambition to compete with Rousseau in particular extends into several fields, including that of educational theory.

In a letter to Sophie von La Roche from October 17th 1763, Wieland mentions plans for a new pedagogical treatise he hopes will rival Rousseau’s *Emile*. Wieland’s lover Maria Christina Afra Hogel is pregnant at the time. He describes their shared preparations for the child’s education with an explicit reference to Rousseau’s revolutionary pedagogical programme: “Elle [Hogel] s’est bien proposée de lire beaucoup qui la puisse éclairer sur l’éducation (sic) et je composerai pour elle un Livre qui s’appellera Theano et sera plus à portée de tout le monde et plus praticable qu’Emile” (Briefwechsel 3:192).\(^{19}\) Wieland never wrote a work entitled Theano.\(^{20}\) However, I contend that *Agathon* serves a function similar to the one he had envisioned for the text of that name. *Agathon* contains many of Wieland’s thoughts on education, which serve to demonstrate his intellectual affinities with as well as his divergences

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\(^{19}\) “[Hogel] has offered to read a lot which will enlighten her on the subject of education, and I will write a book for her called Theano, which will be more accessible to everyone and more practical than Emile” (Briefwechsel 3:192).

\(^{20}\) Wieland’s suggested title “Theano” refers to the wife of Pythagoras and the ostensible author of seven ancient Greek letters on the subject of education (Briefwechsel 6:327).
from Rousseau’s *Emile*. Michael Bell takes this argument one step further, calling *Agathon* a “*de facto* riposte to Rousseau’s pedagogical optimism” (*Open Secrets* 66).

Despite Wieland’s feelings of rivalry, he is nevertheless kindly disposed toward “dem Titan Jean Jacques” (*Briefwechsel* 16:52).21 His correspondence from the early 1760s suggests a genuine concern for Rousseau, who had been exiled from France and Geneva following the publication of *Emile*.22 Julie von Bondeli, Wieland’s then fiancée, sends him regular updates concerning Rousseau’s whereabouts and lauds his willingness to offer Rousseau refuge in Biberach. Bondeli writes, “Ihr Eifer, daß Sie ihm einen Zufluchtsort haben anbieten wollen, gefällt mir sehr; Sie würden sich für einander geschickt haben” (3:132). I cannot speak to Bondeli’s suggestion that Wieland and Rousseau would have been well suited for each other as men.23 But what I can say is that their ideas demonstrate far more compatibility than Wieland would publicly concede.

There is one of Rousseau’s texts for which Wieland repeatedly expresses private as well as public admiration, the epistolary novel *Julie, or the New Eloise*. In a letter to Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi dated 2 December 1771, Wieland declares his enthusiasm both for the text and for its author:

Bei Gelegenheit des 54sten Briefes der neuen Heloise, dessen Sie erwähnen,

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21Wieland commonly refers to Rousseau as a friend, “l’Ami Rousseau. See, for example, his letters to La Roche from February 2, 1763 and November 8, 1764 as well as her letter to him on October 10, 1762.

22Unfortunately, none of Wieland’s letters to Bondeli from the year 1762 remain intact. Three have been lost altogether and two are badly fragmented. We must therefore rely on her responses in order to deduce Wieland’s reaction to Rousseau’s exile. Judging from her lengthy account of Rousseau’s flight from Montmorency, it was a topic she believed would interest him (*Briefwechsel* 3:143).

23If one considers what happened to David Hume when he offered Rousseau safe haven in England, it is probably better that Wieland did not succeed in his plans to harbour the fugitive. For a book-length study of the falling out between Rousseau and Hume, see *Rousseau’s Dog: Two Great Thinkers at War in the Age of Enlightenment* by David Edmonds and John Eidinow.

Wieland also expresses appreciation for 54th letter of Julie in the first version of Agathon, published approximately five years prior to this particular letter to Jacobi.

In the much-admired literary epistle, the novel’s hero, Saint Preux, gives an extended description of his excitement upon entering his Julie’s boudoir:

I arrive full of emotion that grows as I enter this haven. Julie! [...] How is this secret room so charming? Everything in it flatters and feeds the ardor that devours me. Oh Julie! If it full of you [...] my charming Julie! I see you, I feel you everywhere, *I breath you with the air you have breathed; you permeate my whole substance.* (Julie 120, my emphasis)

According to the praise of Agathon’s narrator, Saint Preux’s letter contains the first-ever poetic description to capture the charms of sentimental love, the commingling of spiritual and sensual longing:

So werden doch nicht wenige mit uns einstimmig sein [...] dass [die Wollust] allein von der Empfindung des Herzens jenen wunderbaren Reiz erhälte, welcher immer für unaussprechlich gehalten worden ist, bis Rousseau, der Stoiker, sich herabgelassen, sie in dem fünf und vierzigsten der Briefe der neuen Heloise in einer Vollkommenheit zu schildern [...] (Agathon
It is noteworthy that Wieland singles out this particular passage for praise on two separate occasions. His attachment to the letter reenforces my argument that Wieland’s strongest affinity to Rousseau consists in their mutual desire to bridge the gap between the spirit and the body through the workings of the imagination.

Indeed, Saint Preux’s descriptions of his imaginative ecstasies constitute some of Rousseau’s most poetic attempts to overcome the mind-body dualism. As Saint Preux waits for Julie to enter the room, his imagination conjures her presence, i.e., her physical as well as her spiritual self. The poetic image of Saint Preux “breathing Julie” is meant to symbolize his ability to transcend the mind-body dualism through the use of his imagination. Rousseau capitalizes on the symbolic potential of air and breath for representing the intersection of the physical and spiritual worlds. Air, he explains, is particularly suitable as a physical counterpart to a metaphysical spirits because it, like spirits, is both indivisible and omnipresent (Emile 256).

Moreover,

Wieland means to refer to Julie’s 54th letter and not the 45th which contains a factual description of Lord Bomston, not a enthusiastic description of love. The same passage can also be found, slightly edited and abbreviated, in the third edition of Agathon (SW 1:268). Klaus Manger, in the end notes of historical-critical edition of Agathon, suggests that Wieland’s comment actually refers to the 55th letter of Julie (Agathon 1011). For my argument, it makes no difference whether Wieland is referring to the 54th or the 55th letter because both contain the same image of Saint Preux “breathing Julie.” Note the following passage from the 55th letter: “I believe that with your sweet breath you breathed into me a new soul” (Julie 124). However, two circumstances suggest that Wieland is indeed praising the 54th letter. 1) Wieland praises the 54th in his letter to Jacobi. 2) The difference between the numbers 54 and 45 would constitute a simple mistake of inversion. In any case, both letters have approximately the same topic, the main difference being that one is written before the lovers consummate their affair and the other directly after.

In Emile, however, he highlights the human inadequacies which promote the erroneous symbolic pairing of air and spirits. Specifically he laments the innate human desire to assign a physical counterpart to metaphysical constructs. The etymology of the term “spirit” (esprit) bears witness to the natural, though flawed, association: “I admit that we are taught to say that God is everywhere, but we also believe that air is everywhere, at least in our atmosphere. And in its origin the word spirit itself signifies only breath and wind” (Emile 256). Hence, although Rousseau is philosophically opposed to the conception of air as something both physical and ethereal, he exploits the duality in his literary masterpiece Julie.
Rousseau’s symbolic identification of breath and spirit aligns with the natural religion he promotes in *Emile*, a religion in which the sensual is the spiritual and the spiritual is the sensual. As Saint Preux’s attachment to his lover’s breath suggests, the sensual and spiritual are one and the same.

Wieland recreates the paradoxical image of breath as the soul’s physicality in a corresponding scene in *Agathon*. Just as Saint Preux *breathes in Julie* moments before their first sexual encounter, so Agathon longs to *breathe himself out* at Danae’s feet moments before he succumbs to her seduction (*SW* 1:250). Knowing that Wieland praised the 54th letter of *Julie* as capturing the quintessence of sentimental love, it would be difficult to argue that his repetition of the air-qua-soul image is coincidental. Not only did he value Rousseau’s description of Saint Preux’s imaginative ecstasies, he drew direct comparisons between Rousseau’s sentimental lovers and his own. He describes Saint Preux and Agathon as those most qualified to judge the relative merits of physical and spiritual love:

Ohne Zweifel sind es Liebhaber wie Saint Preux and Agathon, welchen es zukommt über die berührte Streitfrage einen entscheidenden Ausspruch zu thun; sie, welche durch die Feinheit und Lebhaftigkeit ihres Gefühls eben so geschickt gemacht werden von den körperlichen, als durch die Zärtlichkeit ihres Herzens und durch ihren innern Sinn für das sittliche Schöne, von den moralischen Vergnügen der Liebe zu urtheilen. (*SW* 1:268)

Wieland viewed himself as the intended addressee of *Julie*, and of Saint Preux’s love letters in particular. In the above-cited letter to Jacobi, he claims that Rousseau wrote the divine book, “göttliches Buch,” for them and their kindred spirits. Based on his commentary on *Julie*, both from his private correspondence and from *Agathon*,

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26 The protagonist threatens, “in die Flut herab zu stürzen, zu ihr hinüber zu schwimmen, und seine in Entzücken und Liebe zerschmolzene Seele zu ihren Füssen auszuhauchen” (*SW* 1:250).
it is clear that he valued the novel above all for its portrayal of a sensual-spiritual love. Indeed Wieland’s reception of Julie helped him to accomplish for German literature, what Rousseau had accomplished for the French. According to Fritz Martini, Wieland’s Agathon paved the way for the German novel’s engagement with sentimental love:

Er ließ, mit raffinierten Überschichtungen im Vokabular, das Seelenhafte in das Sinnliche und das Sinnliche in das Seelenhafte übergehen, so daß beide Bereiche, welche die Tugendgesinnung der Moralisten streng sonderte, nicht mehr voneinander unterscheidbar wurden. (937)

Wieland modelled his sensual-spiritual lovers, Agathon and Danae, after Rousseau’s Saint Preux and Julie. Yet, as we will see in our discussion of the Beyträige, Wieland’s lengthiest discussion of Rousseau, the self-proclaimed Rousseau enthusiast has as much satire as praise for his contemporary’s theories of love.

Similar to his private correspondence, Wieland’s public responses to Rousseau also reveal a sense of rivalry, but they nevertheless strike a very different tone. In his letters to his friends, Zimmermann, La Roche, Bondeli, and Jacobi, Wieland portrays himself as a young, ambitious philosopher, desirous that his name be classed with the likes of Rousseau. Yet in his public responses, written ten to twenty years later, Wieland replaces his youthful insecurity with an air of philosophical authority. His appraisals of Rousseau’s work vary in nature from deeply polemical to hyperbolically reverential; he either slanders Rousseau’s theories as utterly ridiculous, “am Ende weiter nichts als lächerlich” (Beyträige 239), or hails their author as a paradigm of wisdom and virtue, “de[n] weisesten und tugendhaftesten Mann[ ] unsrer Zeit” (SW 5:173). Yet, regardless of whether Wieland claims to approve or disapprove of Rousseau’s theories, he continually uses them as a springboard for his own ideas.
2.4. WIELAND’S PUBLIC RESPONSES TO ROUSSEAU

2.4 Wieland’s Public Responses to Rousseau

2.4.1 Wieland’s Beyträge: Superficial Polemics or Insightful Refutation?

In a collection of essays and fictional texts entitled *Beyträge zur Geheimen Geschichte des menschlichen Verstandes und Herzens,* Wieland responds polemically to the First and Second Discourses as a means of distancing himself from Rousseau and developing his own stance on the history of human understanding (Schaefer, *Wieland* 114). It has been suggested that the *Beyträge* represent an outdated and superficial engagement with Rousseauian philosophy (Erhart, *Entzweiung* 192). Indeed Wieland publishes the collection fifteen years after the *Discourse on Inequality* (1755), the text to which he primarily responds. What is more, he repeatedly takes recourse to Voltaire’s hackneyed and superficial criticism that Rousseau desires men

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28Erhart cites the following three examples: Richard Fester (38-40), Thimotheus Klein (“Wieland und Rousseau I” 460-62), and Albert Fuchs (388) (Erhart, *Entzweiung* 192). I add the article by Frederic Tubach (146) as well as the monographs by Klaus Schaefer (*Wieland* 115) and Claus Süßenberger (245). Erhart himself however takes the *Beyträger* more seriously.
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to return to the woods and live with the orangutans (Beyträged 220, 223, 240). As both Friedrich Sengle and John A. McCarthy point out, Wieland conveniently glosses over Rousseau’s more nuanced stance on the question of man’s sociability from Emile, preferring to polemicize against the polemics of the Discourses (Wieland 230 and Wieland 92, respectively). Thus, there is some truth to the accusation that the Beyträge simplify and unjustly dismiss Rousseau’s thought. However, the Beyträge also touch on several themes which would come to define Rousseau scholarship in the twentieth-century. Hence, notwithstanding the occasional superficiality of Wieland’s polemics, the Beyträge also demonstrate a close and insightful reading of Rousseau.

That Wieland’s profound understanding of his contemporary is not always readily apparent stems from the fact that demonstrating his grasp on Rousseau was never Wieland’s intention. The aim of the Beyträge is to address what Wieland terms the “Rousseauische Problem,” the problematic speculations about the “state of nature” which form the foundation of Rousseau’s philosophy (SW 5:184). Wieland’s goal is

29In a letter to Rousseau from August 30th, 1755, Voltaire writes: “On n’a jamais tant employé d’esprit a vouloir nous rendre Bêtes. Il prend envie de marcher a quatre pattes, quand on lit votre ouvrage” (Correspondance complète 157). In the German-language context, Voltaire’s sentiments have already been echoed by Albrecht von Haller (Trousson 298), Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (“Reiche des Witzes” 64-79), Moses Mendelssohn (“Sendschreiben” 99) and others before Wieland publishes the Beyträge in 1770. For an in depth analysis of Rousseau’s reception in eighteenth-century Germany, see Süßenberger and Trousson.

30Rousseau repeals this assessment in Emile and the “Moral Letters”: “But if, as one cannot doubt, man is a sociable animal by his nature, or at least made to become so, he can be so only by means of other innate feelings relative to his species” (On Philosophy). However, Wieland continues to attack his original position (Parker 151).

31Wieland touches on the following three topics: 1) the utopian/Platonic nature of Rousseau’s thought, which Judith Shklar explores in Men and Citizens: A Study of Rousseau’s Social Theory (1969) 2) Rousseau’s quest for transparent communication, which forms the basis of Jean Starobinski’s seminal work Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction (1971) 3) Rousseau’s theories of love and imagination, to Allan Bloom pays tribute in the introduction to his Emile translation (1979) and his monograph Love and Friendship (1993). Furthermore, Wieland also anticipates Kant’s famous reading of Rousseau as a theorist of moral beauty, as fundamentally concerned with the possibility of reconciling man’s moral duties and his natural inclinations.
to criticize Rousseau’s method of philosophical inquiry, not to analyze the finer points of his theories.\textsuperscript{32} When attacking Rousseau’s hypothesis on natural man, Wieland often neglects to acknowledge that he embraces other aspects of Rousseau’s thought. He agrees, for example, with Rousseau’s diagnosis of the contradictions that define the psychological constitution of civilized man. He describes the title protagonist of his novel \textit{Agathon} as struggling with the same tensions as Rousseau’s Emile, i.e., with the conflict between human nature and social existence.

It is not my intention to appraise all of the various ways in which the \textit{Beyträge} respond to Rousseau’s philosophy. That would constitute a different study entirely. Instead, I use the \textit{Beyträge} to survey the set of topics which explicitly link Wieland to Rousseau and, ultimately, \textit{Agathon} to \textit{Emile}. As Erhart argues, the \textit{Beyträge} constitute variations on the subject matter of \textit{Agathon} as well as responses to Rousseau’s Discourses (\textit{Entzweiung} 191). Relatedly, I argue that Wieland develops responses to Rousseau in the \textit{Beyträge}, which may be used to inform a comparative reading of \textit{Emile} and \textit{Agathon}. Wieland himself saw the \textit{Beyträge} as important to an understanding of his work as a whole, as “de[n] Kern oder de[n] Zweck oder de[n] Schlüssel von – oder zu allen [s]einen Werken” (\textit{SW} 5:174).\textsuperscript{33} Viewing \textit{Agathon} through the lens of the \textit{Beyträge} and, by extension, through Wieland’s relationship to Rousseau is thus a methodology suggested and sanctioned by the author himself.

In addition to developing a basis of comparison for \textit{Agathon} and \textit{Emile}, there is

\textsuperscript{32} Sengle argues that Wieland not only dislikes Rousseau’s specific method of philosophical argumentation but pure philosophy in general: “Der Angriff auf Rousseau ist mehr Vorwand als Ziel, ein Mittel, um ins Gespräch zu kommen und um ein Gefühl für das Unzulängliche aller philosophischen Systeme auszudrücken” (\textit{Wieland} 230). See also Erhart’s “schielende Wahrheiten” (70-77), his \textit{Entzweiung und Selbstaufklärung} (191) as well as Schaefer’s \textit{Christoph Martin Wieland} (114).

\textsuperscript{33}Although I generally quote this particular essay using the Oßmannstedter edition, I have taken this particular quotation from the Hamburg edition, because Wieland revised the essay’s conclusion, including the statement in question, for the later edition.
one other important reason for my examination of the *Beyträge*. The main goal of my dissertation is to expose intellectual affinities between Rousseau and Wieland. However, in the *Beyträge*, Wieland pursues a seemingly contradictory goal; he attempts to distance himself from Rousseau’s understanding of natural man and man’s nature as such. In effect, he deems the two terms synonymous. He ridicules Rousseau’s attempts to discover “den natürlichen Menschen, oder, welches auf das nehmliche hinaus zu laufen scheint, die menschliche Natur” (*SW* 5:200). In order to argue for the commonality of Rousseau’s and Wieland’s moral and political ideals, it is thus necessary to respond to, and in some ways refute, Wieland’s own assessment of his relationship to Rousseau. My reading of the *Beyträge* demonstrates that the target of Wieland’s attack on Rousseau is more a question of philosophical methodology and less a question of thematic content, that is, more an attack on Rousseau’s speculative approach to understanding human nature and less an attack on the ideas he derives from it.

In the *Beyträge*, Wieland satirizes Rousseau’s hypothesis on natural man. But the hypothesis on natural man forms the centre of Rousseau’s philosophy. It is from this hypothesis, his speculations about the natural goodness of man, that Rousseau develops many of his ideas about the evils of modern life. In addition to questioning the hypothesis itself, Wieland explores several of the ideas that Rousseau develops based upon it. However, his criticism of these subsequent ideas is almost always directed at their philosophical underpinnings (i.e., Rousseau’s speculations about natural man) and rarely at the ideas themselves. He discusses, among others, the following five topics: the interconnectedness of human vice and virtue, the role of the imagination in human development, the nature/culture dichotomy, the ideal of moral beauty, and,
last but not least, the relationship between politics and morality. In examining these topics, Wieland seeks to situate his own ideas vis-à-vis Rousseau (the philosopher, the man, and the icon). Yet the distance between the two thinkers is not always as great as the polemical nature of the text would suggest. In some cases, Wieland agrees with Rousseau’s position, but wishes to demonstrate that one need not endorse the hypothesis on natural man in order to maintain that position. In others, he emphasizes differences between himself and Rousseau that do not withstand closer scrutiny.

In the _Beyträge_ we see evidence of Wieland’s multi-front offensive; he directs some of his comments toward Rousseau the philosopher and others toward Rousseau the icon of anti-Enlightenment thought. Where he engages directly with Rousseau’s _oeuvre_, he is insightful and anticipates entire strains of twentieth-century scholarship. But where he responds to Rousseau the icon, he espouses criticism, the basis of which cannot be supported by an honest engagement with Rousseau’s work.

### 2.4.2 Addressing the Hypothesis on Natural Man

In the _Beyträge_ Wieland directs most of his criticism at Rousseau’s speculative method of analysis. Many of Rousseau’s theories are built on thought experiments, particularly one detailing the characteristics of man in the state of nature. Essentially Rousseau argues that natural man was pre-social, self-sufficient, and therefore peaceful. Based on this hypothesis, he concludes that man’s current state of moral depravity is a product of culture rather than nature; it is man’s dependence upon others that engenders his pride, hatred, hypocrisy, and violence (_Discourses_ 179). If he had maintained his self-sufficiency, he would have no cause for warring or competing
with other men. According to Wieland, Rousseau’s conclusions are convincing, but only if one affirms his hypothesis on natural man, which Wieland adamantly refuses to do:

Denn wer in der Welt wird ihm [Rousseau] die Folgen streitig machen, die er aus seiner Hypothese zieht? - Die Hypothese selbst ist es, was wir ihm gerade zu weglügen. Nichts richtigers, das wilde, ungesellige, dumme, eichelnfressende Thier, das er seinen Menschen nennt, würde in Ewigkeit keine Sprache erfunden haben, wie die Sprache Homers und Platons ist. (Beyträge 229)

Wieland advocates an empirical rather than speculative approach to investigating human nature. For him, observation is superior to speculation for drawing conclusions about the history of human understanding. Wieland insinuates that Rousseau’s reliance on hypotheses and speculation stems from sheer intellectual laziness. In the following quotation, he hails the eighteenth-century paradigm shift from speculative to empirical science but it is clear from context that he is simultaneously criticizing Rousseau:

Wie lange behalf man sich nicht mit willkürlichen Begriffen und kindischen Hypothesen? – weil es bequemer war, schimärische Welten in seinem Cabinette nach selbsterfundenen Gesetzen zu bauen, als mühsame und langwierige Betrachtungen anzustellen, um zu erfahren nach welchen Gesetzen die wirkliche Welt gebaut sey. (Beyträge 258)\(^\text{34}\)

Wieland follows Henry Fielding in his insistence that men learn about human nature

\(^{34}\)In refusing to accept the validity of hypotheses as a method of philosophical inquiry, Wieland aligns himself with Isaac Newton’s famous phrase *hypotheses non fingo* from *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (1687). Newton explains his unwillingness to make hypotheses thus: “I do not feign hypotheses. For whatever is not deduced from the phenomena must be called a hypothesis; and hypotheses, whether metaphysical or physical, or based on occult qualities, or mechanical, have no place in experimental philosophy. In this philosophy particular propositions are inferred from the phenomena, and afterwards rendered general by induction” (943).
by means of observation, not pure erudition. Although one cannot rightly accuse Rousseau of having failed to observe mankind, Wieland does establish a more direct link between his observations and his conclusions insofar as they do not rely on speculations about man in the state of nature. Wieland insists on examining man not as he could be (or could have been) but as he truly is.

The methodological differences between Rousseau and Wieland are inadvertently summarized by Kant. Kant, who numbers *Emile* among his favourite books, recognizes that despite their differing methodologies, he and Rousseau have much in common (Cassirer, “Das Problem” 36). According to Kant, Rousseau correctly identifies the most fundamental problems of human society, but uses an inappropriate method, i.e., speculation, for doing so (Cassirer, “Kant und Rousseau” 23-27). In a series of notes and fragments, which were not originally intended for publication, Kant juxtaposes his own method of inquiry with Rousseau’s: “Rousseau. Verfährt synthetisch und fängt vom natürlichen Menschen an | ich verfahre analytisch und fange vom gesitteten an” (“Gefühl des Schönen” 16). One can argue that Kant’s comparison also bears relevance to Wieland’s relationship to Rousseau: the two thinkers have different starting points (civilized man and natural man respectively) and different methods of analysis (empirical and speculative), but their conclusions about human nature remain strikingly similar, especially with regards to *Agathon* and *Emile*. However, the *Beyträge* do not do justice to their commonality of thought because Wieland attacks Rousseau’s form of argumentation without acknowledging the similarity of their conclusions.

\[^{35}\text{In } Tom Jones (1749), \text{Fielding writes: “However exquisitely human nature may have been described by writers, the true practical system can be learnt only in the world” (425).}\]
2.4.3 The Interconnectedness of Human Vice and Virtue: Wieland’s “Koxkox und Kikequetzal”

For Wieland, Rousseau’s hypothesis on natural man is not only inappropriately speculative, it is also inappropriately utopian. In other words, Wieland rejects not only Rousseau’s philosophical method, but also his idealized portrait of humankind. In the First and Second Discourses, Rousseau seeks, by means of a thought experiment, to strip man of all the weaknesses he believes are socially constructed. What he finds is a natural man “incapable of pride, hatred, falsehood, and vice” (Masters, “Introduction” 20). Wieland upbraids Rousseau’s penchant for idealizing human nature. He describes one of the main goals of the *Beyträge* as being to refute those who willingly misrepresent man’s nature: “uns der Menschheit gegen alle diejenigen anzunehmen, welche ihre wahre Züge verunstalten und mißzeichnen, es sey nun, daß sie den Menschen zu sehr erniedrigen, oder zu sehr erhöhen” (*Beyträge* 242). What Wieland does not mention is that Rousseau concedes the utopian quality of his theory as well as the shortcomings of his methodology (Bäppler 108). Rousseau describes the state of nature as “a state which no longer exists, which perhaps never existed, which probably will never will exist, and about which it is nevertheless necessary to have precise notions in order to judge our present state correctly” (*Discourses* 93). He also recognizes the deficiencies in his methodology, but asks the reader to overlook them and to concentrate instead on the validity of his conclusions: “Even though my entire method were chimerical and false, my observations could still be of profit” (*Emile* 34). Rousseau conceives of the state of nature not as an end in itself, but as a theoretical point of departure from which to measure mankind’s current state of moral corruption. Rousseau, like Wieland, argues against using flawlessly
virtuous individuals as the role models for moral instruction. In the *Confessions*, for example, he reveals incriminating details about his own moral transgressions because he believes that humans learn more from fallibility than from perfection: “perfect beings are not to be found in nature and the lessons they offer are too remote from us” (425). Wieland oversimplifies Rousseau’s argument by attacking Rousseau’s self-consciously utopian vision, without acknowledging that, as concerns the state of man in contemporary society, the two men actually concur. They both believe that men are inherently flawed and that portraying characters of angelic morality, such as Samuel Richardson’s Clarissa, does little to promote the moral improvement of humanity.

In an effort to further his attack against Rousseau’s philosophical method and idealizations, Wieland constructs a fictional parody of Rousseau’s natural man entitled “Koxkox und Kikequetzal. Eine mexikanische Geschichte. Ein Beytrag zur Naturgeschichte des sittlichen Menschen.” The story of “Koxkox und Kikequetzal” begins with the description of a stray comet crashing into Earth and producing a catastrophic flood. The male protagonist, Koxkox, survives the flood but believes

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36 As is commonly the case with Rousseau, his arguments appear paradoxical: his unwillingness to depict “perfect beings” as a means of moral instruction seems to contradict his own use of the hypothesis on natural man as a foil for the evils of modern society. After all, natural man is unequivocally good. Natural man is, however, not meant to act as a role model for civilized man’s moral improvement, but rather as an “experimental control” from which to measure man’s current state of corruption. As Grimsely argues, natural man is what we are not but, also, not what we ought to be (29-42). Emile, on the other hand, is designed as a role model for contemporary moral life; and, unlike natural man, he is subject to moral weakness. Rousseau does not see himself as idealizing mankind. In fact, he criticizes other authors who do: “He [the Comte de Saint-Pierre] tried to make all men like himself, instead of taking them as they are and always will be. While believing that he was working for his contemporaries, he was working only for imaginary beings” (*Confessions* 412).

37 Wieland dislikes Samuel Richardson’s *Clarissa* (1748) and *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753), because they are “trop parfaits” (qtd. in Schmeer 25). Shaftesbury, who revived the eighteenth-century debate on moral beauty, also recognized that the truly beautiful soul was irreconcilable with literature: “The completely virtuous and perfect character is unpoetical and false […] A hero without passion is in poetry as absurd as a hero without life or action” (*Characteristics* 449).
himself the only human to have done so. For thirteen years following the flood’s
devastation, he lives in complete isolation. Then, at the age of eighteen, he stum-
bles across Kikequetzal, his stunningly beautiful female counterpart. Koxkox and
Kikequetzal, i.e., natural man and natural woman, fall in love and experience an
age of innocence. Eventually, their happiness is destroyed by the arrival of a second
man, who sows the seeds of jealousy, anger, and ultimately violence. This second
man, Tlaquatzin, has advantages over Koxkox, “welche zu nennen man sich schämen
müßte,” and thus replaces him in Kikequetzal’s affections (Beyträge 272). Angered
by his lover’s disloyalty, Koxkox attacks Tlaquatzin, thereby putting an end to the
age of innocence, i.e., the state of nature. What follows is intrigue, oppression, and all
of the other evils that inevitably accompany the development of society. In essence,
“Koxkox und Kikequetzal” demonstrates Wieland’s belief that it is useless to specu-
late about the perfections of natural man, because such perfections disappear as soon
as men encounter one another.

The narrator of “Koxkox und Kikequetzal” continually refers to, and engages with,
the theories of Tlantlaquakapatli, “ein angesehener Mexikanischer Filosof,” whose
work he says provides the source for his narrative. “Koxkox und Kikequetzal” is not
a roman-à-clef, and Tlantlaquakapatli is not Rousseau.\(^\text{38}\) However, Tlantlaquakapatli

\(^{38}\) Despite manifold similarities, Tlantlaquakapatli is not a mere fictional substitute for Rousseau. He argues, for example, that man’s moral goodness engenders his highest form of satisfaction or happiness (129). However, in the essay “Über die Behauptung, dass ungehemmte Ausbildung der menschlichen Gattung schädlich sey,” Wieland argues, erroneously, that Rousseau views sensuality as mankind’s greatest source of happiness (Beyträge 293). A further difference between Tlantlaquakapatli and Rousseau is that Mexican philosopher describes human sociability as developing out of man’s discourse with animals, with parrots to be exact (Beyträge 120). Rousseau on the other hand makes no such argument. The concept of human-parrot communication evokes images more likely associated with Daniel Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe (1719) than with Rousseau’s Discourse on Inequality. Finally, and most importantly, the narrator of the Beyträge references Tlantlaquakapatli and Rousseau as two distinct men (281; 291).
does espouse several of Rousseau’s theories (Erhart, “schieelende Wahrheiten” 68). Thus, “Kokkox und Kikequetzal” can be read as responding to the issues raised by the famed hypothesis on the state of nature, even if its source, Tlantlaquakapatli, is not a perfect match for Rousseau. Indeed, the fact that Tlantlaquakapatli and Rousseau are not mirror images of one another exemplifies the oblique and playful quality of Wieland’s engagement with Rousseau. One cannot read the Beyträge expecting every argument and every image to relate perfectly to something in Rousseau’s work. The First and Second Discourses are the starting point of Wieland’s discussion but not necessarily the end game. He satirizes their conception of human nature in an effort to better establish his own.

Wieland rejects Rousseau’s conception of natural man not only because it is speculative and idealized but also because it is, in his opinion, fundamentally misanthropic. According to Wieland, if one eliminates man’s weaknesses, one also negates his strengths, thus destroying his entire constitution:

Die Fehler der menschlichen Natur [sind] großentheils mit ihren Schönheiten zu sehr verwebt […] , als daß man jene heben könnte, ohne etwas an diesen zu verderben; und daß sie liebenwürdige Schwachheiten habe, welche man ihr lassen soll, weil sie dienen können, gewissen Tugenden eine Grazie zu geben, ohne welche die Tugend selbst sich vielleicht Hochachtung erzwingen, aber nicht gefallen kann. (Beyträige 243)

Wieland implies that his own belief in the interconnectedness of man’s strengths and weaknesses distinguishes him from Rousseau. But this is not entirely true. Rousseau acknowledges the necessarily ambivalent effects of human civilization. His natural

\[\text{39 \footnote{Tlantlaquakapatli promotes a cult of nature (Beyträge 253), idealizes transparent communication (255), distinguishes between moral and physical love (261), and curses women as the source of moral corruption (275). More importantly, Tlantlaquakapatli and Rousseau both concern themselves with extensive descriptions of natural man, or "die Sitten unsern ältesten Vorfahren" (277).}}\]
man is devoid of vice, but he also lacks virtue. Like an animal, he is morally neutral (Discourses 128): “Limited to physical instinct alone, he is null, he is stupid” (On Philosophy 170). The development of society is thus not categorically negative. It leads man to vice, but it opens up the possibility of virtue:

I would show that to this ardor to be talked about, to this furor to distinguish oneself, which nearly always keeps us outside of ourselves, we owe what is best and worst among men, our virtues and vices, our sciences and our errors, our conquerors and our philosophers. (Discourses 175)

Here again we see Wieland attacking Rousseau’s hypotheses not because he disagrees with Rousseau’s final conclusions but because he questions the need to hypothesize in the first place. Wieland sees no point in speculating about the perfection of natural man, but concedes that society both detracts from, and adds to, man’s moral constitution.

Relatedly, Wieland also refuses to speculate about natural man’s lack of imagination. Yet he agrees with Rousseau that the imagination has both positive and

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40To clarify, natural man is not Rousseau’s ideal. In truth, Rousseau idealizes the “juste milieu” which exists between man’s complete isolation in the state of nature and the psychological fragmentation that results from the development of property and divisions of labour (Fetscher, politische Philosophie 57). Wieland was aware of the distinction between natural man and the “juste milieu” and Rousseau’s preference for the latter (Beyträge 292). Thus, if he describes natural man as Rousseau’s ideal, it is merely for the purpose of polemics.

41Rousseau’s comments concerning “this ardor to be talked about, to this furor to distinguish oneself” summarize his theory of amour-propre, to which he attributes the moral decline of society. For an excellent description of amour-propre, see O’Hagan’s Rousseau (162-79). Rousseau’s belief in the interconnectedness of vice and virtue comes up again in his “Letter to Voltaire” when he locates the source of moral evil “[…] in man free, perfected, hence corrupted” (On Philosophy 51).

42In the essay “Über die vorgebliche Abnahme des menschlichen Geschlechts,” which belongs to the Beyträge of the Hamburg edition, Wieland describes the history of man as an oscillation between two extremes: “[dem] höchsten Punkt der natürlichen Gesundheit, Größe und Stärke des Menschen” in the state of nature and “[dem] tiefsten Punkt der Kleinheit, Schwäche, Erschlaßung und Verderbniß” in the state of culture (SW 14:306). However, the oscillations between these two extremes do not form a circle, but rather an upward spiral (SW 14:327). According to Jutta Heinz, this model of the historical progression of human understanding brings Wieland far closer to Rousseau than he is willing to admit (“Wieland und die Philosophie” 90). The concept of history moving in a spiral-type motion also recalls Giambattista Vico’s argument from Scienza Nuova (The New Science 1725).
negative effects on the development of society. The imagination is, in fact, the very faculty that ensures the interconnection of human vices and virtues. Once humans develop imagination, they automatically develop the vices and virtues that distinguish them from other animals. Rousseau and Wieland both reflect upon the ambivalent role of imagination in educating men toward moral beauty. The complexity of their thoughts concerning the role of the imagination in an individual’s moral development provides the most interesting foundation for comparing *Emile* and *Agathon*.

2.4.4 From Natural to Civilized Man: the Role of Imagination in the Fictional *Beyträge*

The *Beyträge* are important to this study not least because they furnish proof of Wieland’s critical engagement with Rousseau’s thoughts on imagination. In the *Discourse on Inequality*, Rousseau argues that man is not naturally endowed with imagination: “Imagination, which causes so much havoc among us, does not speak to savage hearts” (*Discourses* 135). For Rousseau, it is the development of imagination that distinguishes man from animals and ultimately enables him to form society.  

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43In the *Discourse on Inequality* Rousseau offers a fairly simple definition of imagination as the ability of the mind to create images. He stresses the possession of imagination as a key difference between animals and humans: “When a monkey goes without hesitating from one nut to another, is it thought that he has a general idea of this kind of fruit and that he compares its archetype to these two individuals? Doubtless not; but the sight of one of these nuts recalls to his memory the sensations he received from the other, and his eyes, modified in a certain way, announce to his taste the modification it is going to receive. Every general idea is purely intellectual; if imagination is in the least involved, the idea immediately becomes particular. [...] The definition of the triangle alone gives you the true idea of it: as soon as you imagine one in your mind, it is a given triangle and not another, and you cannot avoid making its lines perceptible or its plane colored. It is therefore necessary to state propositions, hence to speak, in order to have general ideas; for as soon as the imagination stops, the mind goes no further without the help of discourse” (*Discourses* 125). Interestingly, the example of a triangle to illustrate the concept of imagination is also found in the sixth of Descartes’s “Six Metaphysical Meditations” (1641) and in Voltaire’s article on imagination from the *Encyclopédie*. This case of intertextuality seems to indicate that Rousseau and Voltaire were both drawing on Descartes, although their assessments of the imagination would prove far more positive than those of their source.
Wieland alludes to Rousseau’s theories on imagination in “Koxkox und Kikequetzal” and the other fiction text from the Beyträger, “Die Reise des Priesters Abulfauaris ins innere Afrika.” His appraisal of Rousseau’s thoughts on imagination does not deviate from his response to Rousseau in general. Wieland derides the speculative nature of Rousseau’s theory on imagination and fails to acknowledge that he agrees with several of Rousseau’s conclusions. Most importantly, he fails to acknowledge that he agrees with Rousseau’s assessment of the ambivalent nature of the imagination, i.e., its contributions, both positive and negative, to the development of humankind.

In accordance with Rousseau’s belief that natural man has no imagination, the narrator of “Koxkox und Kikequetzal” introduces Koxkox as lacking the ability to create mental images. The narrator expresses great regret that Koxkox is unable to fantasize. Loneliness, he claims, is far easier to bear if one can fantasize one’s companions into existence. But Koxkox and his people, in keeping with their primitive culture, have not yet developed the powers of imagination:


After lamenting Koxkox’s inability to relieve his loneliness through the use of his imagination, the narrator makes a logical reversal. He realizes that, without an imagination, Koxkox would be completely unaware of his loneliness. The entire question of how to alleviate his sadness is thus moot because he is unable to experience the pangs of solitude. The narrator’s portrayal of Koxkox is not at all consistent with Rousseau’s understanding of natural man, nor is it meant to be. The narrator’s logical inconsistencies serve to demonstrate the impossibility of imagining men without
imagination.\textsuperscript{44} By attempting, and failing, to describe Koxkox’s inability to use his imagination, Wieland highlights the logical impasse that characterizes the question of man’s origins: “gewiß ist, daß sie [the state of nature], wie sehr viele andre transcendentalische Dinge, den Fehler hat, daß sie sich nicht denken läßt” (Beyträge 227).\textsuperscript{45}

Yet, although Wieland undermines Rousseau’s hypothesis about natural man’s lack of imagination, he nevertheless agrees with Rousseau that the imagination contributes to the moral improvement and decline of humankind.\textsuperscript{46} Wieland argues, for example, that the imagination has the capacity either to elevate or to pervert the relationship between the sexes. In “Koxkox und Kikequetzal,” we witness the ability of the imagination to elevate sexual relationships from the instinctual to the moral.

The narrator of the Beyträge highlights the fact that Koxkox’s love for Kikequetzal is not as morally admirable as the famous love story between Theagenes and Chariclea in Heliodorus’s Aethiopica (145).\textsuperscript{47} Koxkox loves Kikequetzal not because he prefers her to other women but because his imagination has no basis for comparison: “Koxkox

\textsuperscript{44}Erhart describes Wieland’s exploration and retraction of certain ideas as a “launige[n] Stil” (Entzweiung 194). He argues that Wieland uses this narrative technique in order to deconstruct various viewpoints and shake the individual’s belief in a harmoniously unifying notion of humanity: “Die ‘launige’ Variation verschiedenster Blickrichtungen auf ein und denselben Sachverhalt und die Dekonstruktion einer eben erst aufgebauten Perspektive durch den Wechsel in eine andere ‘willkürlich’ inszenierte ‘Gemütsdisposition’ stören die Vorstellung einer imaginär entworfenen ‘Natur,’ mit der das Subjekt sich von den Widersprüchen des zivilisatorischen Prozesses zu befreien versucht” (Entzweiung 202).

\textsuperscript{45}In a recently published article on the Beyträge, Kristina Kuhn also emphasizes the irreconcilable nature of Wieland’s paradoxes: “In den Beyträgen werden Sachverhalte beständig in ihr Gegenteil übersetzt, man könnte sagen, widerrufen” (316).

\textsuperscript{46}In Der Sieg der Natur über die Schwärmerey, oder die Abenteuer des Don Sylvio von Rosalva (1764), for example, he describes the imagination as “die Quelle unserer Glückseligkeit und unsres Elends, unserer schändlichsten Laster und unserer glänzendsten Tugenden” (SW 11:82).

\textsuperscript{47}The love story of Theagenes and Chariclea is told by the Greek novelist Heliodorus (circa 230 A.D.), whose work served as an inspiration for Wieland’s Agathon (Zaremba 116). Chariclea is the daughter of an Ethiopian queen. She is exiled from Ethiopia to Delphi, because she is born with white skin, and her mother fears being accused of adultery. In Greece, she becomes the priestess of Artemis, at whose festival she and the Thessalian aristocrat, Theagenes, meet and fall in love. Chariclea insists on maintaining her virginity until they return to Ethiopia and marry (Bowie 176-77). Interestingly, Danae assumes the name Chariklea upon her arrival in Tarentum (SW 3:355).
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konnte keine Idee von etwas besserem haben als er vor sich sah. *Seine Imagination hatte gar nichts bey der Sache zu tun; seine Sinnen und sein Herz thaten alles*” (128, emphasis added).48 Koxkox’s love is purely instinctual, “pure Natur” (140). By comparing Koxkox to Theagenes, the narrator insinuates that the latter’s imagination allows him to be more discriminating in his choice of partner. As we will see in our discussions of *Emile* and *Agathon*, both Rousseau and Wieland view sentimental love as a product of the imagination. From the *Beyträge* we can deduce that Wieland’s understanding of the connections between love and imagination arise, at least in part, out of his reading of Rousseau.

In the *Beyträge*, Wieland both parodies and praises his Swiss contemporary’s understanding of love. In the *Discourse on Inequality* and *Emile*, Rousseau distinguishes between the physical and the moral components of love. Natural man, he claims, only experiences physical love. Having no ideas of beauty or merit, he copulates randomly with any partner who meets his physical needs: “In [the savage state] all women are suitable for all men because both still have only the primitive and common form” (*Emile* 406). Kikequetzal’s love is clearly of this base, physical variety; she replaces Koxkox with Tlaquatzin merely because the latter is better able to satisfy her physical impulses.49 Social man, on the other hand, “determines this desire [physical lust] and fixes it exclusively on a single object” (*Discourses* 134). Having acquired

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48Throughout his analysis of love, Wieland’s narrator again revokes Koxkox’s powers of imagination. In order to continue responding to the various attributes of Rousseau’s natural man, Wieland is forced to follow Rousseau’s logic. Thus, although he has already established that Koxkox must indeed have an imagination, he concedes for the sake of argument that he does not.

49Kikequetzal regrets her decision to leave Koxkox after she has attained a higher level of civilization (274). Her initial love for Koxkox is product of nature, or “bloßer Instinct” (270); she therefore has no problem leaving him for Tlaquatzin, who better satisfies her sexual desires. But her love for Koxkox transforms into a product of society when she begins to compare their non-physical traits: “Seine [Tlaquatzins] rauhe Gemüthsart machte einen sehr starken Absatz mit der zärtlichen Begegnung, an welche sei von Koxkoxen gewöhnt worden war […]” (274).
a taste for proportion and regularity, social man directs his love toward the woman who inspires not only his physical lust but also his moral admiration, as is the case for Theagenes and Chariclea. In short, Rousseau believes that physical love transforms into moral love with the development of society. Although Wieland adheres to Rousseau’s conception of physical versus moral love in “Koxkok und Kikequetzal,” he parodies the distinction in “Die Geschichte des Priesters Abulfauaris.” The fact that Wieland approaches Rousseau’s theories on the connection between love and imagination from two separate, contradictory perspectives suggests that it is an issue he considers worthy of analysis.

“Die Geschichte des Priesters Abulfauaris” is a critique of colonization avant la lettre. While travelling, the title character, the Egyptian priest of Isis Abulfauaris, stumbles across an idyllically virtuous African tribe. Ostensibly offended by the tribe’s nakedness, Abulfauaris gives them clothes and encourages them to cover themselves. His gifts have the counter-intuitive effect of corrupting the tribe’s sexual morals. Before the introduction of clothes, the people’s sexual instincts slept. They formed attachments based on emotions rather than physical attraction: “Die Liebe war bey ihnen mehr das Werk des Herzens als der Sinne; und ohne die Liebe sagte die Natur einem Manne nicht mehr für ein Weib als für seines gleichen” (Beyträge 155). In “Abulfauaris,” Wieland completely inverts both Rousseau’s original analysis

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50Erhart notes several other ways in which “Abulfauaris” inverts the content of “Koxkok und Kikequetzal” (“schiegende Wahrheiten” 63-65). In a similar vein, he also points out that the various Beyträgen contradict one another irreconcilably: “Nicht nur die in den Beyträgen zitierten Autoritäten widersprechen sich, auch die einzelnen ‘Beyträge’ entwerfen höchst widersprüchliche Perspektiven” (“schierende Wahrheiten” 69).

51That said, Wieland did have contemporary sources for his material. For his Abulfauaris, he drew on the work of the French orientalist François Pétis de la Croix (Jørgensen et al. 86).

52In the story’s sequel entitled “Die Bekenntnisse des Abulfauaris,” the priest admits that his motives were far more sinister. He knew of the tribe’s wealth and sought them out intentionally. He was aware that giving them clothing would eventually corrupt their morals, but he did so anyway because he wanted to seduce one of their married women (Beyträge 161-181).
of love as well as his own analysis from “Koxkok und Kikequetzal.” Savage man, instead of copulating randomly, is virtually indifferent to women’s bodies. He chooses a wife based on emotional rather than physical attraction.

The introduction of clothes, a metaphor for civilized society, reduces the emotional component of love to base physical attachment. The decline of the tribe’s sexual morals goes hand in hand with the development of their imagination. In reaction to their new clothes, the women develop a previously unexperienced pride in their outward appearances. They use dresses to hide their bodies’ imperfections and enhance their feminine charms. Their newly awakened vanity triggers a chain events involving the imagination which ultimately leads to the degeneracy of their sexual practices: “Es wurde unmöglich zu errathen, was unter dieser seltsamen Verkleidung vorborgen seyn könne. Dieses erweckte die Neugier, und setzte die Imagination ins Spiel” (Beyträge 155). The imagination, once activated, gives rise to comparisons and distinctions in taste.53 The men of the tribe begin to judge women according to their physical beauty rather than their emotional attachment, whereby the relationship between the sexes descends into vice: “Die Weiber wurden aus einem Gegenstand der Liebe ein Object des Vorwitzes” (Beyträge 155).54

It is not that Wieland disagrees with Rousseau’s conception of love. It is more

53Rousseau describes the interplay of the five senses, the imagination and judgement as follows: “it [taste] is the only one [of the five senses] which says nothing to the imagination, or at least it is the one into whose sensations the imagination enters the least, whereas imitation and imagination often mix something moral with the impression of all the others” (Emile 152). However, Rousseau also argues that tenderness and compassion arise out of the workings of the imagination (Emile 220-23). He would therefore disagree with Wieland’s insinuation that the savages could love virtuously before they developed imagination.

54Wieland follows a similar line of argumentation in his essay “Über die von J.J. Rousseau vorgeschlagenen Versuche den wahren Stand der Natur des Menschen zu entdecken.” He humorously describes Pandora’s box as a make-up case (“Schminkbüchse”). Correspondingly, he reads the fall from innocence as resulting from women’s desire to cover up their physical flaws. The result being that: “Schienen und Seyn, welche Eins seyn sollten, wurden zweyerley” (Beyträge 212).
that he challenges Rousseau’s attempt to trace its historical development. Many of
Wieland’s works, including *Agathon*, centre around the search for a sensual-spiritual
or sentimental love (Sengle, *Wieland* 48). Correspondingly, Wieland praises Rousseau
for locating a middle ground between moral and physical love: “[Er hielt] in der Liebe
immer das Mittel zwischen der Platonischen und Büffonischen” (*Beyträge* 252).\(^{55}\)
However, Wieland does not believe one can hypothesize about how love develops,
about whether sensual love precedes moral love or vice versa. Wieland’s analysis of
love in “Koxkox und Kikequetzal” contradicts his analysis of love in “Abulfauaris.” In
the former, he illustrates how physical love transforms into moral love. In the latter,
he inverts the order of events by showing how moral love transforms into physical love.
Wieland’s willingness to allow for both possibilities demonstrates that the historical
development of love is irrelevant to him.

Wieland strives to understand what love is, not how it develops. In “Koxkox
und Kikequetzal,” Wieland argues that the imagination ennobles love by allowing
man to be more discriminating in his choice of partner, that is, to choose a partner
who satisfies not only his physical needs but also his moral ideals. However, in
“Abulfauaris,” he argues that the imagination destroys the moral component of love
for that exact same reason, i.e., that it allows man to be more discriminating in his
choice of partner. The imagination allows human beings to form comparisons and,
by extension, preferences. In “Koxkox und Kikequetzal,” the imagination fosters

\(^{55}\) “Das Büffonische” refers to the theories of the French naturalist Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte
de Buffon (1707-1788), whom Charles Darwin recognizes as “the first author who in modern times
has treated it [evolution] in a scientific spirit” (*On the Origin of Species* xiii). Thus, by contrasting
Plato and Buffon, Wieland desires to highlight the most idealistic and the most materialist con-
ceptions of love. Wieland’s suggestion that Rousseau balances the theories of Plato and Buffon
demonstrates his close readings of the texts. Recent scholarship has emphasized the importance of
both thinkers for Rousseau’s *oeuvre*. For references to Buffon, see Charles W. Hendel’s *Jean-Jacques
Rousseau: Moralist* (78-80). For references to Plato, see David Lay Williams’s *Rousseau’s Platonic
Enlightenment*. 
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moral preferences, in “Abulfauaris” physical. The juxtaposition of the two stories demonstrates that Wieland is clearly interested in exploring the connection between love and imagination established by Rousseau’s Second Discourse. However, he does not believe that Rousseau’s hypothesis on natural man is central to that exploration. In fact, Wieland questions Rousseau’s whole claim to be able to distinguish between the natural and cultural components of love and, more importantly, between nature and culture in general.

2.4.5 The Nature/Culture Dichotomy in Wieland’s *Beyträge*

Both Wieland and Rousseau employ roughly the same definition for the terms art and culture, which they both use synonymously. Wieland defines art or culture as the additions to, and beautifications of, man’s natural state. According to him, the additions to man’s nature arise from man’s ability to perceive his own physical needs. The beautifications are, on the other hand, a product of the imagination: “die Früchte einer durch die Imagination erhöhten und verfeinerten Sinnlichkeit” (*Beyträge* 145). Similarly, Rousseau believes that society develops on the basis of man’s physical needs but is beautified by the mind: “The needs of the body constitute the foundation of society, those of the mind make it pleasant” (*Discourses* 36).56 Both Wieland and Rousseau view refinements in human civilization as arising from man’s natural sensuality. Furthermore, they both emphasize the role of the imagination in transforming man’s natural sensuality into pleasing cultural achievements.

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56Rousseau’s quote refers to the mind in general as providing the beautifications of man’s nature, but he emphasizes the specific role of the imagination elsewhere: “Chimeras adorn real objects; and if imagination does not add a charm to what strikes us, the sterile pleasure one takes in it is limited to the perceiving organ and always leaves the heart cold” (*Emile* 158).
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Where they differ most dramatically, is the question of whether cultural achievements constitute improvements or injuries to human beings as individuals and to humankind as a whole. In the First and Second Discourses, Rousseau argues that culture sets man at odds with himself, causing a rift between his natural inclinations and his moral duties. He claims that although it may beneficial to the individual, it is detrimental to the species as a whole. Wieland disagrees with Rousseau on both counts: “Die Vereinigung der Menschen in große Gesellschaften ist in vielen Stücken dem einzelnen Menschen nachtheilig, und befördert hingegen die Vollkommenheit der Gattung” (Beyträge 301). This difference, though fundamental, does not have much bearing on the comparison of Emile and Agathon. Wieland’s Agathon contains little support for his professed social optimism, and Rousseau’s Emile transcends the pessimism of his earlier writings.

In the Beyträge, Wieland explores the nature/culture dichotomy from various, sometimes contradictory, perspectives. He questions the validity of the nature versus culture distinction while, paradoxically, employing it to further his argumentation. When discussing the question of whether art improves upon nature, he criticizes parties on both sides of the debate, claiming that art and nature are not distinct concepts:

Die ersten scheinen der Kunst zu wenig einzuräumen, die andern zuviel; beyde aber sich zu irren, wenn sie von der Natur und Kunst als wesentlich

See also Jacobs’s Wielands Romane (72) and Gerd-Klaus Kaltenbrunnen’s “Rousseau und die Deutschen von Lessing bis Nietzsche” (219).

Wieland’s use of multiple perspectives to illuminate the nature/culture dichotomy aligns with his self-definition as a dialogical thinker: “Meine natürliche Geneigtheit, Alles (Personen und Sachen) von allen Seiten und aus allen möglichen Geschichtspunkten anzusehen, und ein herzlicher Widerwille gegen das nur allzu gewöhnliche einseitige Urtheilen und Parteynamen, ist ein wesentliches Stück meiner Individualität” (Merkur 1800 1.4:256). For more on Wieland as a dialogical thinker, see Bernard Budde’s Aufklärung als Dialog – Wielands antithetische Prosa.
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Here Wieland claims that nature and culture are one and the same, but elsewhere he describes them as irrevocably separated. For instance, he lambasts Rousseau’s cult of nature: “Die Natur zur Führerinn nehmen! – Nichts ist bälder gesagt. – Aber wie dann, wenn ein Volk sich durch eine lange Reihe von Jahrhunderten in einer immer fortlaufenden Linie von der Natur entfernt hat?” (Beyträäge 297). Wieland’s critical treatment of the nature/culture dichotomy anticipates Carl L. Becker’s thesis that Enlightenment philosophers use nature as a projection screen for their own conceptions of morality (59).

59Erhart also draws attention to Wieland’s criticism of the Enlightenment’s penchant for projection: “Wielands Rousseau-Kritik […] zielt auf das Verfahren der Projektion, mit dem Rousseau den ‘état naturel’ zum imaginären Gegenbild stilisiert – Fortsetzung einer Kritik der Einbildungskraft, die Wieland seit Araspes und Panthea gegen die Imaginationen der verschiedenen Aufklärungsprojekte ins Feld führt” (Entzweiung 194).

60For Pascal, “La coutume est une seconde nature qui détruit la première. Mais qu’est-ce que nature? Pourquoi la coutume n’est-elle pas naturelle? J’ai grand peur que cette nature ne soit elle-même qu’une première coutume, comme la coutume est une seconde nature” (82). English: “Custom is a second nature which destroys the former. But what is nature? For is custom not natural? I am much afraid that nature is itself only a first custom, as custom is a second nature” (62). The Genevan scientist Charles Bonnet, pseudonym Philopolis, was the first of Rousseau’s critics to undermine his nature/culture dichotomy (Green 124). According to Bonnet, Rousseau could not make claims about primitive man’s natural perfectibility and then call society (the product of man’s perfectibility) unnatural. Wieland was thus not the first to object to Rousseau’s nature/culture distinctions.
he cannot break with it entirely, not least because the theory of moral beauty presupposes a rift between nature and culture within the individual. Correspondingly, Wieland, though sceptical of the distinction between nature and culture, develops his theory of moral beauty based on the nature/culture dichotomy.61

2.4.6 Tlantlaquacapatli’s Excursus on Moral Beauty

Wieland summarizes his thoughts on moral beauty in an excursus in “Koxkox und Kikequetzal.” The excursus, narrated primarily by the philosopher Tlantlaquacapatli, explores the question of whether moral goodness or sensual pleasure affords man the highest level of satisfaction. Contrary to the conventions of literary analysis, I equate Wieland’s personal views on moral beauty with the philosophy espoused by Tlantlaquacapatli in this passage. I have two reasons for doing so. First, the narrator of “Koxkox und Kikequetzal” explicitly endorses the views presented in the excursus (129). Secondly, Wieland follows the same line of argumentation in his nonfictional essay “Über die Behauptung dass ungehemmte Ausbildung der menschlichen Gattung nachteilig sey” (Beyträge 281-304). I have chosen to discuss the excursus and not the corresponding essay, because the excursus makes the same points in a more condensed fashion and because its poetic language conveys the bridging process between the animalistic and spiritual sides of humanity more forcefully. Indeed the excursus is a complex passage worthy of detailed analysis.

To begin, Tlantlaquacapatli explains that nothing convinces him of nature’s goodness as firmly as her sagacity at having married man’s highest form of pleasure to the ultimate goal of his existence, “den höchsten Grad des Vergnügens, dessen der Mensch...”

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61 For more on the nature versus culture dichotomy, see Wolfram Buddecke’s C.M. Wielands Entwicklungsbe griff und die Geschichte des Agathon (13-20).
fähig ist, mit denjenigen Empfindungen unauflässig zu verbinden, welche den großen Endzweck unsers Daseyns unmittelbar befördern” (Beyträge 129). Tlantlaquacapatli cites several occasions in which moral goodness promotes the most sublime happiness, including the suppression of egoistical drives in favour of altruism, the renunciation of revenge, and the comforting of an unfortunate soul. Through these acts of kindness, Tlantlaquacapatli believes that humans achieve moral beauty and consequently happiness:

In allen diesen, und allen ähnlichen Fällen fühle ich, in dem entscheidenden Augenblick, diese göttliche Flamme sich mit einer unausdrücklichen geistigen Wollust durch mein ganzes Wesen ergießen, und den sittlichen Menschen mit dem animalischen wie in Eins zusammenschmelzen. (130)

Tlantlaquacapatli portrays the effect of uniting his animalistic being with his moral being in a poetic language, featuring an equal number of sensual and spiritual elements. He describes his state, paradoxically, as a “spiritual voluptuousness” or “geistige Wollust” and alternates twice between the sensual adjective sweet (“süß”) and the spiritual adjective godly (“göttlich[!]”/ “vergötternd”) (Beyträge 130). Tlantlaquacapatli’s poetic diction mirrors the quintessence of his subject matter; like moral beauty itself, the philosopher’s word choice conveys a harmonious coming together of sensual and spiritual components.

Tlantlaquacapatli follows his panegyric on moral beauty with a tribute to the power of sensual pleasure. He expresses a fear that his ostensible prepossession for moral goodness will be attributed to a lack of sexual experience or even prudery. In order to stave off such accusations, he highlights his deep appreciation for the sensual world: “Ich habe mich in den Düften des Rosenstrauchs, im säurlichensüssigen Nectar des Palmbaums, in den süßen Küssen des Mädchen berauscht – Hab’ ich nicht den
Becher der Freude rein ausgetrunken, und den letzten Tropfen von meinem Nagel abgeschürft?” (130). Although Tlantlaquacapatli acknowledges the overwhelming power of sexual intimacy, he nevertheless maintains, “daß die Wollust, eine gute That zu thun, die größe aller Wollüste ist!” (130). Tlantlaquacapatli sees a civilization based on moral virtue, not sensuality as the ultimate goal of humanity, “den großen Endzweck unsers Daseyns” (129). This is not because he rejects the importance of the body for the human experience. On the contrary, he believes that moral goodness unites both sides of human nature, the sensual and the spiritual, and thus helps man to fulfill his ultimate purpose.

Wieland uses this excursus in “Koxkox und Kikequetzal” to situate his own understanding of eudaemonism in reference to those held by his contemporaries and by Rousseau in particular. Rousseau brings the relationship between morality and happiness to an intellectual crisis (Bernstein 62). On the one hand, he revives Shaftesbury’s ethical-aesthetic synthesis, because he wants to lend virtue an emotional appeal, to counteract the selfishness philosophically sanctioned by the materialists (Bernstein 84). On the other, his belief that moral duties alienate man from his natural inclinations makes it impossible for him to equate moral goodness with a pure, unmitigated happiness. Rousseau’s perfectly contented individual maintains his wholeness by living in isolation.62 The moment he enters society he must sacrifice part of himself, either his inclinations to his duties or his duties to his inclinations. From that point onward he can achieve nothing but an incomplete and “frail happiness” (Todorov 62).

Rousseau argues, “Only in our original state are power and desire in equilibrium and man is not unhappy” (Emile 80).
For Rousseau, this “frail happiness” is the only option available to the inhabitants of a corrupt, modern-day society. Wieland does not dispute the charms of a whole, undivided existence, but maintains that culture affords man a different kind of happiness: “Eine vollkommnere Art von allgemeiner Glückseligkeit ist uns zugedacht” (SW 5: 278).

Although the *Beyträge* suggest that Rousseau and Wieland disagree on the origins of happiness, a comparative analysis of *Emile* and *Agathon* contradicts that assertion. In *Emile* Rousseau takes one step toward Wieland, differentiating between naive and reflective goodness and, by extension, between naive and reflective happiness. Emile’s happiest moment is not experienced in social isolation but in the arms of Sophie. Yet Rousseau is not the only one who adjusts his position. In *Agathon*, Wieland also takes one step toward Rousseau. Athens is the most culturally advanced city in the novel, but it is not the happiest. That designation is reserved for Tarentum, where the inhabitants exist in a state between the rudiments of nature and the luxuries of culture. In both texts, happiness is achieved through the attainment of moral beauty, and moral beauty is attained in turn by harmonizing the demands of nature with those of culture, the demands of the body with those of the spirit. As we will see in chapters 3 and 4, both authors idealize a “just milieu,” where cultural progress is not purchased at the price of psychic fragmentation.

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63 The title of Todorov’s essay *Frail Happiness* is taken from Rousseau’s *Emile*. Bloom’s translation reads: “Thus from our very infirmity is born our frail happiness. A truly happy being is a solitary being. God alone enjoys an absolute happiness” (221).

64 Hans-Jürgen Ketzer explores Wieland’s response to the eudaemonism of Shaftesbury and Rousseau. He claims that Wieland transfers Rousseau’s claim to human equality from the political to the aesthetic realm and then marries it to questions of happiness: “Auf der dem Individuum inhärenten Potenz zu sittlichen-ästhetischer Wertung beruht die menschliche Gleichheit. Einem Kunstwerk gleich kann sich der Einzelne seiner sozialen Stellung gemäß zu begrenzter Glückseligkeit harmonisch gestalten” (269). Ketzer’s argument, though fascinating, is too underdeveloped to be thoroughly convincing, a weakness which is, at least in part, attributable to the limited scope of a colloquium paper.
2.4. WIELAND’S PUBLIC RESPONSES TO ROUSSEAU

2.4.7 Moral Pessimism versus Political Optimism

Ostensibly frustrated with Rousseau’s moral pessimism, Wieland describes man’s corruption as an evil of the political system rather than of civilization as a whole, thus leaving the door open for the rehabilitation of humankind. He believes that man is capable of a complete return to goodness if he is provided with a just constitution in which, “die wahren Triebfedern der menschlichen Natur auch die Triebfedern des Staats sind; wo die [...] Gesetze nicht als Gesetze sondern als Gewohnheiten ihre Wirkung thun” (244). Although Wieland presents his political optimism as the ultimate solution to Rousseau’s cultural pessimism, there is nothing in the above statements that contradicts Rousseau’s thought. Indeed Emile explicitly conveys Rousseau’s belief in the infallible connection between morals and politics (325). Moreover, Emile’s education attempts to align his duties with his inclinations such that he obeys the law but in so doing only obeys his own conscience. Thus, Wieland’s attempt to distance himself from the cultural pessimism of Rousseau’s First and Second Discourses only brings him closer to the philosophy of Rousseau’s Emile.

My main purpose in examining the Beyträge has been to survey the topics that link Wieland to Rousseau and, ultimately, Agathon to Emile. I have demonstrated that Wieland engages with Rousseau’s thought in order to develop his own positions on the following: the superiority of empirical versus speculative philosophical inquiry; the interconnectedness of man’s virtues and vices; the ambivalent role of imagination in the development of human civilization; the inability to distinguish between the

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65Rousseau makes the same point in his Confessions: “Since then [Rousseau’s time in Venice] my ideas had been greatly expanded through my historical study of morality. I had seen that everything is rooted in politics, and that, whatever the circumstances, a people will never be other than the nature of its government makes it” (395).

66Süßenberger makes a similar argument, but he emphasizes Wieland’s proximity to the Social Contract rather than Emile (245).
2.5. FELLOW PERSPECTIVISTS AND MORALISTS

moral and cultural components of man’s constitution; the ideal of moral beauty; and the connection between morality and politics. These topics are all variations on the subject matter of *Agathon* and, in turn, form the foundation for a thematic comparison or *Agathon* and *Emile*. Yet Rousseau and Wieland have more in common than a mutual interest in certain themes. Their texts also display similarities in narrative form, specifically in their use of multiple, often contradictory, perspectives.

2.5 Wieland and Rousseau: Fellow Perspectivists and Moralists

In the *Beyträge*, Wieland attacks Rousseau for formulating his arguments in a paradoxical fashion. He claims that Rousseau employs paradox not in order to demonstrate a particular truth but merely to seduce his readers into believing he has said something original:


The irony of Wieland’s criticism is striking if one considers Wieland’s own reputation for intellectual ambiguity, multiperspectival analysis, and anti-systematic thought (Heinz, “Wielandizität” 461). Wieland himself does not attempt to expel every contradiction from his argument. On the contrary, in his essay “Was ist Wahrheit?” (1778) he describes truth as something relative or “Verhältniβmäßiges,” explaining: “die Wahrheit ist weder hier, noch da, - - Sie ist, wie die Gottheit und das Licht, worin
In reality, neither Rousseau nor Wieland is guilty of a superfluous use of contradiction. I agree with Todorov who claims, in reference to Rousseau, that the contradiction is in the subject matter itself, not in the observer: “If there is a contradiction, it is in the human condition; there is nothing contradictory in the act of observing and describing a contradiction” (19). Kant also defends Rousseau’s use of paradox, viewing it as the product of an honest pursuit of truth, not a “Willen zum Seltsamen und Abweichenden” (Cassirer, “Kant und Rousseau” 8). The use that Rousseau and Wieland make of contradiction is productive. It gets to the heart of late eighteenth-century thought, as it serves to replace rationalism’s claim to dogmatically fixed truths with an acceptance of multiple perspectives and thus of multiple truths (cf. Hofmann 11). Indeed, both Rousseau and Wieland regularly exploit literary forms, such as the dialogue and the epistolary novel that encourage the juxtaposition of multiple, contradictory, perspectives. Rousseau eloquently defends the paradoxical nature of his educational maxims: “These again, you will say, are paradoxes. So be it; but let us see whether they are truths” (Emile

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67 Manfred Beetz’s article “Wunschdenken und Realitätsprinzip – zur Vorurteilsanalyse in Wielands Agathon” includes a section entitled “Roman und Gespräch als Medien anthropologischer Vorurteilsreflexion,” in which he places Wieland’s polyperspectivism in historical context (264-74). Lieselotte E. Kurth-Voigt’s Perspectives and Points of View: The Early Works of Wieland and Their Background also offers several possible influences on Wieland’s perspectival thought, including: Cicero, Lucian, Erasmus, Leibniz, and David Hume (8-88).

68 Rousseau himself makes a similar argument in his Confessions: “Those who reproach me with my many contradictions will not fail to reproach me with this one too. I have said that idleness was what made social life intolerable to me, and yet here [in confining himself to the Île de Saint-Pierre] I was seeking solitude for the sole purpose of giving myself over to idleness. This, however, is how I am; if there is any contradiction here, it is nature’s doing and not mine” (627). For an interesting account of Rousseau’s use of paradox, see Stephen G. Salkever’s “Interpreting Rousseau’s Paradoxes.”

69 In terms of the dialogue, Rousseau has Dialogues: Rousseau Judge of Jean-Jacques (1782) as well as isolated passages from Émile. Wieland has many examples, including: Timoklea - Ein Gespräch über scheinbare und wahre Schönheit (1755) as well as several passages from Agathon. As for the epistolary novel, Rousseau has Julie and Wieland, among others, Aristipp und einige seiner Zeitgenossen (1800-02).
Bell seconds Rousseau, claiming, with reference to *Emile*, that textual “hybridity is a source of ultimately fruitful ambiguity” (*Open Secrets* 18). I not only agree with Bell, I hope to demonstrate that his statement applies equally well to Wieland’s *Agathon*.

Thus far I have dwelled significantly on Wieland’s criticism of Rousseau; however, a survey of Wieland’s responses to the “Citizen of Geneva” would be incomplete without also mentioning Wieland’s admiration for his fellow moralist. This admiration is most forcefully expressed in one of Wieland’s journalistic texts, which takes a stand on a controversy surrounding Rousseau’s biography. Before the initial publication of Rousseau’s *Confessions* (1782), Wieland writes a text for *Der Teutsche Merkur* entitled “Briefe an einen Freund: Ueber eine Anekdote von J.J. Rousseaus geheimer Geschichte seines Lebens,” in which he undertakes a moral justification for one of Rousseau’s adolescent transgressions. Following Rousseau’s death, stories circulated pertaining to the content of his unpublished autobiography. One of the stories related an incident from Rousseau’s time as a footman in the home of Comtesse de Vercellis in Turin. According to the anecdote, which Wieland reads in the Isaak

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70Rousseau repeatedly defends himself against the allegation of paradox. He goes as far as to associate the use of paradox with an unprejudiced quest for truth: “Common readers, pardon me my paradoxes. When one reflects, they are necessary and, whatever you may say, I prefer to be a paradoxical man than a prejudiced one” (*Emile* 93).

Iselin’s journal *Ephemeriden* (1776-82),

Rousseau stole a ribbon from among the countess’s things after she died. When questioned about the ribbon’s disappearance, Rousseau denied any involvement and accused a young kitchen maid named Marion in his stead. Marion pleaded her innocence, but the new count, unable to verify her story, dismissed both her and Rousseau from his service. The reports of Rousseau’s adolescent transgression disturb Wieland not only because they impact his opinion of Rousseau but because they impact his view of humanity in general: “Es kränkte mich um der Menschheit willen, für deren Zierde ich ihn gehalten hatte” (*SW* 5:178). Although Wieland has not yet read Rousseau’s original account of the incident, he sets about refuting the version contained in the *Ephemeriden* and essentially justifying Rousseau’s actions. He attempts to explain how a person of Rousseau’s high moral integrity could have committed such an act: “wie er [Rousseau], ohne darum weniger Rousseau zu seyn, eine solche That habe begehen können” (*SW* 5:187). For many years Rousseau’s competitor and avowed critic, Wieland now becomes his staunch defender.

In sum, Wieland’s relationship to Rousseau, as portrayed by Wieland himself, develops from one of competition, to one of criticism, to one of commendation. From the competitive spirit of his personal correspondence, to the polemical attacks of the

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72 The account is published in Isaak Iselin’s journal *Ephemeriden der Menschheit oder Bibliothek der Sittenlehre, der Politik und Gesezgebung* (1776-82). It sparks a debate between Wieland and Iselin about whether one ought to disclose such information. Iselin responds to Wieland’s “Anekdot” with an article entitled “Johann Jakob Rousseau gerechtfertigt,” which he again publishes in the *Ephemeriden* (July 1780). Wieland, in turn, publishes an essay entitled “In wiefern es gut sey, die Uebelthaten vortrefflicher Menschen bekannt zu machen” in *Der Teutsche Merkur* (October 1780).

73 Jürgen Jacobs finds Wieland’s change of attitude toward Rousseau “paradoxical” because Wieland misunderstands and criticizes the revolutionary Rousseau but defends the aged, “zwischen Eitelkeit und Verfolgungswahn schwankende Person” (*Wielands Romane* 71).
2.5. FELLOW PERSPECTIVISTS AND MORALISTS

*Beyträge*, to the homage of “Anekdote”: Wieland expresses a sustained interest in his contemporary, the “Citizen of Geneva.” If one were to read the *Beyträge* with no previous knowledge of Rousseau, one would conclude, based on Wieland’s argumentation, that the two thinkers had little in common. It is only by juxtaposing Wieland’s polemics with the content of Rousseau’s *oeuvre* that one isolates the true target of Wieland’s attacks, namely Rousseau’s method for arriving at philosophical conclusions, not the conclusions themselves. Hence, I second Sophie von La Roche who writes a letter to Wieland, her former fiancé, on December 14 1770, defending Rousseau against his criticism and questioning the motive behind his polemics. La Roche writes: “Es ist genug, daß mein ganzes Herz Rousseau für brauchbarer, simplier, u deutlicher hält; *warum bekriegen Sie den guten Mann so oft?*” (*Briefwechsel* 4:241).

Wieland never responds to La Roche’s question, at least not in their surviving written correspondence. If, after surveying Wieland’s responses to Rousseau, I had to offer my own explanation of why Wieland chooses the author of the Discourses as the target of his polemics, I would suggest that it has as much to do with their similarities as their differences. Rousseau becomes famous with wildly imaginative theories about man in the state of nature. Wieland, on the other hand, is advised by Lessing and others to put his fanciful theories behind him and observe man as he is, not as he could have been or should someday be. Wieland’s attacks against Rousseau can thus be read as attacks against his former self.

Furthermore, Wieland understands himself as a dialogical thinker; he takes pride in the sophistication of exploring the truth from various perspectives. The Rousseau of the First and Second Discourses is, by contrast, a whistler-blower. He claims he has
the truth and then announces it, rather self-righteously, to the world. Like Wieland, Rousseau is in all actuality a polyperspectival thinker. But this trait only becomes evident when one compares his various works with one another, the collectivism of *The Social Contract* with the individualism of *Emile* for example (Shklar 3). Thus, it is possible that Wieland’s objections to Rousseau are also a matter of temperament. Robert E. Norton thinks this might be the case. He argues that Wieland’s thought is closer to Rousseau’s than that of any of his other German contemporaries. For Norton, Wieland is “the one German writer who most resemble[s] Rousseau, if not in temperament, then certainly in the overall constitution of his mind and commitments” (140). I follow Norton in his desire to see past Rousseau’s and Wieland’s differences of temperament in order to assess the similarities of their thought.
Chapter 3

The Pedagogy of Emile’s Imagination: From Nature to Natural Religion, Compassion, and Love

3.1 Emile through the Lens of Agathon

I now turn my attention to the details of Emile’s identity formation. As my purpose in examining *Emile* is ultimately comparative, I do not assign equal weight to all aspects of Rousseau’s educational programme. I do not, for example, concern myself with Rousseau’s opinions on the necessity of breast-feeding or the futility of modern medicine. Instead I explore only those topics that provide a direct point of comparison with Wieland’s *Agathon*. As my discussion of the *Beyträger* demonstrates, Wieland’s major objections to Rousseau’s thought centre around the methodology of his philosophical inquiry. I therefore begin my analysis by asking how Rousseau’s controversial hypothesis on natural man defines Emile’s initial state of being (3.2). I then demonstrate how Emile develops from an egotistical natural man to a moral being (3.3). In particular, I emphasize the role of imagination in the formation of his moral constitution (3.4.1). I demonstrate how the tutor widens Emile’s imagination
3.2. THE FOUNDATION OF EMILE’S EDUCATION

to include an understanding of natural religion (3.4.2), compassion (3.4.3), and sentimental love (3.4.4). Lastly, I establish connections between Rousseau’s moral and political ideals (3.5). How does Emile’s moral constitution influence his relationship to the state? If moral beauty proves itself to be an untenable ideal, what are the consequences for the text’s theme of politics?

3.2 The Foundation of Emile’s Education: the Theoretical State of Nature

The starting point of Emile’s education is the theoretical state of nature. To begin with, Emile is not an individual; he is a symbolic representation of mankind in general. His tutor, Jean-Jacques, selects him at random from among a group of infants. The arbitrariness with which Emile is chosen demonstrates the ostensible irrelevance of his natural predispositions to the tutor’s educational programme. The choice is however only seemingly random, as Jean-Jacques does in fact make several stipulations. First, Emile must be a member of the nobility. The privileged classes are, according to the tutor, the ones most in need of education: “Let us, then, choose a rich man. We will at least be sure we have made one more man, while a poor person can become a man by himself” (52). Second, Emile must be strong in body: “I want no pupil always useless to himself and others, involved uniquely with preserving himself, whose body does damage to the education of his soul” (53). Third, he must be of average intelligence: “I have chosen him from among the ordinary minds in order to show

1Unlike Helvétius, Rousseau does not believe in the blank-slate theory. He recognizes, for example, that individuals are naturally predisposed to one occupation or another. He therefore refuses to choose Emile’s occupation for him: “In making all the objects it is important for him to know pass before him, we put him in a position to develop his taste and his talent, to make the first steps toward the object to which his genius leads him” (Emile 192).
what education can do for man” (245). Last but not least, he must be an orphan, if not in fact then at least in practice: “It makes no difference whether he has his father and mother [...] he ought to obey only me” (52). In reality, it would be impossible for Jean-Jacques to know whether an infant, whom he chose at random, has a healthy body and an average mind. As is true for much of Rousseau’s thought, Emile is an unrealizable thought experiment. Emile is an “abstract man” (42). His individual traits are virtually insignificant. If Jean-Jacques can educate him to possess moral beauty, the implication is that all humans are capable of becoming beautiful souls. Indeed a cornerstone of Rousseau’s philosophy is that, in the state of nature, man is fundamentally good. It is human society that corrupts him, robbing him of his potential for moral beauty. Emile asks the question how one can use education to prevent the process of social corruption and thus recreate man’s natural goodness within a social context.

The tutor describes Emile’s education as coming to him from three distinct sources: nature, things, and men. It is this initial division, this implicit acceptance of the nature/culture dichotomy, which eventually justifies the tutor’s complete control over Emile’s environment. The division is explained as follows: the education of nature consists of the internal development of Emile’s faculties and organs; the education of things is what he acquires from his sensory experience of the world; and the education

\footnote{In the same vein, the tutor also asserts “I am Emile’s true father” (407). Interestingly, several of the protagonists from the eighteenth-century Bildungsroman grow up as orphans: Wieland’s Agathon, Hölderlin’s Hyperion (1797/99), and Caroline von Wolzogen’s Agnes von Lilien (1798). The orphan status of these characters suggests that the absence of a defined social milieu is conducive to the development of moral beauty. It appears as if the established social conventions that accompany a defined social status preclude the beautiful soul’s status as a universal human ideal. In her monograph The Post-Revolutionary Self, Jan Goldstein also draws connections between an “individual’s lack of fixed social position” and “the dominance of imagination in an individual psyche” (27). Because I make the claim that an active imagination is a prerequisite to the development of moral beauty, Goldstein’s thesis appears intimately related to, and indeed supportive of, my own.}
of men is the use which others teach him to make of nature and things, that is, of his internal faculties and his external resources. Emile’s tutor acknowledges that the education of nature is completely out of his control, and that the education of things is only indirectly subject to his manipulation. He can ensure, for example, that Emile does or does not come into contact with certain stimuli. However, the tutor’s true domain is, of course, the education of men. Jean-Jacques, and Jean-Jacques alone, teaches Emile how to make use of his natural faculties and external resources, i.e., the carefully selected objects with which he peoples the boy’s surroundings.

Jean-Jacques’s goal is to make all three forms of Emile’s education (nature, things, and men) coincide. He believes that if all three educations accord with each other, his pupil will achieve inner harmony:

The disciple in whom their various lessons are at odds with one another is badly raised and will never be in agreement with himself. He alone in whom they all coincide at the same points and then to the same ends reaches his goal and lives consistently. (38)

Because the education of men is the only form of education under the tutor’s control, it must be made to accord with the education of nature, which is impervious to his influence. But what exactly is nature?

Rousseau defines nature as man’s inclinations before they are corrupted by the opinions of others. He likens the corruption of man’s inclinations to the interference of a plant’s natural direction of growth. The plant, which nature designed to grow toward the sun, will grow deeper into the soil if it is turned upside down. The same is true of man’s inclinations. If society reverses the natural direction of man’s
growth, then he will develop based on a false, unnatural trajectory (39).\(^3\) For example, if one forces a child to espouse religious beliefs before he or she has developed a capacity for abstraction or a natural curiosity about the origins of life, the child’s understanding of the divine will be forced and unnatural. According to Rousseau, intellectual instruction, whether religious or secular, must not commence until the child’s mind naturally tends toward the content of the purposed instruction. In order to discover man’s true nature, it is therefore necessary to raise Emile in a social vacuum where he will not be exposed to the corrupting influence of opinion. Paradoxically, then, the tutor will take complete control of Emile’s environment so that Emile will develop utterly free of social influence. For Rousseau, absolute control is a necessary prerequisite for the discovery of human nature and, by extension, the establishment of moral autonomy, i.e., freedom.

Jean-Jacques does not consider his own presence in Emile’s early life as exerting a meaningful social influence. Because he does not expose Emile to his opinions, he classifies his own social influence as neutral. The tutor explains that he “ought to give no precepts at all; he ought to make them be discovered” (52). Accordingly, he describes the first three books of *Emile* as promoting a “negative education,” which encompasses the education of nature and the education of things but purposely forestalls the education of men. The idea is not to actively teach the child virtue or truth but to secure “the heart from vice and the mind from error” (*Emile* 93). In a typical Rousseauian paradox, Jean-Jacques explains his “negative education” as an absence of education: “Young teacher, I am preaching a difficult art to you, that

\(^3\)Plato also employs a plant metaphor in order to explain the corruption of man’s nature: “It’s [the philosopher’s nature] like the seed of some exotic plant. When it’s sown outside its native land, it tends to lose its distinguishing properties and vigour, and degenerate into the indigenous variety. In the same way, as things stand at present, the philosophic type tends not to preserve its distinctive power. It degenerates into some other sort of character” (*Republic* 202).
of governing without precepts and doing everything by doing nothing” (119). The concept of “negative education” seems to confirm Rousseau’s principle that man is naturally good but corrupted by society; it appears as if the best education consists of simply getting out of the way and letting nature do the work.

It is not true, however, that Jean-Jacques does nothing during the first years of Emile’s education. On the contrary, Jean-Jacques possesses an almost God-like control over Emile’s environment. However, his control is indirect and thus imperceptible, at least from the point of view of his pupil. The tutor continually places Emile in highly orchestrated situations in order to teach him various lessons. For instance, he teaches Emile astronomy by taking him on a morning walk through the forest. The pair wanders about in the forest until Emile has lost his orientation. As the day progresses, Emile becomes increasingly hot, fatigued, and hungry. He desires to return home, but Jean-Jacques feigns ignorance about their current location. Only after Emile has experienced first-hand the desirability of being able to orient himself in the forest, does Jean-Jacques employ the Socratic method in order to furnish him with the desired astronomical knowledge. He asks Emile pointed questions about the time of day and position of the sun. Eventually, Emile discovers based on the direction of the shadows that they are north of their desired destination (167-72).

With the help of yet another Rousseauian paradox, the tutor describes his method of teaching as a “well regulated freedom” (92). Emile is always free to do as he pleases; Jean-Jacques never overtly thwarts him in his aims. That said, he ensures that if Emile’s desires become unreasonable, the world will frustrate them in his stead. For

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4As Peter Gay points out Rousseau is often inclined to “play God with his characters,” which makes him appear as the “caricature of the enlightened despot” (Enlightenment 531). Relatedly, Geraint Parry suggests that the terms “defensive” or “protective” education might be a more accurate way of describing the tutor’s method than Rousseau’s coinage “negative education” (252).
instance, he will not scold Emile for breaking his bedroom window. Instead, he will allow the unpleasantness of sleeping in a room without windows teach Emile about the value of a window.

At times, Emile’s entire reality is constructed in such a way as to teach him a lesson but simultaneously avoid impinging on his perceived freedom. One case in particular anticipates the virtual reality of Peter Weir’s *The Truman Show* (1998) in the all-consuming nature of its deception. The scenario proceeds as follows: Emile asks his tutor to accompany him on a walk, but the tutor refuses, knowing that Emile is likely to venture out on his own. All of the neighbours have been prepared in advance for Emile’s first solo excursion. The tutor has told them how to behave: the local children jeer at Emile, showing no respect for his fine attire. Two gentlemen refer to him within earshot as a “little libertine” whom they suspect to have been thrown out of his home (123). Emile thus experiences the extent of his own dependence without anyone having to enlighten him. He returns home painfully embarrassed and utterly tractable.

According to Rousseau, Emile’s “well regulated freedom” allows him to benefit from society’s advancements while maintaining his natural wholeness (Spaemann 84). On the one hand, Emile differs from natural man insofar as natural man, a mere animal, would not be in a position to master complex astronomical principles at the age of ten.5 On the other hand, Emile resembles natural man to the extent that he is not conscious of anything dividing him from his natural inclinations. For Rousseau, “there is no subjection so perfect as that which keeps the appearance of freedom. Thus the will itself is made captive” (120). As a child, Emile is unfamiliar with the

5At the time of his first astronomy lesson, Emile is approximately ten years of age. This can be deduced because Book 3, from which the passage is taken, covers the years of his life from age ten to age fifteen.
3.3. The Trajectory of Emile’s Education: From a Physical to a Moral Being

Emile’s development from infancy to adulthood is described in minute detail over the course of five books. In the novel’s first three books, or up until the age of fifteen, Emile is almost entirely a physical being. The tutor’s plan for his pre-adolescent years,
is to “exercise his body, his organs, his senses, his strength, but keep his soul idle for
as long as possible” (94). Emile’s physically-oriented education is designed, somewhat
counter-intuitively, to develop the strength and autonomy of his reason, which will in
turn form the basis for the strength and autonomy of his morality (to be developed
in Books 4 and 5). The trajectory of Emile’s education is thus from the physical to
the moral. In childhood, Emile understands himself and the people around him as
physical entities, with no notion of their spiritual or emotional attributes. Only with
the onset of adolescence does Emile develop the capacity for imaginative thinking
and, by extension, for moral decision-making.

Jean-Jacques refuses to indoctrinate Emile with conventional wisdom or pre-
processed information. The young Emile does not know how to read the Bible or
recite the catechism. He is unfamiliar with the major events of French history. In-
stead of memorizing facts and figures, Emile learns how to obtain and process sensory
information first-hand:

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. Our first masters of
philosophy are our feet, our hands, our eyes. To substitute books for all
that is not to teach us reason. It is to teach us to use the reason of others.
It is to teach us to believe much and never know anything. (125)

Emile spends his childhood learning how to perceive and, by extension, how to think.
Rousseau compares him to a savage who “is forced to reason in each action of his
life” (Emile 118). Rousseau’s idealized savage, who is not subject to any external
authority, learns about his environment through sensory experience rather than ex-
PLICIT instruction. He learns for himself how to foresee rain by inspecting the skies
and to find his way home by reading the shadows: “He gets his lessons from nature
3.3. THE TRAJECTORY OF EMILE’S EDUCATION

because he sees nowhere the intention to instruct him. Thus his body and his mind are exercised together” (119). Correspondingly, Emile spends the greater part of his childhood honing his senses: his sight, touch, taste, hearing, and smell.

Ernst Cassirer observes that, as a child, Emile is comparable to the marble statue from Étienne Bonnot de Condillac’s *Traité des sensations* (1754), which the author increasingly brings to life as he introduces the various sensory perceptions (Cassirer, “Das Problem” 67). Cassirer’s comparison is apt because it emphasizes the pure physicality of Emile’s initial state of being:

“Emile has only natural and purely physical knowledge. He does not know even the name of history, or what metaphysics and morals are. He knows the essential relations of man to things but nothing of the moral relations of man to man. He hardly knows how to generalize ideas and hardly how to make abstractions.” (*Émile* 207)

The difference between Emile and Condillac’s statue is that Emile will eventually surpass the statue’s purely sensational relationship to the world. He will develop from a concrete to an abstract thinker, from a sensual to a spiritual being. Furthermore, this development will involve active judgement on his part. Rousseau counters the sensationalist belief that “Juger n’est jamais que sentir” (Helvétius, *De l’esprit* 78) with his own assertion that “[t]o perceive is to sense; to compare is to judge. Judging and sensing are not the same thing” (*Emile* 270). According to the eighteenth-century French writer Louis Dutens, Rousseau’s “luminous distinction” between sensation and judgment dealt a serious blow to the contemporary materialistic doctrine that the development of the human mind derives purely from physical sensibility (Green 171).

The meticulous cultivation of Emile’s senses is aimed at delaying the emergence of his judgement and thus preventing errors in his reasoning. Essentially Jean-Jacques
desires to restrain the development of Emile’s mind by concentrating his attention on the body: “Arrange it so that as long as he is struck only by objects of sense, all his ideas stop at sensations” (Emile 89). Because the act of judging involves comparing one’s various sensory perceptions, solid judgements presuppose solid perceptions.⁶ Only after one has perfected one’s sensory organs, should one start judging the products of those organs (i.e., one’s perceptions) and thus start forming ideas. Jean-Jacques would prefer that Emile have no ideas at all than that he fall prey to ideas that are precocious and therefore false:

Remember always that the spirit of my education consists not in teaching the child many things, but in never letting anything but accurate and clear ideas enter his brain. Were he to know nothing, it would be of little importance to me provided he made no mistakes [. . .] Reason and judgement come slowly; prejudices come in crowds; it is from them that he must be preserved. (171)

Emile learns how to perceive and judge for himself before he learns how others perceive and judge.⁷ By shielding Emile from the opinions of others, Jean-Jacques hopes to promote the autonomy of his reason and rescue him from the fallacies of other men: “Forced to learn by himself, he uses his reason and not another’s” (Emile 207). The autonomy of Emile’s reason leads Allan Bloom to read him as an embodiment of the Enlightenment’s scientific method. As Bloom points out, “[Emile’s] will to affirm never exceeds his capacity to prove” (“Introduction” 15). In Agathon, Wieland takes a completely different stance on this issue. Agathon is not spared from error as Emile

⁶Rousseau describes Emile’s development from simple perception to complex reasoning: “At first our pupil had only sensations. Now he has ideas. He only felt; now he judges; for from the comparison of several successive or simultaneous sensations and the judgement made of them is born a sort of mixed or complex sensation which I call an idea” (Emile 203).

⁷The tutor explains: “It is bad to know what they think when one does not know whether what they think is true or false. Teach him, therefore, in the first place what things are in themselves, and you can teach him afterward what they are in our eyes” (Emile 187).
is. On the contrary, he begins his education plagued with misconceptions about the world that he must work to overcome.

After Jean-Jacques has finished honing Emile’s senses and perfecting his reason, he ushers in a new phase of Emile’s development. In Books 4 and 5, Jean-Jacques introduces Emile into society, into his relationships with other humans and thus into questions of religious belief, moral sentiment, and love: “We have made an active and thinking being. It remains for us, in order to complete the man, only to make a loving and feeling being – that is to say, to perfect reason by sentiment” (203). If the terms which define Emile’s childhood are sensuality and reason, the key words for his adolescence are belief, compassion, and love. In order to make Emile a believing, compassionate and loving being, Jean-Jacques attempts to steer the development of his imagination. The imagination, he argues, provides the basis for Emile’s belief in the divine, his compassion for humanity, and his ability to love. It is the combination of these three capacities that forms the foundation for Emile’s morality and thus the centrepiece of Rousseau’s educational program.

3.4 “Such is the Empire and Influence of the Imagination”

3.4.1 Rousseau’s Ambivalence toward the Imagination

Rousseau is credited with being the first French author to provide an in depth analysis of the imagination (Sosso, “Imagination” 436). That said, Rousseau never develops a comprehensive definition of the concept, describing it instead through

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8The entire quotation reads: “Such is the empire and influence of the imagination over us that it gives birth not only to the virtues and vices, but the goods and the ills of human life; and it is mainly the manner in which men yield to it that makes them good or bad, happy or unhappy on this earth” (Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques 120).
3.4. “SUCH IS THE EMPIRE AND INFLUENCE OF THE IMAGINATION”

a piecemeal exploration of its various functions (Maguire 9; Morgenstern 72). In *Emile*, the imagination occupies a deeply ambivalent position. On the one hand, it threatens, if uncontrolled, to corrupt Emile with a materialistic worldview and an unrestrained libertinism. On the other hand, it also helps to produce his crowning moral achievements, namely his devotion to God, his compassion for humanity, and his love for Sophie. Voltaire draws attention to Rousseau’s ambivalent relationship to the imagination when responding to Rousseau’s attack on the creative arts in the First and Second Discourses: “Vous êtes comme Achille qui s’emporte contre La gloire, et comme le père Malle Branche dont L’imagination Brillante écrivait contre L’imagination” (Voltaire, *Correspondence* 260). The comparison is apt: Rousseau is indeed like Nicolas Malebranche to the extent that he is equally inspired by, and weary of, man’s imaginative faculty (Barber 79). *Emile*, in particular, is both his most imaginative work (Cassirer, “Das Problem” 172) and the work, in which he expresses the deepest ambivalence about the powers of the imagination (Sosso, “Imagination” 437). In it, Rousseau seeks to demonstrate that the imagination, if properly harnessed, can be transformed from the source of man’s alienation to the remedy for

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9 In an article entitled “Les fonctions de l’imagination dans Émile,” Marc Eigeldinger identifies four different functions for the imagination in Rousseau’s *œuvre*: 1) the spatial function 2) the creative, idealizing, and compensating function 3) the humanitarian and erotic function 4) the temporal function (251). Although I do not adopt Eigeldinger’s typology exactly, I am deeply indebted to his thoughts for my own analysis.

10 The letter is dated 30 August 1755: “You are like Achilles declaiming against fame, and Father Malebranche using his brilliant imagination to write against the imagination.”

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his dividedness, from the cause of his depravity to the basis for his morality. One can read *Emile* as a pedagogy of the imagination, in which Rousseau delays and controls the development of the imagination in order to prevent fragmentation of the self (Sosso, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau* 114). Indeed Rousseau was the first Enlightenment philosopher to hail the cultivation of the imagination as the key to man’s morality and, by extension, his happiness (Green 360).

Allan Bloom reads the first three books of *Emile* as “an elaborate attempt to avoid the emergence of imagination” (“Introduction” 7). But why, one might ask, would Rousseau desire to delay the development of Emile’s imagination? The first reason for him to impose such a delay may be attributed to the expansive quality of the imagination, which produces a disequilibrium between one’s capacities and one’s desires ultimately yields unhappiness: “The real world has its limits; the imaginary world is infinite. Unable to enlarge the one, let us restrict the other, for it is from the difference between the two alone that are born all the pains which make us truly...

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12 Benjamin Barber puts forth a similar thesis statement regarding Rousseau’s treatment of the theatre. In his essay “Rousseau and the Paradoxes of the Dramatic Imagination,” he explains: “Rousseau’s critique of the theatre rests on the paradox which makes the civilizing imagination the source of all our errors and vices. At the same time – here is the paradox inverted – the imagination by virtue of which we pervert our innocence and deprave our natural simplicity is also the faculty by virtue of which we overcome our perversity and transform our nature” (88). Timothy O’Hagan and John D. Lyons also draw attention to the ambivalent position of imagination in Rousseau’s work. O’Hagan explains that, for Rousseau, the imagination is “dangerous if not kept under tight rein, but essential to the formation of the fully moral adult” (77). Lyons, who focuses more on the negative attributes of Rousseau’s theory on imagination, comments that “it is most often bad [...] but can occasionally be useful” (199).

13 Green underlines the importance of Rousseau’s *Dialogues: Rousseau Judge of Jean-Jacques* (1782) for his theory of the imagination, but his conclusions are equally applicable to *Emile*.

14 Patricia M. Lines’s article “Shackling the Imagination: Education for Virtue in Plato and Rousseau” also provides a discussion of the tutor’s attempts to curb Emile’s imagination. However, despite its promising title, the article contains little insight into Rousseau’s thought on the connection between imagination and the education of virtue. On the contrary, it uses a superficial reading of Rousseau’s reservations about the powers of the imagination to brand him, and the tradition of liberal thought with which she associates him, as essentially totalitarian in nature. In fact, Lines’s analysis of Rousseau appears to be no more than an excuse to decry public education (with reference to the modern-day Swedes in particular) as a liberal attempt to indoctrinate children.
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unhappy” (Emile 81). Rousseau’s doctrine of limiting desire recalls the teaching of the Stoic philosopher Epictetus (AD 55-c.135), who claims that the path to happiness was to cease worrying about things which are beyond one’s control (Epictetus 157-58). For Rousseau, as for the Stoics, it is the discrepancy between what one is able to do and what one desires to do that produces discontent (Spaemann 85). Because the imagination “extends for us the measure of the possible,” it enables our mental representations to outstretch our physical reality and our desires to exceed our capabilities, thereby drawing our attention to our inadequacies and making us unhappy (Emile 81).

In an article for the Encyclopédie, Voltaire outlines two different types of imagination that philosophers, including Locke and Leibniz, had differentiated over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Denby, “Imagination” 258). The passive imagination, as Voltaire explains, is simply the ability of the mind to create visual representations of that which one has perceived in the real world. The active

15As Margery Sabin convincingly argues, Rousseau’s thoughts on imagination always maintain a “clear and firm opposition” between what is real and what is imaginary (345). Although he often prefers the imaginary to the real, Rousseau never doubts, as the Romantics do, that there is in fact a difference. For Sabin, the clarity of Rousseau’s distinction between the imaginary and the real aligns his thought with the ancient Epicurean philosophers (336). In support of her claim, she juxtaposes Rousseau’s statement that “the real world has its limits; the imaginary world is infinite” with a strikingly similar quotation by Epicurus (circa 280 BC): “The wealth demanded by nature is both limited and easily procured; that demanded by idle imaginings stretches on to infinity” (qtd. in Sabin 336).
imagination, on the other hand, is the mind’s capacity to combine one’s various perceptions into something new (Voltaire, “Imagination, imaginer” 8:560). It is this “something new” which Rousseau believes causes a problem, a rift between one’s reality and one’s aspirations. Emile, whose imagination has been contained, is entirely at one with himself. He does not desire to be anything but what he already is. In fact, without an active imagination, he possesses no mental faculty for contemplating the future. He lives in, and is contented with, the immediate present.

It is important to note that Emile’s self-satisfaction is not an indication of smugness, because it is not comparative, i.e., relative to the status of others. At this point in his development, Emile does not judge his accomplishments by those of his peers. In fact he is not even aware that he has peers. Recognizing that other humans think and feel like oneself requires an act of imagination of which Emile is not yet capable.

The happiness which results from the equilibrium between Emile’s abilities and his

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16The division of the imagination into active and passive forces was introduced by John Locke and maintained by thinkers such as Leibniz and Joseph Addison (Engell 18, 28, 36). In his article on the imagination in the *Encyclopédie*, Voltaire summarizes: “Il y a deux sortes d’imagination, l’une qui consiste à retenir une simple impression des objets; l’autre qui arrange ces images reçues, & les combine en mille manières. La première a été appelée imagination passive, la seconde active” (“Imagination, imaginer” 561). English: “There are two descriptions of imagination; one consists in retaining a simple impression of objects. The other arranges the images received, and combines them in endless diversity. The first has been called passive imagination, and the second active” (Voltaire, “Imagination” 118).

In his seminal monograph about the theory of imagination in the eighteenth century, entitled *The Creative Imagination: Enlightenment to Romanticism* (1981), James Engell consciously excludes the French philosophers from his discussion, arguing France “did not originate or develop the idea of the imagination in the same fashion nor to the same extent as that of England, Scotland, and Germany” (x). However, recent scholarship on imagination has corrected Engell’s oversight. As Dennis L. Sepper points out in a book review for the *Journal of Modern History*, three monographs have successfully demonstrated the importance of French thought for the development of the theory of imagination, namely Jan Goldstein’s *The Post-Revolutionary Self: Politics and Psyche in France, 1750-1850* (2005), John D. Lyons’s *Before Imagination: Embodied Thought from Montaigne to Rousseau* (2005), and Matthew W. Maguire’s *The Conversion of Imagination: From Pascal through Rousseau to Tocqueville* (2006). As I argue in the following, Rousseau participates in the Enlightenment project to see “in the imagination a power that could bridge the gulf between man and nature and knit the two together again” (Engell 7).
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desires is untouched by the pitfalls of vanity. It is a Stoic trait based on the willingness to accept things as they are rather than to desire to change them (O’Hagan 79).

If one considers the imagination as the source of human individuality, as is typical in the post-Romantic era, Rousseau’s attempts to smother it seem more than a little disturbing. However, one has to remember that Rousseau was not a Romantic. Judith N. Shklar explains:

Rousseau was not in the least interested in the unique personality crushed by mediocrity, nor in the creative imagination stifled by common sense, nor again in the artist-hero persecuted by the philistines […] Far from glorifying the ‘creative imagination’, Rousseau saw in this vehicle of ‘perfectibility’ the deepest source of human misery. (54)

Shklar’s argument is supported by the fact that Emile is neither a creative thinker nor a captivatingly unique individual: “As he never runs after new ideas, he could not pride himself on his cleverness. I [Jean-Jacques] have made him feel that all the ideas which are salutary and truly useful to men were the first to be known. […] He wants neither to stray from his path nor to shine” (Emile 339). In short, although Emile’s creator insists on the uniqueness of his character, Emile himself is uninterested in differentiating himself from other men.

In addition to freeing him from the struggle to assert his individuality, the harmony of Emile’s abilities and desires also has the benefit of making him more socially and politically independent than other men. According to Rousseau, a man who finds himself incapable of satisfying his own desires will inevitably look to others to assist him. He will become dependent on others or, what is worse, begin to view them as a
means of satisfying his desires, not, as Kant would have it, as an end in and of themselves. For Rousseau the only way of preventing Emile from becoming dependent on others (and the despotic urges to which such dependence ultimately leads) is to restrict his desires to their natural levels, that is, to suppress his imagination’s ability to create new, artificial desires for luxury goods (Shklar 34):

In what, then, consists human wisdom or the road to true happiness? 
[...] It is in diminishing the excess of the desires over the faculties and putting power and will in perfect equality. It is only then that, with all the powers in action, the soul will nevertheless remain peaceful and that man will be well ordered. (Emile 80, my emphasis)

Rousseau links the development of Emile’s imagination to his physical and moral independence and his physical and moral independence to the peacefulness of his soul. In Agathon, these same traits, i.e., indifference to personal distinction and luxury goods, resurfaces in Wieland’s description of Tarentine, i.e., republican virtues. In Emile and Agathon, the restriction of the imagination is both a moral and a political issue.

3.4.2 The Imagination: Gateway to the Divine or Cause of Religious Deformities?

The same expansive quality of the imagination that allows man’s desires to exceed his abilities also provides him with a gateway to the spiritual realm of existence (Eigeldinger, “l’imagination” 253). In his “Profession of Faith” the Savoyard Vicar cites the imagination as providing man’s sole access to the divine:

17Kant’s belief that one should treat the other “as an end in himself” (“als Zweck, niemals bloß als Mittel”) is one of five different variations of the famous categorical imperative in his Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten (61).
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Impenetrable mysteries surround us on all sides; they are above the region accessible to the senses. We believe we possess intelligence for piercing these mysteries, but all we have is imagination. Through this imaginary world each blazes a trail he believes to be good. (Emile 268, my emphasis)

According to the Vicar, it is the imagination that allows man to transcend the confines of the physical world and to ponder metaphysical truths. Voltaire expresses a similar connection between imagination and metaphysical speculation in his article on imagination for the Encyclopédie: “Peut-être ce don de Dieu, l’imagination, est-il le seul instrument avec lequel nous composions des idées, & même les plus métaphysiques” (“Imagination, imaginer” 560). As is implicit in this quotation, Voltaire does not make a clear distinction between reason and the imagination, positing that the imagination may be the only mental faculty for constructing ideas. I would argue that the same is also true of Rousseau who argues alternately for imagination and reason as being the sole mental faculty capable of spiritual understanding. In addition to emphasizing the primacy of the imagination for “piercing” divine mysteries, the Vicar also claims, that “the greatest ideas of the divine come to us from reason alone” (295). The Vicar’s reference to reason as the basis for one’s understanding of the divine does not contradict his former argument about the central role of the imagination. On the contrary, it demonstrates a fundamental overlap between the two concepts, the same

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18 “Perhaps this gift of God, imagination, is the sole instrument with which we compound ideas, even those which are the most abstract and metaphysical” (Voltaire, “Imagination” 106).
overlap that I discussed in my introduction. For Rousseau, as for Voltaire, reason and imagination go hand in hand: one cannot exist without the other, and both are essential to the expansion of man’s spirit to include issues beyond his physical existence.

In this case, the expansive qualities of the imagination are important because Rousseau considers a faith in God to be a necessary prerequisite for “true virtue” (Emile 312). The Savoyard Vicar explains, that “without faith no true virtue exists” (312). Jean-Jacques echoes the Vicar’s argumentation, claiming that a true atheist would have no motivation for being virtuous (315). The stakes are, then, correspondingly high: to successfully activate Emile’s imagination means to foster a profound understanding of God and a sound morality, while to lose control of his imagination means to deform his spiritual beliefs and, by extension, his moral principles.

Just as the tutor aims at delaying the development of Emile’s judgement in order to protect him from fallacious reasoning, so too he desires to forestall the activation of Emile’s imagination in order to provide a solid foundation for his belief in the divine. He claims that “it would be better [for Emile] to have no idea of the divinity than to

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19Furthermore, the Vicar makes his claim about the importance of reason in religion as part of his argument against revealed religion. His focus at the moment is to prove that one does not need religious dogma to foster religious belief, i.e., that one’s engagement with the natural world provides sufficient grounds for the belief in a divine power. Thus, he is in the process of differentiating reason from revelation, not reason from imagination. Rousseau recognizes that his use of terminology is not always consistent. He maintains that “it is impossible in a long work always to give the same meanings to the same words” (Emile 108). Consequently, I would argue that Rousseau’s apparent contradiction (having stated that both imagination and reason provide man’s only insight into spiritual matters) is not a contradiction at all but rather a contextually-based linguistic imprecision. To drive this point home, in his “Letter to Voltaire,” Rousseau himself denies that the existence of God can be demonstrated through reason alone (On Philosophy 58-59).
have ideas of it that are base, fantastic, insulting, or unworthy" (259). In order to prevent Emile from acquiring fantastic notions of the divine, the tutor attempts to curb his youthful imagination. In essence, the tutor wants to limit the scope of Emile’s imagination to compound, modify, or distort sensory information. Emile should see things as they are, not as his imagination would fabricate them to appear. In an effort to ensure that Emile’s faculties of perception remain free from imaginative play, the tutor focuses his attention on objects in his surroundings. Emile is not allowed to read books nor is he allowed to draw objects from memory; he must engage directly with the physical world, rather than indirectly through the use of his imagination. The benefit of these measures for Emile’s spiritual life is twofold. First of all, because Emile immerses himself in perception, his imagination remains passive and cannot explore beyond the boundaries of his this-worldly existence. Second, the honing

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20Rousseau’s comments on precocious religiosity mirror his comments on precocious knowledge. On premature knowledge, he writes: “Were he [Emile] to know nothing, it would be of little importance to me provided he made no mistakes” (171). Essentially, Rousseau believes that delaying the development of mental capacities, such as reason and imagination, allows for a more controlled and therefore more sound development (cf. Hendel 108).

21In the case of bourgeois man, the imagination modifies information garnered by the senses. Marc Eigeldinger explains: “Il [Rousseau] admet pourtant que l’imagination, chez l’homme social, l’emporte sur les sens et les gouverne” (Jean-Jacques Rousseau 57). By delaying the emergence of Emile’s active imagination, Jean-Jacques hopes to limit the modifying power of the imagination. Goethe attempts to engender a similar change in perception during his journey to Italy. He explains his desire “nur die Sachen [zu sehen] und nicht [...] bei und mit den Sachen zu sehe[n], was nicht da ist” (Italienische Reise 457). For Rousseau and for Goethe, limiting the imagination is an important step to harmonizing man and nature.

22“I will even divert him from drawing from memory in the absence of the objects until their exact shapes are well imprinted on his imagination by frequent observation, for fear that, by substituting bizarre and fantastic shapes for the truth of things, he will lose the knowledge of proportions and the taste for the beauties of nature” (144). The distinction Rousseau draws here between artistic production based on a free-flowing imagination and artistic production based on an original object is a theme which runs through the tradition of the German Bildungsroman. It calls to mind both Wilhelm Meister’s overly subjective/imaginative interpretation of Shakespeare’s Hamlet in Goethe’s Wilhelm Meister Lehrjahre (1795/96) and Green Henry’s failure to accurately capture natural phenomena with his drawings in Gottfried Keller’s Der grüne Heinrich (1855). In Agathon, the protagonist’s overactive imagination influences his reception, rather than production, of aesthetic objects (for example, Danea’s pantomime dance or the musical competition between the sirens and the muses), a fact which will be explored in chapter 4 of the present work.
of Emile’s sensory perceptions deepens his understanding of the material world, an understanding which, according to Jean-Jacques, is essential to spiritual belief: “One must have studied bodies for a long time in order to form for oneself a true notion of spirits and to suspect that they exist. The opposite order serves only to establish materialism” (255). Only after Emile has thoroughly familiarized himself with the material world does his imagination proceed from the passive reception of physical objects to the active compounding of images and, eventually, to a contemplation of the origin of things.

As is definitive of his training, Emile lends no credence to other people’s opinions or, in this case, religious doctrines. He develops his own system of belief based on his engagement with the world and his exposure to the natural religion of the Savoyard Vicar. The “Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar” helps Emile in a manner analogous to the tutor’s use of the Socratic method in the astronomy lesson. Both pedagogical tools allow Emile to benefit from the achievements of human society without robbing him of his personal autonomy. He is not expected to adopt the Savoyard Vicar’s beliefs as his own. He is merely expected to use them as a springboard for his own metaphysical inquiries.

In the absence of some form of positive instruction, it would be impossible for Emile to acquire abstract notions of God. Rousseau denies, for example, that natural man could ever form correct ideas about the divinity: “It is a demonstrated impossibility that such a savage could ever raise his reflections up to the knowledge of the true God” (Emile 258). Rousseau also emphasizes the length of time it took for mankind as a whole to develop from the polytheism of the ancients to the monotheism of the moderns. He concludes that, in order to fashion an accurate conception of
God, Emile will require spiritual guidance. For Rousseau, man’s enthusiasm for nature and his belief in God both arise out of a solid understanding of the “sweet harmony” that characterizes the natural world (Emile 169). Jean-Jacques points out that the same natural spectacle that sends an adult into raptures leaves a child completely unmoved. The child, he explains, sees only the individual elements. The adult, by contrast, perceives myriad relations between the elements and encourages his imagination to grasp the sublimity of their creator. His enthusiasm is based not only on his sensual enjoyment of nature’s beauties but on his spiritual contemplation of the whole. He is literally enthused, meaning “possessed by a God,” when his imagination experiences nature’s “complex impressions” (Emile 169). The child lacks both the passive and the active imagination for such enthusiasm. Rousseau questions:

With what transports will he see so fair a day dawning, if his imagination does not know how to paint for him those transports with which it can be filled? […] how can he be touched by the beauty of nature’s spectacle, if he does not know the hand responsible for adorning it? (169)

The passive imagination allows the adult to foresee the day’s amusements; he has experienced such delights before and can readily recall them to mind. The active imagination allows him to recognize the creator behind the creation. For Rousseau, 23

23 In a letter to Malesherbes from 16 January 1762 (the same year he published Emile), Rousseau describes how the imagination constructs the idea of infinity. His description implies that the imagination is able not only to conceive of God as a spiritual abstraction but also create an experience of oneness between the self and the infinite: “I raised my ideas from the surface of the earth to all the beings of nature, to the universal system of things, to the incomprehensible being who embraces everything. Then with my mind lost in that immensity, I did not think, I did not reason, I did not philosophize; with a sort of sensual pleasure I felt myself weighed down with the weight of that universe, with rapture I abandoned myself to the confusion of these great ideas, I loved to lose myself in imagination in space; confined within the limits of beings my heart found itself too constrained, I was smothered in the universe, I would have wanted to throw myself into the infinite” (On Philosophy 156).
an enthusiasm for nature and a belief in God are one and the same. In the above passage, he implicitly rejects the notion that one could be emotionally moved by nature without recognizing its governing principle. That said, the imagination, the gateway to the divine, also poses several difficulties to spiritual development.

According to Rousseau, if one allows a precocious imagination to engage with matters of religion, one runs the risk of creating either a materialist or a religious fanatic. He stresses the importance of timing in approaching questions of a divine nature. He does not begin Emile’s spiritual education until his pupil is well into his adolescence, explaining: “At fifteen he did not know whether he had a soul. And perhaps at eighteen it is not yet time for him to learn it; for if he learns it sooner than he ought, he runs the risk of never knowing it” (257). The causality Rousseau draws between precocious religious instruction and adult materialism is twofold. First, he believes that if Emile engages with questions about the divine before he is ready, his imagination will create concrete images of God rather than abstract conceptions. The child’s imagination is simultaneously too strong and not strong enough to deal with metaphysical questions. It is too strong because the passive imagination creates mental images of God based on objects that the child has previously beheld (God as a father-figure, for example); but it is not strong enough because the active imagination cannot yet conceive of an abstract force that governs all things. In an uncharacteristically condescending tone, Rousseau observes that for children as well as for the masses (“le peuple”), the notion of a spirit will always be tied to the image of a physical body.24 Furthermore, he warns that if one

24 “Un esprit n’est qu’un corps pour le peuple et pour les enfants. N’imaginent-ils pas des esprits qui crient, qui parlent, qui batent, qui font du bruit?” (Émile 552). “To the people and to children, a spirit is only a body. Do they not imagine spirits who cry out, speak, flutter, and make noise?” (Émile 255). I include the French original because the English translation, specifically the term “the people,” does not adequately capture the condescending tone of the French expression “le peuple.”
anthropomorphizes God at a young age, one is unlikely to reform one’s notions as an adult: “Every child who believes in God is [...] necessarily an idolator or at least an anthropomorphite. And once the imagination has seen God, it is very rare that the understanding [l’entendement] conceives of Him” (256). Here Rousseau sets up an apparent opposition between imagination and understanding; however, the opposition only holds true for a childlike imagination which, in picturing God as a physical body rather than as an abstraction, precludes a true understanding of the concept. In general, imagination aids, not obstructs, Emile’s quest for understanding.

The second danger in exposing a child to religious instruction is that he will simply adopt, or claim to adopt, his instructor’s point of view. A credulous child will profess a belief in God because that is what his instructor has told him to do. However, if someone challenges that belief, the child, finding no support his argument, will gladly concede his error. Rousseau questions: “What does the child who professes the Christian religion believe? What he has a conception of; and he has a conception of so little of what he is made to say that, if you say to him the opposite, he will adopt it just as gladly” (Emile 258). For Rousseau, true notions of the divine are the product an active and profound imagination and thus beyond the grasp of children.\(^\text{25}\) He believes that by indoctrinating children with religious content, one produces materialistic parrots instead of true believers. That said, he does not deny that a belief in God is felt by the heart as well as understood by the mind, but he insists that understanding

\(^{25}\)Jean-Jacques explains the divine as beyond comprehension: “I say, moreover, that, to accept the mysteries, one must at least comprehend that they are incomprehensible, and children are not even capable of this conception” (Emile 257).
3.4. “SUCH IS THE EMPIRE AND INFLUENCE OF THE IMAGINATION”

A child who has not yet conceived of God cannot found his beliefs on feeling alone.

In addition to creating a materialist, a precociously inflamed imagination can also lead to religious fanaticism. Jean-Jacques relates an anecdote about a Swiss mother who, by sheer coincidence, followed his suggestions concerning the postponement of religious instruction. Fearing her son would adopt crude notions of the divine, the Swiss mother decided, of her own accord, to delay her son’s engagement with religious matters. The child often heard his parents speak of God “with devotion and reverence,” but he was never allowed to participate in their discussions (259). Instead, “silence was imposed, as though the subject were too sublime and too great for him” (259). Unfortunately, the mother’s plan backfired. The Swiss woman’s son had fallen prey to *amour-propre*. His parents’ secrecy surrounding questions of religion only made him more curious to engage with the topic; his vanity revolted at the idea that something was beyond his comprehension. Rousseau describes the potentially damaging consequences of the child’s inflamed imagination in the following terms: “This child saw God everywhere, and what I would be afraid of, if this air of mystery were inopportunely affected, is that one might influence the young man’s imagination too much, thereby troubling his brain and finally making a fanatic of him rather than a believer” (259). The woman’s failed attempt to delay her child’s religious education suggests that what works for Emile does not necessarily work for ordinary children. The case of the boy’s fanaticism demonstrates that one cannot

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26 The temporal precedence of spiritual thought before spiritual sentiment is especially clear from the passage in which Rousseau compares the adult’s response to nature’s beauty to the child’s. Rousseau emphasizes the importance of feeling: “It is in man’s heart that the life of nature’s spectacle exists” (*Emile* 169). But he emphasizes that the child does not experience a similar sentiment because he does not yet comprehend the harmony of nature’s relations. Thus, comprehension precedes feeling.
undertake a piecemeal reading of Rousseau’s educational treatise. One cannot, for example, adopt Rousseau’s suggestion of delaying religious instruction unless one has also taken measures to combat the emergence of *amour-propre*. The elements of his programme are too intimately entwined for one to function without the others. Jean-Jacques illustrates this point by noting that, in contrast to the Swiss child, Emile’s imagination remains unfazed by *amour-propre*. Emile, who does not compare himself to others, contemplates God when he is ready and, even then, only on the basis of his own natural curiosity and not out of a desire to fancy himself learned: “[he] refuses his attention to everything beyond his reach and listens to things he does not understand with the most profound indifference” (259).

To sum up, Rousseau views the relationship between imagination and spiritual belief as deeply ambivalent. On the one hand, one needs the imagination in order to comprehend the divine, in order to conceive of an omnipotent force which governs all things. On the other hand, the imagination possesses significant impediments to the development of a solid belief system. If it is allowed to emerge precociously, the imagination will create “deformed images of the divinity” which will result in a materialistic worldview (259). Alternatively, if the imagination is inflamed by *amour-propre*, it will fall out of line with reason and foster religious fanaticism. In the conclusion to *Prelude; or, Growth of a Poet’s Mind* (1850), William Wordsworth defines the imagination as “amplitude of mind, / and Reason in her most exalted mood” (521).\(^{27}\) This passage serves as a summary of Rousseau’s views on the positive role of the imagination in religious matters. For Rousseau, the imagination allows intellectual reason to reach its loftiest heights. However, if not properly controlled, it may also lead to significant deformities in man’s spiritual and, by extension, moral

\(^{27}\)Book XIV, Line 191-92.
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3.4.3 “Pity is sweet [...] Envy is bitter”: Compassion, *Amour-propre* and the Foundation of Social Justice

*Emile* constitutes Rousseau’s attempt “to determine whether it is possible for a man to be good both for himself and others” (Dent, *Rousseau* 84). Yet before the onset of adolescence, which begins in Book 4, Emile is good for himself alone. He has absolutely no concern for the feelings of others: “He considers himself without regard to others and finds it good that others do not think of him. He demands nothing of anyone and believes he owes nothing to anyone. He is alone in human society” (*Emile* 208). Rousseau views the imagination as the instrument that will allow Emile to break free from his egotism. It is on the basis of his imagination that Emile will develop the ability to feel compassion (*pitié*), which is, according to Rousseau’s moral psychology, “the psychic source of all possible goodness in human relations” (Shklar 46). Indeed, for Rousseau, compassion is “the best conceived sentiment that man can have about his species” (*Emile* 236).

However, with Emile’s entrance into society comes not only his ability to exercise compassion but also the development of his *amour-propre*, which may be interpreted as his “desire for inequality,” i.e., his desire for superiority over his fellow men (Shklar 35). The difficulty with *amour-propre* is that the belief in one’s own superiority dulls the sentiment of compassion. The tutor’s task is thus to direct Emile’s *amour-propre* in such a way that it enhances, rather than undermines, his compassionate relationship to humanity. If the heart can remain free from the vices of *amour-propre*, then compassion can serve as the foundation for a system of justice based on human
equality, i.e., democracy.

In his *Discourse on Inequality* Rousseau describes two attributes he believes characterize natural man: the first is *amour de soi*, and the second is pity. In the state of nature, man possesses a desire for self-preservation, known as *amour de soi*, and “an innate repugnance to see his fellow man suffer,” known as pity (*Discourses* 131). Both attributes are initially instinctive but assume more complex forms with the development of reason and imagination and the concomitant emergence of society. Rousseau thus develops two distinct notions of pity: one is pre-reflective and instinctual, and the second is based on one’s imaginative identification with others (Morgenstern 56-72; Lévi-Strauss 37-38; Grimsely 57). In line with Roger D. Masters, I use the term “pity” to refer to the capacity of natural man to feel “an innate repugnance” when he sees his fellow man suffering, and the term “compassion” to refer to the ability of social man to imaginatively experience the pain of others (*Political Philosophy* 46). It must be noted that Rousseau refers to both concepts with the term *pitié*. However, I believe the standard practice in English-language scholarship of differentiating between “pity” and “compassion” is helpful when discussing the role of imagination in the development of human society.

Pity is not the only one of man’s natural attributes that assumes a different form.

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28 Here we see Rousseau referring to the instinctual pity as *pitié*: “Il est donc bien certain que la *pitié* est un sentiment naturel, qui modérant dans chaque individu l’activité de l’amour de soi même, concourt à la conservation mutuelle de toute l’espèce. C’est elle, qui nous porte sans réflexion au secours de ceux que nous voyons souffrir: c’est elle qui, dans l’état de Nature, tient lieu de Loix, de moeurs, et de vertu, avec cet avantage que nul n’est tenté de désobéir à sa douce voix” (*Discours de l’inégalité* 156, my emphasis). But here he uses the same term to refer to a process which requires both imagination and reflection and thus could not take place in the state of nature: “La *pitié* est douce, parce qu’en se mettant à la place de celui qui souffre on se sent pourtant le plaisir de ne pas souffrir comme lui” (*Émile* 504). The two concepts are related insofar as the second is a more highly developed version of the first. However, they require different faculties and have different effects. Thus it makes sense to assign them different terms when translating the original French *pitié* into English.
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with the development of natural man to civilized man. Bourgeois society corrupts *amour de soi* by transforming it into *amour-propre*, which in turn silences the voice of compassion. One must understand how this transformation takes place in order to know how to stop it, that is, how to channel the competitive, self-centred drive of *amour-propre* into the benevolent sentiment of compassion and ultimately into the foundation for social justice.

With the onset of puberty, the emergence of Emile’s libido prompts him to take an increased interest in his peers. For the first time in his life, Emile feels an emotional attachment to his fellow human beings that is not based on their willingness to assist him. Before puberty, Emile “loves his sister as he loves his watch, and his friend as his dog” (219). In other words, he loves people as objects rather than subjects; he loves them only as they relate to himself, not as individuals in their own right. With puberty, all that changes. Emile’s emerging sexuality causes him to long for specifically human contact, though not necessarily of the erotic variety. Indeed Rousseau views sentimental love and sympathetic friendship as deriving from the exact same biological drive. It is the character of one’s imagination, as formed by education, that determines the form of that biological drive, either erotic or congenial: “The first sentiment of which a carefully raised young man is capable is not love; it is friendship. The first act of his nascent imagination is to teach him that he has fellows [semblables]” (220). According to Rousseau, all moral sentiments, including love and friendship, are based on imaginative comparisons of one’s own internal disposition.
with that of another human being, comparisons that are initially triggered by an increased, libidinous interest in the other (Masters, Political Philosophy 43). Emile’s burgeoning imagination “begins to transport him outside of himself,” bringing him to the conclusion that others think and feel as he does (223). Yet Emile’s first imaginative comparison is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it enables him to experience a heartfelt emotional attachment. On the other hand, it instigates the development of amour-propre, which may result in envy and aggression.

Amour-propre has neither a clear-cut definition nor a satisfactory English translation (Dent, Rousseau Dictionary 34; O’Hagan 167). An individual with inflamed amour-propre is likely to be described as vain, proud, or smug. But vanity, pride and excessive self-satisfaction are merely negative outcomes of an inflamed amour-propre, not amour-propre itself. The term refers to a psychological predisposition in man, which dictates that he will always prefer himself to others. It is a type of self-love that goes beyond the instinctual need for self-preservation, amour de soi. It prompts man to compare himself to others and to base his self-worth on the results of his comparisons. It thus replaces his absolute self, based on the sentiment of existence, with a relative “I,” based on the desire for social regard. Historically speaking, amour-propre has been viewed in a primarily negative light. It has been considered the leading cause of social strife, bar none. Yet recent efforts have been undertaken

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29Rousseau describes the process as follows: “But when the first development of senses lights the fire of imagination, he begins to feel himself in his fellows, to be moved by their complaints and to suffer from their pains. It is then that the sad picture of suffering humanity ought to bring to his heart the first tenderness it has ever experienced” (Emile 222).

30As Wokalek points out, Rousseau’s theory of compassion finds confirmation in modern neuroscience. Wokalek, for example, cites the work of Giacomo Rizzaloti in mirror neurons, which enable humans to mimic and identify with the behaviour of others, including indications of suffering (53).

31Fetscher, for example, views amour-propre as an attempt on the part of man to regain part of his natural autonomy by dominating others (“Ethik und Politik” 9).
to expose its essentially benign nature.\footnote{According to a book review by Lucas Fain, the following scholars have supported the effort to redefine \textit{amour-propre} in a positive light: Nicolas Dent, Joshua Cohen, Andrew Chitty, and Frederick Neuhouser (475). To Fain’s list, I would add O’Hagan (170). It is puzzling that scholarship took so long to engage with the positive attributes of \textit{amour-propre}, considering that Rousseau himself explicitly mentions them: “This amour-propre in itself or relative to us is good and useful; and since it has no necessary relation to others, it is in this respect naturally neutral. It becomes good or bad only by the application made of it and the relations given to it” (\textit{Emile} 92). The negative reception of \textit{amour-propre} is probably due to a sort of pop-Rousseauism, which falsely concludes that he rejects everything associated with the development of society, including \textit{amour-propre}.} According to Nicholas Dent, \textit{amour-propre} constitutes a morally neutral “desire or need to secure recognition from others, for an acknowledgement of oneself in their eyes and actions” (\textit{Rousseau} 40). For him, it is the specific form of \textit{amour-propre}, rather than \textit{amour-propre} as such, that is either virtuous or depraved (Dent, \textit{Rousseau} 40). \textit{Emile} provides the basis for this more nuanced interpretation.

Rousseau identifies the exact moment when Emile’s \textit{amour de soi} changes into \textit{amour-propre}. He emphasizes that the nature of this transition will dictate the nature of Emile’s character, for good or evil:

> Since my Emile has until now looked only at himself, the first glance he casts on his fellows leads him to compare himself with them. And the first sentiment aroused in him by this comparison is the desire to be in the first position. This is the point where love of self [\textit{l’amour de soi}] turns into \textit{amour-propre} and where begin to arise all the passions which depend on this one. But to decide whether among these passions the dominant ones in his character will be \textit{humane and gentle} or \textit{cruel and malignant}, whether they will be passions of \textit{beneficence and commiseration} or of \textit{envy and covetousness}, we must know what position he will feel he has among men […] (235, my emphasis)

The concept of \textit{amour-propre} is central to Rousseau’s understanding of human psychology. If Emile’s \textit{amour-propre} develops benignly, he will seek happiness in acts of kindness and magnanimity. If, on the other hand, his \textit{amour-propre} assumes an
aggressive form, he will remain at odds with his fellow men, seeking always to oppress them rather than to offer them compassion and assistance. One thing, however, is certain: as soon as Emile enters society, the development of *amour-propre* is inevitable. *Amour-propre* is the “key to socialization” without which an individual would be utterly indifferent to the other members of his species (O’Hagan 166).

What, then, causes the deformation of *amour-propre* and how can it be avoided? In *Emile*, Rousseau argues that *amour-propre* need not manifest itself as a desire to dominate others. The drive for social recognition can be healthy if it reaffirms, rather than destroys, one’s sense of self-worth. If one compares oneself with others, and the comparisons point to one’s inferiority, one will be dissatisfied with oneself and envious of others. If, however, the comparisons fall in one’s favour, one will be content with oneself and harmless to others. Hence, *amour-propre* only engenders feelings of animosity and aggression in situations where one judges oneself inferior (Bloom, “Introduction” 17). The solution to controlling Emile’s *amour-propre* is thus to ensure that he considers himself in high regard relative to his peers. Indeed Rousseau takes great pains to make sure that is the case. As a child, Emile is not allowed to have contact with the wealthy or the socially advantaged for fear that they might cause him to dissatisfied with his particular lot in life:

> Do you wish, then, to excite and nourish in the heart of a young man the first movements of nascent sensibility and turn his character toward beneficence and goodness? Do not put the seeds of pride, vanity, and envy in him by the deceptive image of the happiness of men. Do not expose his eyes at the outset to the pomp of courts, the splendour of palaces, or the appeal of the theatre. (*Emile* 221-22)

If Emile prefers his station in society to all others, he will be neither envious nor covetous. Yet keeping Emile from developing the aggressive drives of *amour-propre*
is not the same thing as making him kind. A strong sense of self-worth is a necessary, albeit insufficient, prerequisite for the development of a compassionate disposition. In order to experience compassion, Emile must feel that he is not exempt from the suffering of those less fortunate than himself.

Rousseau identifies three maxims that define the human ability to feel compassion, all of which rely on the power of the imagination. The first maxim is that one only identifies with those who are more pitiable than oneself: “Imagination puts us in the place of the miserable man rather than in that of the happy man” (221). Compassion, as Rousseau teaches it, is not a Christian virtue (Bloom, “Introduction” 18). According to him, our ostensibly benevolent compassion is, in actuality, fuelled by self-interest. We see others suffering, and our imaginations place us in their consciousness, allowing us to feel their pain. However, upon reflection, we realize that it is they, not we, who are suffering. This realization is a source of satisfaction. We are now in the position to demonstrate our strength and superiority by helping the individuals in distress. After having aided others less fortunate than ourselves, we feel, and enjoy, the sentiment of our own moral goodness (Bloom, “Introduction”

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33 Clifford Orwin presents some convincing arguments against Rousseau’s maxims on compassion (“Compassion” 321-323). However, my job here is not to assess the validity or invalidity of Rousseau’s theories. I am engaging with eighteenth-century understandings of the imagination’s role in compassion, while at the same time conscious that the last two hundred years have seen extensions and refinements in these areas of thought.

34 For a critical comparison of Rousseau’s theory on compassion with those of Christian and Buddhist thought, see Richard White’s article “Rousseau and the Education of Compassion.”

35 The passage describing man’s initial response to the sight of suffering reads as follows: “If the first sight that strikes him is an object of sadness, the first return to himself is a sentiment of pleasure. In seeing how many ills he is exempt from, he feels himself to be happier than he thought he was” (Emile 229).
18). Thus, Rousseau argues, “pity is sweet” (Emile 221).

As a result, the emotional ties that bind us to the unfortunate are purer than those which attach us to the ostensibly “happy man” (Emile 221). We cannot imaginatively experience the elation of the happy man in the same way we experience the trials and tribulations of the sufferer. On the contrary, we regret, at least on some level, that the happy man’s joy is not our own and resent the fact that he is in no need of our assistance. His independence wounds our amour-propre. However, just because “envy is bitter” that does not mean that we cannot befriend or feel compassion for someone of a superior social status (Emile 221). According to Rousseau, suffering is an experience shared by all men, and as such it is the glue that binds them together: “it is our common miseries which turn our hearts to humanity” (Emile 221). In order to feel compassion for a fortunate man, all we need to do is see past his happiness to the source of his anguish (Reisert 89). Emile, for example, will not be humbled by men of superior wealth and station. He will recognize that their superiority over him is more apparent than real, that it is the product of artificial social structures rather than genuine merit. Furthermore, because wealth and power are artificially contrived, they seldom promote happiness. In fact, they often stand in the way of it. Thus Emile

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36 I agree with Grimsley when he argues that pity is not enough to ensure moral action. He explains that without will, pity would “not produce any moral result […] a man might feel pity for his fellows, but would take no steps to help them” (63). Grimsely’s analysis is implicit in Bloom’s summary of why Rousseau argues “pity is sweet.”

37 Rousseau’s theory on compassion could be considered a glorified version of Schadenfreude: “[Emile] shares the suffering of his fellows; but this sharing is voluntary and sweet. At the same time he enjoys both the pity he has for their ills and the happiness that exempts him from those ills” (Emile 229). Richard Boyd goes one step further, arguing that Rousseau’s theory of compassion is pathological in nature: “Rousseau’s compassionate soul becomes a kind of moral voyeur” (526). Boyd views Rousseau as instrumentalizing the suffering of others for the sake of Emile’s education (525). I disagree with Boyd’s analysis insofar as Rousseau classifies human suffering as inevitable. The suffering exists independent of Emile’s education. Rousseau merely questions how much suffering Emile should be exposed to if he is to remain compassionate. Rousseau doesn’t make people suffer in order to educate Emile. On the contrary, he educates Emile in order to deal compassionately with people’s inevitable suffering.
will have pity, rather than envy, for the well-to-do whose ostensibly favourable social status undermines their natural right to happiness (Neuhouser 179).

Rousseau’s second maxim on compassion explains why it is not enough for Emile to be free of the aggressive drives of *amour-propre* in order to be compassionate. If Emile feels that he is unconditionally superior to his peers, he will neither envy them nor covet their positions, but he will not care about them either. Unwavering vanity, Rousseau explains, suppresses one’s ability to experience compassion: “A young man is hardened and takes pleasure at seeing a sensitive being tormented when a reflection of vanity makes him regard himself as exempt from the same pains as a result of his wisdom or his superiority” (*Emile* 251). According to Rousseau’s second maxim, one must recognize one’s own vulnerability in order to feel compassion: “one pities in others only those ills from which one does not feel oneself exempt” (224). The combination of Rousseau’s first and second maxims suggests that, in order to feel compassion, Emile must consider himself more fortunate than the sufferer at the moment of his suffering, but must not consider himself immune to his misfortunes in

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38 Unlike Kant, Rousseau argues that happiness must be a factor in the development of moral philosophy. He believes the drive for happiness is natural to all sentient creatures and cannot be overcome: “You must be happy, dear Emile. That is the goal of every being which senses. That is the first desire which nature has impressed on us, and the only one which never leaves us” (442). If the conclusions of Rousseau’s moral philosophy appear as austere as Kant’s, which I believe they do, it is not because he discounts the moralist’s desire for happiness. It is more that he believes the drive for happiness can be sublimated into, or satisfied by, a passion for virtue.

39 Rousseau’s second maxim on compassion recalls Thomas Hobbes’s discussion of pity from *Treatise on Human Nature* (1650): “Pity is imagination or fiction of future calamity to ourselves, proceeding from the sense of another man’s present calamity; when when it lighteth on such as we think have not deserved the same, the compassion is the greater, because then there appeareth the more probability that the same may happen to us. For the evil that happeneth to an innocent man, may happen to every man […] The contrary of pity is HARDNESS of heart, proceeding either from slowness of imagination, of from extreme great opinion of their own exemption of the like calamity” (53). The similarity of the two thinkers on this point underlines the fact that Rousseau’s theory of compassion rests on an Hobbesian self-interest, rather than Christian selflessness. According to Clifford Orwin, this is true not only of Rousseau but of the last “three centuries of theorizing about compassion” (“Compassion” 319).
The question thus arises: how is the tutor to secure Emile’s high opinion of himself while simultaneously making him feel susceptible to the fate of the less fortunate? The answer lies, at least partially, in the use of his imagination. Emile is wealthy; he does not need to labour in the fields with the peasants. Yet he will know “the vicissitudes of fortune” (*Emile* 224). He will understand that although he is wealthy today, he could be poor tomorrow. The tutor will show him examples of men who have fallen from the heights of glory into the depths of despair; he will “unsettle and frighten his imagination with the perils by which every man is constantly surrounded” (224). Note that it is not enough for Emile to know, on a rational level, that he is subject to the whims of fortune. His imagination must allow him to feel it. If he can see himself in the position of the tired, the poor and the huddled masses, he will extend his compassion to them.\footnote{The inscription on the Statue of Liberty reads “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.” It is taken from a poem by Emma Lazarus entitled “The New Colossus” (1883). I make the allusion as a means of foreshadowing the connections between Rousseau’s maxims of compassion and his theory of democracy.} If, however, he cannot imagine himself sharing their misery, he will remain cold to their pleas for assistance. Rousseau exemplifies his second maxim with a rhetorical question concerning the behaviour of the wealthy toward the poor: “why are the rich so hard toward the poor? It is because they have no fear of becoming poor” (*Emile* 224). For Rousseau, the imaginative ability to place oneself in someone else’s shoes is a necessary prerequisite for compassion.

Rousseau’s third maxim on compassion demonstrates the failings of the imagination in the face of social prejudice. Rousseau explains that our experience of compassion is not always in proportion to the suffering of the individual. The problem is that we feel compassion based on our perception of suffering rather than on
the scale of suffering itself: “The pity one has for another’s misfortune is measured not by the quantity of that misfortune but by the sentiment which one attributes to those who suffer it” (Emile 225). If we believed that everyone felt as we do, our compassion would correspond to the suffering of the individual in question. But we do not. We distinguish between people based on any number of factors: race, class, gender, etc. These artificial, social distinctions result in the false assumption that people feel differently. We develop a hierarchy of suffering and treat people accordingly. Rousseau illustrates this hierarchy of suffering with yet another explanation for why the rich lack compassion for the poor: “the rich are consoled about the ill they do to the poor, because they assume the latter to be stupid enough to feel nothing of it” (Emile 225). Note the implied connections between accuracy of thought and accuracy of sentiment. According to Rousseau, if one does not think correctly, one will not feel correctly. He believes that if one were to acknowledge the natural equality of men, which is based on sentiment rather than intellect, one would extend one’s compassion equally to the whole of humanity: “To the man who thinks, all the civil distinctions disappear. He sees the same passions, the same sentiments in the hodcarrier and the illustrious man” (Emile 225). Emile, who has been raised to think for himself and to disregard the opinions of others, pities all men equally.

Indeed, the generalization of compassion and its extension to the whole of humanity constitutes one of the twin pillars of social justice, the other being amour de soi (Orwin, “Political Compassion” 298). Expressed differently, if the perversions of amour-propre did not undermine man’s ability to commiserate with others,
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social justice would require no additional psychological support; man’s desire for self-preservation (amour de soi) in addition to his imaginative ability to suffer the blows dealt to another would ensure the tranquility of human relations. But amour-propre is an inevitable by-product of social development and must be dealt with accordingly. It must be made to strengthen, rather than weaken, man’s dedication to the cause of justice.

In an effort to provide a psychological basis for Emile’s social goodness, Rousseau attempts to align the outward-flowing energy of his compassion with the egoism of his amour-propre. The alignment of compassion and amour-propre is not a straightforward process. Compassion, as previously explained, develops out of instinctual pity and imagination, whereas amour-propre develops out of the combined impulses of amour de soi and reason (Fetscher, politische Philosophie 42). To align compassion with amour-propre is thus another way of aligning imagination with reason. Both compassion and amour-propre, Rousseau explains, should be channelled in the same direction and extended to humanity.

The idea of extending one’s compassion to all human beings seems clear enough. If we recognize that all humans feel as we do, then there will be no psychological barrier preventing us from imagining ourselves in their situation. Furthermore, a truly compassionate person would, somewhat selfishly, not want others to suffer because the suffering of others would, in turn, cause suffering to himself.42 The fact that the compassionate man does not desire the suffering of others does not contradict the idea that “pity is sweet.” As explained previously, pity is sweet because, after helping to alleviate the suffering of the other, the compassionate man can enjoy the sentiment of his own moral goodness. If the compassionate man willed, or even caused, the suffering of the other, he would clearly not be able to relish in pity’s sweetness. Furthermore, our exemplary compassionate man recognizes the natural equality of men, meaning he does not possess the sense of superiority (described in conjunction with Rousseau’s second maxim on pity) that would lead him to enjoy someone else’s suffering.

42
passage, Rousseau elaborates on the relationship between compassion and *amour de soi*; he explains how the relationship provides the foundation for the precept of natural law: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

When the strength of an expansive soul makes me identify myself with my fellow, and I feel that I am, so to speak, in him, it is in order not to suffer that I do not want him to suffer. I am interested in him for love of self [l’amour de moi], and the reason for the precept is in nature itself, which inspires in me the desire of my well-being in whatever place I feel my existence. From this I conclude that it is not true that the precepts of natural law are founded on reason alone. They have a base more solid and sure. *Love of men derived from love of self* [l’amour de soi] *is the principle of human justice.* (Emile 235)\(^{43}\)

Clifford Orwin, the English-language scholar who has devoted the most attention to Rousseau’s thoughts on compassion, centres his explanation of the relationship between compassion and *amour de soi* around the above passage (“Political Compassion” 298). For Orwin, Rousseau’s insistence on the role of compassion as a foundation of human justice is his way of countering Hobbes and Locke, who believed that man, on the basis of self-interest alone, could reason his way into an effective commitment to justice. Rousseau, as Orwin notes, believes that reason and *amour de soi* are not enough; man, in order to be just, must have both a rational and an emotional impetus for doing so (“Political Compassion” 299): “In vain does tranquil reason make us approve or criticize; it is only passion which makes us act” (Emile 183). Reason enables Emile to know the good but only passion forces him to pursue it.

Although Rousseau presents compassion as the most effective emotional impetus for behaving justly, he is also conscious of its drawbacks. In *The Social Contract* he expresses doubt that compassion can actually be extended to humanity in the

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\(^{43}\)In this passage, the term self-love refers alternately to *amour de moi* and *amour de soi*, but not *amour-propre* (Emile 523).
manner he advocates in *Emile*. He explains his preference for small states with the claim that, “the sentiment of humanity evaporates and weakens as it is extended over the whole world” (*Social Contract* 219). Kant, too, in his response to *Emile*, denies that a generalized compassion could provide a solid foundation for morality, claiming that “von dem Mitleiden ist nur zu merken daß es niemals | herrschen sondern dem Vermögen und vernünftigen Verlangen | Gutes zu thun muß subordinirt seyn (“Gefühl des Schönen” 46). In *Emile*, as opposed to *The Social Contract*, Rousseau never explicitly denies the ability of compassion to provide the emotional force behind morality. He does however offer an alternative. In addition to placing *amour de soi* in the service of compassion, Rousseau also places compassion in the service of *amour-propre*, thus offering two different passions as potential catalysts for just action. Furthermore, in his alternative foundation for social justice, which he calls “passion for virtue,” compassion is indeed subordinated to the rational desire to do good, just as Kant later prescribed (*Emile* 445).

Having established that *amour de soi* can fuel compassion, it remains for us to examine how compassion relates to the other type of self-love, *amour-propre*, and how the imagination is involved in their relationship. Can *amour-propre*, the ostensible root of social corruption, be redirected such that it offers an emotional incentive for human goodness? This is a particularly difficult question, not least because there are so many different understandings of the term *amour-propre*. As several scholars have already pointed out, compassion is not simply opposed to *amour-propre* (Orwin,

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44Given their differing philosophical methodologies, it is natural that Kant and Rousseau come to different conclusions about how to ground the theory of morality. As Orwin highlights, Rousseau’s praise of compassion is evidence of his “moral realism” (“Political Compassion” 298). Rousseau uses introspection and observation to deduce why humans act morally. Kant, on the other hand, has no interest in empirical realities. The task of the *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* (1785) is a metaphysics of morals, based solely on rational argument not empirical evidence. In it Kant argues “daß alle sittliche Begriffe völlig a priori in der Vernunft ihren Sitz und Ursprung haben” (40).
“Political Compassion” 305; Dent, *An Introduction* 125). In fact, Orwin suggests that commiseration, as the first of Emile’s relative sentiments, depends on the birth of *amour-propre* (“Political Compassion” 305). Natural man, independent and self-sufficient, would not feel the sweetness of compassion. He would feel pity, meaning a pure and innate repugnance at seeing his fellow creature suffer; but, lacking the ability to reflect, he would not distinguish between himself and the sufferer and thus not recognize the relative superiority of his situation. Social man, on the other hand, experiences compassion as a relative sentiment; he compares himself to the sufferer and, provided he himself is not suffering, recognizes the superiority of his own position. This act of comparison is, in fact, the very essence of *amour-propre*. The question then becomes: how will he react? If he reacts with compassion, it is because he recognizes himself in the other. If he reacts with coldness, it is because he fancies himself immune to the other’s pain. Yet I would argue, as does Dent, that this is not the only relationship between compassion and *amour-propre*. Compassion is not simply the outcome of a virtuously developed *amour-propre*. One’s ability to exercise compassion can, in turn, strengthen one’s *amour-propre*. The symbiotic relationship of compassion and *amour-propre* supports what Dent calls Rousseau’s “many-layered relationship of reciprocal care and regard” (*Rousseau Dictionary* 53).

What does Rousseau mean when he says, “let us extend *amour-propre* to other beings. We shall transform it into a virtue” (Emile 252)? The French original reads: “Etendons l’amour-propre sur les autres êtres, nous les transformerons en vertu” (Émile 547). This is one case in which I think Bloom’s translation may significantly distort the original. In the French version, Rousseau commands us to extend our *amour-propre* to “the” other beings, meaning, potentially, to “all” other beings.
Bloom’s translation, by contrast, implies that Rousseau commands us to extend our *amour-propre* to other beings, period (meaning a potentially, though not necessarily, limited number of other beings). The controversy over the translation of this passage mirrors the controversy over its meaning. Some scholars believe that Rousseau intended to write *amour de soi* rather than *amour-propre* (Charvet 85; Horowitz 237). Dent, on the other hand, interprets the passage as it stands. He believes that extending one’s *amour-propre* to others means recognizing that others possess an *amour-propre* similar to one’s own. He explains that if one recognizes the *amour-propre* of others, one naturally develops “the virtue of just respect and honour for each several person as their due and title” (*An Introduction* 144). While I do not disagree with Dent’s interpretation, I would nevertheless like to offer an alternative.

Could extending one’s *amour-propre* mean that one should strive for the esteem and recognition of mankind as a whole rather than the esteem and recognition of particular individuals? If so, what would that entail? My answer is twofold: compassion and justice. According to Rousseau, all men ought to feel compassion with one another because they are all equal and they all suffer. Furthermore, he believes that feelings of compassion form the foundation of social justice. It follows, then, that if one demonstrates universal compassion and implacably just behaviour, one merits, at least in theory, the esteem of one’s fellow men (after all, one has acted in the best interests of humanity). Indeed Rousseau wants Emile to expand his desire

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45Reisert makes a similar argument but from a different angle (109 and 151-52). He concedes that Rousseau wants Emile to develop the “desire to excel in devotion to the common good” (109); yet, he does not demonstrate how this “passion for virtue” arises out of compassion and, ultimately, imagination (*Emile* 445). Nor does he connect the idea of “extending *amour-propre* to other beings” with Emile’s love of humanity. He merely explains that to extend *amour-propre* to other beings means “to identify so much with his neighbors that he come to take pride in their welfare” (151). For him, this key passage is synonymous with saying that Emile has a well-formed conscience (151). Reisert’s reading is the closest I have found to my own; yet, it still differs in significant ways.
for esteem so as to obtain the general esteem of his species, rather than the esteem of particular individuals, whose esteem may or may not be worth having. The idea is that if Emile aspires to gain universal esteem, he will show compassion and behave justly toward everyone. He will not, for example, commit acts of injustice out of a desire to please particular individuals. Rousseau demonstrates the characteristics of a generalized compassion with an example from Emile’s courtship of Sophie. Emile makes plans for an evening rendezvous with his beloved, but fails to appear. He does, however, send word that he has not been injured. When he arrives the next day at the home of Sophie’s parents, he is given a cold reception. Sophie is furious, but Emile does not apologize for his absence. Instead the tutor recounts their adventures from the previous evening. On their way to visit Sophie, he and Emile had stumbled across an injured man. They helped the stranger back to his home only to discover the stranger’s wife, anxious about her husband’s condition, had gone into premature labour. The tutor and Emile spent the entire evening caring for the distressed couple and thus could not make good on their obligation to Sophie. Once the tutor has finished the account of their actions, Emile approaches Sophie, still refusing to apologize. On the contrary, using a “firm” (i.e., not particularly compassionate) voice, he tells her: “do not hope to make me forget the rights of humanity. They are more sacred to me than yours. I will never give them up for you” (441). Sophie, who approves of Emile’s priorities, immediately agrees to marry him. It is implied that a less virtuous young man would have put the desires of his beloved above the desires of a stranger, and that a less virtuous young woman would have been insulted that her lover showed so little regard for her feelings. The episode demonstrates that Emile’s ability to generalize his desire for esteem promotes the cause of justice:
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The less the object of our care is immediately involved with us, the less the illusion of particular interest is to be feared. The more one generalizes this interest, the more it becomes equitable, and then, the love of mankind is nothing other than the love of justice. \((\text{Emile 252, my emphasis})\)

If Emile’s amour-propre had striven for the esteem of particular individuals, he would not have put himself out, and risked angering Sophie, to help a stranger. Instead, Emile generalizes his need for esteem and thus avoids acting unjustly.

The meaning I attribute to the idea of “extending amour-propre” is more egotistical than Dent’s. Dent explains that one has to extend amour-propre and, consequently, respect to others in order to derive any satisfaction from their esteem (\(\text{An Interpretation 144}\)). My interpretation suggests that if one generalizes amour-propre, one need not respect specific individuals in order to gain satisfaction from behaving justly. Indeed Rousseau emphasizes that, in general, “Emile does not esteem men” \((\text{Emile 336})\). Yet he does behave justly. The question, then, is: why? Rousseau answers: because he “pities [men] and is touched by them” \((\text{Emile 336})\). Emile’s heartfelt attachment to the idea of humanity, based on his own amour de soi and compassion, is enough to incite him to just actions. His amour-propre does not strive for the affirmation of particular individuals. It is satisfied with the knowledge that it merits the esteem of mankind as a whole.\(^{46}\)

\(^{46}\) This line of argumentation is further supported by a passage from “Emile and Sophie; or, The Solitaries” (1781), the fragmentary sequel to \(\text{Emile}\) published posthumously. It is an epistolary novel, written in the form of letters from Emile to his tutor Jean-Jacques. In the first of two letters, Emile summarizes some of the pedagogical strategies that Jean-Jacques used to educate him. He explains, for example, Jean-Jacques’s efforts to control his passions: “[N]ot being able to secure myself against all the affections that tie us to things, at least you taught me to select them, to open my soul only to the most nobel, to attach it only to the worthiest objects that are my fellows, to extend, so to speak, the human I over all humanity, and in this manner to preserve myself from the vile passions that concentrate it” \((272, \text{my emphasis})\). Emile describes how the tutor taught him to expand himself over all of humanity in order to protect against the vices of a concentrated amour-propre. To my mind, this passage from “Sophie and Emile” serves to clarify Rousseau’s ambiguous statement about extending one’s amour-propre to other beings. It is clear that the more universal the object of one’s amour-propre, the safer one is from passions such as vanity.
In effect, Rousseau wants to make the love of justice a passion, so that it satisfies not only reason but feeling as well. He qualifies Socrates’ argument that justice is a good in and of itself. For Rousseau, Socratic justice constitutes a valid albeit unrealistic foundation for morality and, by extension, politics. The reason is that Socrates’ explanation of morality, as well as Hobbes’s doctrine of self-interest, attributes too much importance to man’s rationality (Orwin, “Political Compassion” 298). According to Rousseau, man’s rational reasons for acting morally must correspond with his subrational, or sentimental, reasons for doing so. In his Second Discourse, Rousseau explains, that “although it may behove Socrates and Minds of his stamp to acquire virtue through reason, the human Race would have perished long ago if its preservation had depended only on the reasoning of its members” (Discourses 133). Reason fails to ensure justice not because the argument itself is flawed but because it lacks psychological efficacy. Compassion, but also amour-propre, can add an emotional supplement to the arguments of reason, thereby making the pursuit of justice both

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47See book two of Plato’s Republic. Glaucon asks Socrates: “Do you think there is a good of the kind we would choose to have because we value it for its own sake, and not from any desire for its results?” (37). Socrates replies in the affirmative.
beautiful and realistic.\footnote{In a remarkable essay entitled “The Divine Instinct? Rousseau and Conscience,” Jonathan Marks outlines the psychological elements which form Rousseau’s understanding of conscience. To the notion of compassion, which I emphasize, Marks adds gratitude and rhetoric as the founding elements of conscience (577). Although the structure and emphasis of his argument are different from my own, I do not believe the two are incompatible. On the contrary, the development of compassion is one step toward the development of conscience. To be more precise, the development of compassion is the step toward the development of conscience that most directly involves imagination and that is therefore the most central to my argument. I have chosen to discuss compassion rather than conscience because of its relationship to the imagination, and because I believe it offers a more direct comparison with Wieland’s \textit{Agathon}. Levels of compassion help to explain differences of character between Agathon, Hippias, and Archytas. Furthermore, I believe I have made the importance of gratitude, emphasized by Marks, implicit when discussing the “sheltered” nature of Emile’s childhood. As I pointed out, Emile grows up in a non-threatening society, where he believes himself to occupy the most preferable station. It is the safety of this environment which, according to Marks, encourages the general sense of gratitude that Emile needs in order to develop a compassionate disposition. I have expressed the same idea by arguing that Emile must avoid an inflamed \textit{amour-propre} in order to be compassionate. The bottom line is that Emile cannot always be on the defensive. If he is constantly defending his own feeling of self-worth, he will be unable to extend his sensibility to others as he will be entirely wrapped up in himself.}

The claims of \textit{amour-propre} can be satisfied by acts of, and responses to, compassionate behaviour. Dent explains how this mechanism works on an individual basis, but it also holds true once \textit{amour-propre} is generalized and extended to humanity. As Dent explains it, acts of compassion open up the opportunity for people to find “a footing for themselves in the lives, feelings and concerns of other people” (\textit{Rousseau Dictionary} 52). What is more, it is a footing more conducive to social harmony than the competitiveness associated with an inflamed \textit{amour-propre}. If one commits an essentially disinterested act of compassion, it is natural for the beneficiary of the act to feel and express his or her gratitude.\footnote{I say “essentially” disinterested because, as already discussed, Rousseau believes all compassion is, at some level, self-interested. What I mean in this context is that the act of compassion is not tied to tangible gain, financial or otherwise.} The positive regard one obtains for having helped someone in need reaffirms one’s sense of self; one feels one has value and meaning in the opinions of others, which satisfies the demands of \textit{amour-propre}.

For love and friendship to develop out of compassion, as Rousseau believes they
do, the roles of benefactor and beneficiary must be reversed from time to time. If not, the benefactor will come to the conclusion that he is exempt from the pains of the other and become unwilling to help. Alternatively, the beneficiary’s *amour-propre* will suffer feelings of inferiority with respect to his benefactor, which will lead to an upsurge of negative emotions, such as envy and aggression, rather than desired feelings of esteem and gratitude. If, on the contrary, both individuals alternate between the roles of benefactor and beneficiary, they create the possibility of “a steady and enduring bond of mutual confidence and esteem” (Dent, *Rousseau Dictionary* 54).

That said, Rousseau does not reduce love and friendship to alternating expressions of compassion. He merely suggests that feelings of compassion provide the basis for friendly, non-competitive human interaction.

The same psychological mechanism of “care and regard” can be used, with some minor alterations, to establish compassionate human relationships on a global scale. The exploitation of man’s natural compassion, which helps to establish peaceful relations between two individuals, can connect the individual to society at large (Orwin, 138).  

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50In the Second Discourse, Rousseau explains the connection between friendship and compassion as follows: “Benevolence and even friendship are, rightly understood, the products of a constant pity fixed on a particular object: for is desiring that someone not suffer anything but desiring that he be happy?” (132).

51Roger D. Masters makes clear differentiations between two different applications of pity mentioned above: he calls them human affections and human virtues, respectively (Political Philosophy 48-53). For Masters, human virtues exist on the social level. They are a “purified form of *amour-propre*” by which one recognizes the superiority of one’s own situation to the situation of the other and extends compassion unilaterally (Political Philosophy 49). Human affections, he says, exist on an individual level. They are a “reciprocal relation of equality between beings” (49). In general, I find the distinction cogent. However, I think one must be careful when insinuating a direct opposition between the two (cf. Dent, *An Introduction* 133). Human affections and human virtues both depend on one’s assessment of the superiority of one’s own situation to the situation of the other, although for human affections this superiority is necessarily temporary. Furthermore, they both satisfy the demands of *amour-propre*, one by means of particular esteem, the other by means of general esteem. Instead of saying that one is opposed to the other, one could understand human affections as a reciprocal and intimate variety of human virtues, thus emphasizing the similarities rather than the differences.
“Political Compassion” 303). Rousseau asks: “what are generosity, clemency, humanity, if not pity applied to the weak, the guilty, or to the human species in general?” (Discourses 131). Emile, who extends pity to everyone, is generous, clement and humane. But, as Rousseau explains, his ostensible altruism is completely in line with his self-interest: “it must be remembered that all these means by which I take my pupil out of himself, always have, nevertheless, a direct relation to him” (Emile 253).

The question thus arises: how does Emile benefit from his kindness to others? If the individuals he helps do not recognize him as their benefactor, and thus cannot express their gratitude or esteem, then how does he profit from his own goodness? The answer to this question lies in a process of extrapolation. One knows that disinterested acts of kindness toward individuals engender gratitude. One must extrapolate from the individual to the societal such that performing disinterested acts of kindness satisfies one’s *amour-propre* even when one receives no direct expression of thanks or positive regard:

> It will be only after having cultivated his nature in countless ways, after many reflections on his own sentiments and on those he observes in others, that he will be able to get to the point of generalizing his individual notions under the abstract idea of humanity and to join to his particular affections those which make him identify with his species. (Emile 233, my emphasis)

One must recognize one’s self as a force of good regardless of the intangibility of the results. The problem is that the ability to extrapolate in this manner requires a sophisticated level of reasoning and is thus not available to everyone.

Rousseau refers to those who are able to include humanity in their benevolence as “great cosmopolitan souls, who […] follow […] the example of the sovereign Being” (Discourses 160). It is important to note that these extraordinarily compassionate
human beings take God as their example but do not achieve his perfection. Unlike God, humans can never be totally independent of one another.\textsuperscript{52} Even men who appear to have fully generalized their \textit{amour-propre} continue to seek rewards for their goodness. If their goodness were utterly selfless, requiring no worldly recognition, they would be not be men, they would be gods. Indeed the Savoyard Vicar claims that Jesus Christ, having achieved this level of altruism, deserves deification. His was a morality of pure compassion, untouched by \textit{amour-propre}: “When Plato depicts his imaginary just man, covered with all the opprobrium of crime and worthy of all the rewards of virtue, he depicts Jesus Christ feature for feature […] the life and death of Jesus are those of a god” (\textit{Emile} 307-08). Christ’s goodness was absolute; it required no external rewards. Yet for normal human beings moral behaviour arises out of a symbiotic relationship between compassion and \textit{amour-propre}.

Rousseau’s analysis of that relationship offers a convincing psychological explanation for the claim made earlier by Shaftesbury that virtue engenders happiness.\textsuperscript{53} For Shaftesbury, it is man’s inner consciousness of merited esteem that constitutes his ultimate source of happiness (204).\textsuperscript{54} He contends that truly virtuous individuals need no external recognition of their good deeds in order to gain satisfaction for

\textsuperscript{52}Rousseau describes compares men’s dependence on each other with God’s absolute independence as follows: “It is man’s weakness which makes him sociable; it is our common miseries which turn our hearts to humanity; we would owe humanity nothing if we were not men. Every attachment is a sign of insufficiency. If each of us had no need of others, he would hardly think of uniting himself with them. Thus from our very infirmity is born our frail happiness. A truly happy being is a solitary being. God alone enjoys an absolute happiness” (\textit{Emile} 221).

\textsuperscript{53}In his “Inquiry Concerning Virtue or Merit,” Shaftesbury argues that “to have the natural, kindly or generous affections strong and powerful towards the good of the public is to have the chief means and power of self-enjoyment” (\textit{Characteristics} 200).

\textsuperscript{54}Reisert offers an interesting reading of the connection between virtue and happiness in Rousseau’s work (106-140). He argues that Rousseau sees virtue as a necessary albeit insufficient prerequisite for happiness (121).
having performed them (223). Rousseau’s idea of generalizing \textit{amour-propre} offers a cogent explanation for the Shaftesburian identity of virtue and happiness. Individuals who have generalized their \textit{amour-propre} are content with the internal rewards of their just actions. They are content because they know that their good deeds have made them valuable to others, whether or not their efforts are explicitly recognized. Emile’s character is similarly self-sustaining: it “flatters and feeds \textit{amour-propre} with the good witness of [its]self” (436).

Yet the fact that Emile’s good character is self-sustaining does not mean that he is incapable of friendship. He will cherish the esteem of men who recognize and value his goodness. Rousseau explains how Emile’s ideal of friendship differs from that of a bourgeois. The bourgeois lives outside himself, in the opinions of others. His self-esteem is based on the affirmation he gets from others, that is, on their ability to satisfy his \textit{amour-propre} with their positive regard. Emile, who lives wholly within himself, has a different approach:

He will not precisely say to himself, “I rejoice because they approve of me,” but rather, “I rejoice because they approve of what I have done that is good. I rejoice that the people who honor me do themselves honor. So long as they judge so soundly, it will be a fine thing to merit their esteem.” (Emile 339)

It is with precisely this type of logic that Rousseau sees Emile as being good both for himself and for others. Being good for oneself and also for others means being

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\textsuperscript{55}The belief in the ultimate virtue of individuals who perform good for the sake of goodness’s, rather than for social recognition, finds expression in several popular eighteenth-century novels. Both Choderlos de Laclos’s \textit{Les Liaisons dangereuses} (1782) and Sophie von La Roche’s \textit{Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim} (1771) provide examples of rakes who attempt to gain a reputation for virtue by ostensibly performing disinterested acts of charity. In truth, both Laclos’s Vicomte de Valmont and La Roche’s Lord Derby know they are being watched and thus that their “disinterested charity” will be gain them the esteem of their respective love interests. Notably, both authors acknowledge their debt to Rousseau.
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independent of others in the formation of one’s thoughts and sentiments, but, at the same time, being united with them through a similarity of thoughts and sentiments. It denotes a separate togetherness, so to speak.\textsuperscript{56} Wieland, as we will see, explores this concept under the term sympathy, \textit{Sympathie}, giving it more or less moral significance in the various editions of \textit{Agathon}.

According to Bernstein, Shaftesbury’s analysis of how moral goodness engenders happiness opens him up to allegations of moral narcissism (36). Rousseau makes several attempts to guard his own work against such allegations but his success is sometimes questionable (Neuhouser 180). As previously mentioned, the tutor counteracts Emile’s potential for smugness with historical anecdotes about men who have lost their wealth and social standing. Emile’s ability to exercise compassion depends on a lack of personal suffering, and his ability to be generous depends on a surplus of goods.\textsuperscript{57} Thus, aided by anecdotes about ill-fated heroes, the tutor demonstrates for Emile that his compassion and generosity, and the satisfaction he derives from them, are contingent upon a fate over which he has no control. Yet the tutor’s efforts to humble Emile do not stop there. He also allows Emile to experience, first hand, the vulnerability of his privileged social position. Emile is made the “dupe” of scam artists and prostitutes (243). All of this is done in order to ensure that Emile does

\textsuperscript{56}For a strong, detailed analysis of Rousseau’s thoughts on friendship, see Reisert’s \textit{Jean-Jacques Rousseau: A Friend of Virtue} (78-106).

\textsuperscript{57}Rousseau exemplifies the fact that “generosity is an inegalitarian passion” with an anecdote about organized foot racing (Nichols 540). The tutor, prior to taking charge of Emile, had another pupil who was uninterested in running. In order to encourage the child to run, the tutor would organize foot races and would grant the winner a cake. He describes the results of his experiment as follows: “When he [the tutor’s charge] had rarely carried off the prize, he almost always ate it alone, as did his competitors. But, in accustoming himself to victory, he became generous and often shared with the vanquished. That provided a moral observation for me, and I learned thereby what the true principle of generosity is” (\textit{Emile} 142). Nichols contrasts generosity and compassion, claiming that the former presupposes inequality between the benefactor and the beneficiary while the later requires their equality (543).
not give himself credit for his own goodness and thus fall prey to moral narcissism. Rousseau fears he “will be tempted to honor his reason for the work of yours [i.e., his educator] and to attribute his happiness to his own merit [...] in congratulating himself, he will esteem himself more, and in feeling himself to be happier than them [others], he will believe himself worthier to be so” (245). The tutor attempts to undermine Emile’s potential for moral vanity by pointing to the social factors that make his goodness possible. If Emile recognizes that he derives his goodness not only from the strength of his own character but also from fortuitous social circumstances, he will not take full credit for his success and not fall prey to an inflated sense of self.

This reasoning is also reflected in Rousseau’s distinction between pride and vanity. Amour-propre, Rousseau claims, has two potential outcomes: it “becomes pride in great souls, vanity in small ones” (Emile 215). An individual can be conscious, and even proud, of his own moral goodness. But he must also recognize that his superiority is a product of fortuitous circumstances as much as natural merit.58 As is clear from the first sentence of Emile, all men are naturally good. Society is what corrupts them or, as is the case for Emile, helps them to preserve their natural goodness. If an individual gives himself full credit for his goodness, he is morally vain. If, on the contrary, he is humbled by the good fortune that allows him to develop his goodness,

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58 The Savoyard Vicar has his religion to fulfill a similar humbling function. Because he recognizes himself as God’s creation, he does not take credit for his own place in the order of things: “I who am content with the place in which God has put me, I see nothing, except for Him, that is better than my species [...] The effect of this reflection is less to make me proud than to touch me; for this state is not of my choice, and it was not due to the merit of a being who did not yet exist. Can I see myself thus distinguished without congratulating myself on filling this honorable post and without blessing the hand which placed me in it? From my first return to myself there is born in my heart the sentiment of gratitude and benediction for the Author of my species” (Emile 278). Yet, as Nichols points out, this reasoning will not work for Emile because “the vicar’s natural religion may curb his pride, but the contentment to which it gives rise is not sufficient for Rousseau” (549). The Vicar’s reasoning ultimately forces him to place his expectation of happiness in an afterlife. Rousseau wants Emile to enjoy his life on earth.
he is proud. Emile, of course, is proud. He knows he deserves some of the credit for the forming of his own character; yet he is also grateful for the circumstances which supported his development.

In summary, compassion and *amour de soi* provide the foundation for social justice. *Amour-propre*, a necessary by-product of society, can either weaken or strengthen this foundation. An inflamed *amour-propre*, also known as vanity, will weaken man’s natural pity by convincing him that his superior station in life places him above other men. A virtuous *amour-propre*, also known as pride, will reinforce man’s natural compassion by rewarding acts of kindness with a basis for positive self-regard. In the end, *amour-propre* and compassion must collaborate in order to secure man’s pursuit of justice. Hence, the precepts of natural law “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” and “love your neighbour as yourself” can be understood as arising out of the combined efforts of reason and imagination. Justice begins with man’s ability to imaginatively identify with his fellow human beings and ends with his rational conclusion that he may derive pleasure from translating his compassion into acts of kindness. Thus Rousseau integrates an emotional element into his theory of morality, and bridges the gap between sensuality and reason, the body and the spirit. In chapter 4, we will see Wieland’s protagonist Agathon struggling similarly with the interplay between compassion and *amour-propre*.

3.4.4 “There is nothing beautiful except that which is not”\(^{59}\): or, of Love and Sublimation

Just as Rousseau views a “passion for virtue” as a social refinement of man’s instinctual pity, so he understands sentimental love as an elevated form of man’s natural

\(^{59}\)See *Emile* (447).
sexuality. He writes, “observe how the physical leads us unawares to the moral, and how the sweetest laws of love are born little by little from the coarse union of the sexes” (*Emile* 360). For Rousseau, neither compassion nor sentimental love exist in the state of nature. They are both products of education. To be more accurate, they are both products of the imagination whose form is dictated by education.\(^{60}\) In *Emile*, particularly in Books 4 and 5, the tutor attempts to shape his pupil’s imagination in such a way as to promote virtuous conduct, toward both humanity in general and his future wife in particular.

Compassion and love are similar in that they both depend on the imagination but dissimilar in that they demand different levels of emotional reciprocity. One’s compassion is an expression of one’s superfluous sensibility; it places no demands on the other to reciprocate. One is capable of commiseration precisely because one has emotional energy in excess of what one requires. Love, by contrast, requires emotional reciprocation: “Possession which is not reciprocal is nothing” (*Emile* 349). In Rousseau’s view, love is in itself an expression of physical and emotional insufficiency (Bradshaw 74). Human beings have needs which they depend on others to fulfill: “So long as he [Emile] loved nothing, he depended only on himself and his needs. As soon as he loves, he depends on his attachments. Thus are formed the first bonds linking him to his species” (*Emile* 233). In short, Rousseau uses sexuality to socialize Emile because, unlike other basic human drives, sexuality requires the participation of others (Kelly and Grace xxiii).

Yet Rousseau remains uneasy about Emile’s dependence on others and on Sophie in particular. On the one hand, he wants love to play a large role in human life; but, on
the other, he does not want it to undermine the individual’s autonomy. Paradoxically, he wants Emile to love one woman in particular, but he does not want him to love, or be dependent upon, that woman’s particularities. Thus, Emile’s love for Sophie is just that: a love of Sophia, or Wisdom in general, which his imagination projects onto a human form. Essentially Rousseau wants to harness the power of sexual energy to the service of his moral ideals. But in order for the process of sublimation to work, two conditions must be met: Emile’s imagination must be properly formed, and Sophie’s person must provide a suitable projection screen for Emile’s moral ideals.

In Rousseau’s view, order is paramount in preparing the imagination for sentimental love. Emile’s burgeoning imagination must be directed toward objects of compassion before it engages with members of the opposite sex. The reverse order, i.e., sex before compassion, has potentially disastrous consequences for his moral constitution. The libertine, the tutor explains, has an imagination which has been wholly sexualized and is therefore insufficiently compassionate:

I have always seen that young people who are corrupted early and given over to women and debauchery are inhuman and cruel [. . .] Their imagination, filled by a single object, rejected all the rest. They knew neither pity nor mercy. They would have sacrificed fathers, mothers, and the whole universe to the least of their pleasures. (Emile 220, my emphasis)

According to Rousseau, precocious sexual experiences corrupt the individual’s morality because they encourage relationships based on pure physicality. Rousseau doubts

\footnote{Just as I refuse to use gender neutral pronouns to soften Rousseau’s sexist beliefs, I also refuse to gloss over the fact that he adhered to a heterosexual norm. Again, I believe that his analysis is relevant to all forms of sexuality, but that does not change the fact that he viewed males and females as necessary complements: “The social relationship of the sexes is an admirable thing. This partnership produces a moral person of which the woman is the eye and the man is the arm, but they have such a dependence on one another that the woman learns from the man what must be seen and the man learns from the woman what must be done” (Emile 377).}
whether one can open oneself up to the delights of compassion, friendship, and love if one’s imagination has been wholly captivated by the promise of sexual pleasure (Reisert 88). Only if one delays sexual gratification, can one make use of sexuality’s untapped energy by directing it “upwards” toward loftier social goals (Bloom, “Democratic Man” 147). Thus, in a sense, Emile’s education in compassion can be understood as a calculated deferral of his education in sexuality (Schwartz 80). The tutor wants to widen the scope of Emile’s imagination and thus prevent it from becoming fixated on the pursuit of sexual satisfaction. 

In addition to his pedagogy of compassion, the tutor undertakes several other measures to defer Emile’s sexual awakening. All of these measures involve an indirect manipulation of the senses by way of the imagination. More specifically, they are all designed to smother the imagination and thus forestall Emile’s sexual consciousness, either by making sex seem unappealing or by working the body to exhaustion. Relevant examples include: having young boys visit the hospital ward where syphilis is treated (231), speaking about sexual matters in coarse, unappealing language (218) and, last but not least, extensive hunting (320). The tutor summarizes his tactics for postponing Emile’s sexual awakening in a piece of advice to aspiring educators. He tells them to “put [their pupils’] nascent imaginations off the track with objects which, far from inflaming, repress the activity of their senses” (230). For Rousseau, stifling the imagination translates to stifling the senses. If Emile’s imagination can remain silent or occupy itself with other subject matter, his physical desire for sex will either go unnoticed or be channelled in other directions, ideally toward compassionate friendships. This rerouting of sexual energy is possible because sexual energy itself is “amorphous”: adolescents desire without knowing exactly what it is they desire
3.4. “SUCH IS THE EMPIRE AND INFLUENCE OF THE IMAGINATION”

(Schwartz 80).62

The tutor adamantly denies that his manipulations of the imagination are unnatural. On the contrary, he claims that life in society accelerates the development of human sexuality in comparison to what biology would otherwise dictate. Hence his tactics for manipulating the imagination do not delay sexual growth. They merely prevent society from precipitating it: “Nature’s instruction is late and slow; men’s is almost always premature. In the former case the senses wake the imagination; in the latter the imagination wakes the senses” (Emile 215). To illustrate society’s acceleration of sexual development, the tutor points to the differences in pubescent development in urban versus rural areas. In cities, he explains, adults veil their libertine morals beneath “purified language” and the “apish posturings of propriety” (215). But children are not fooled by artifice. On the contrary, the mystery with which city dwellers shroud all matters of sexual import serves only to pique adolescent curiosity and inflame nascent imaginations. In the end, it becomes a matter of pride to know everything there is to know about sexuality, which leads adolescents to experiment with sexual behaviour in order to satisfy their amour-propre rather than

62The character of Cherubino in Pierre Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais’s The Marriage of Figaro (1778) provides a perfect contemporary example of the amorphous quality of adolescent love as described by Rousseau. Cherubino explains the confusion of his sentiments as follows: “I don’t know what’s happening to me. For days, I’ve felt a throbbing in the breast; my heart beats wildly at the mere sight of a woman; the words “love” and “desire” make me tremble and blush. The need to say “I love you” to someone is so urgent I say it when I’m all alone running in the park, to your mistress, to you, to the trees, to the clouds, to the wind that carries them away with my lost words” (248). Cherubino’s description of amorphous love perfectly exemplifies Rousseau’s comments on the subject. It is interesting to compare his statements with the following passage from Emile: “A long restlessness precedes the first desires [...] One desires without knowing what. The blood ferments and is agitated; a superabundance of life seeks to extend itself outward [...] one begins to feel that one is not made to live alone” (Emile 220). Notably, in Agathon, Danae also experiences the amorphous energy of love described by Rousseau: “Sie fühlte [...] einen Schatz von Zärtlichkeit, womit sie nichts anzufangen wusste” (SW 3:259).
any innate biological drives. Corresponding Rousseau claims that “amour-propre produces more libertines than love” (Emile 331). Children raised in rural communities do not struggle with the same issues, because country people prolong the innocence of childhood with their lack of artifice and simplistic morals. Bucolic language, being coarse and literal, does not excite the imagination, which remains latent and does not accelerate sexual development.

The tutor’s manipulations of Emile’s sexual life do not stop at the postponement of sexual desire. Even after Emile has come of age, the tutor continues to manipulate his sexual impulses by steering his imagination. He creates an imaginary moral ideal, Sophie, onto which he encourages Emile to project his libidinous energy. The imagination, instead of helping to repress Emile’s sexual desire, now becomes its primary object (Schwartz 81). The tutor coaches Emile to fall in love with a fabrication of his imagination rather than a woman of flesh and blood:63

It is unimportant whether the object I depict for him is imaginary [...] And what is true love itself if it is not chimera, lie, and illusion? We love the image we make for ourselves far more than we love the object to which we apply it. If we saw what we love exactly as it is, there would be no more love on earth. When we stop loving, the person remains the same as before, but we no longer see her in the same way. The magic veil drops, and love disappears. (Emile 329, my emphasis)

63Glen Baier finds the tutor’s sexualizing of Sophie’s image contradictory to Rousseau’s philosophy as a whole. On the one hand, Rousseau wants Emile to direct his sexual energy at an image in his imagination; he is not allowed to have an external outlet. Other the other hand, Rousseau flatly rejects the practice of masturbation (Baier 258). In general, Baier’s thesis is that Rousseau’s diatribe against masturbation “makes available avenues for social control not justified by his assumptions regarding the nature of autonomous, self-sufficient individuals” (250). I mention Baier’s article, “A Proper Arbiter of Pleasure: Rousseau on the Control of Sexual Desire,” because it highlights some of the inconsistencies of Rousseau’s teaching on sexuality, which although not directly relevant to my argument, are nevertheless good to bear in mind. Ironically, Rousseau, who condemned human exploitation and glorified self-sufficiency, would rather Emile visit a prostitute than resort to masturbation.
For Rousseau, the reality of the imaginary prevails over the reality of the physical world (Eigeldinger, Jean-Jacques Rousseau 7). People are not motivated by what is but by what they perceive. The same is true of Emile. His image of Sophie is far more important to him than the reality of her character. It is based on this image, his personal image of moral perfection, that he strives to ennoble himself. Sophie’s character is important only insofar as it provides proper nourishment for his ideals.

Rousseau views the imagination as the key to moralizing the energy which would otherwise lead to random and emotionally meaningless sexual couplings (Schwartz 75). Rousseau was, in effect, the first modern philosopher to develop the concept of sexual sublimation, whose origins can be traced back to Plato’s Symposium. Yet Rousseau’s theory of sublimation differs substantially from the one later popularized by Sigmund Freud. As Bloom explains, Rousseau emphasizes “the separate dignity of the sublime,” whereas Freud merely reduces “sublime things to their elements” (“Introduction” 16). Both Rousseau and Freud view sentimental love as a cultural sublimation of libidinous energy. But for Rousseau, love is not humbled by its base origins. On the contrary, Emile’s love for Sophie is the sweetest experience of his life as well as the crowning achievement of his moral education. In his attachment to Sophie, Emile succeeds in temporarily harmonizing the natural and the moral sides of his nature, his innate sexual drive and his ideals of the good.64 His desire to marry her is the third and final expression of his beautiful soul (in the Schillerian sense of the term).

Rousseau’s definition of love as something which transcends the gap between the physical and the moral may not have been new in and of itself; but, what was new

64 For an interesting analysis of the similarities between Rousseau’s sublimation of libidinous energy and Diotima’s ladder of love in Plato’s Symposium, see Laurence D. Cooper’s article “Human Nature and the Love of Wisdom: Rousseau’s Hidden (and Modified) Platonism” (117-119).
about Rousseau’s theory of love was his idea to harness the energy of sentimental longing in the service of moral development, to infuse “this pervasive yearning with a moral force,” to deepen “this passionate impulse into an ethical idea” (Berman 189). In Rousseau’s thought, Aphrodite Urania (i.e., moral love) and Aphrodite Pandemos (i.e., physical love) converge to form an indivisible whole; ideals of the good and desires of the flesh commingle to create what has since become known as sentimental love (Babbitt 221). Although the idea of sentimental love held a prominent place in the Zeitgeist of the later eighteenth century, Rousseau’s contemporaries nevertheless paid tribute to his particular variant, as we have already seen in Wieland’s reception of Rousseau’s Julie. Similar to Wieland, the French moralist Joseph Joubert also emphasizes the novelty of Rousseau’s thoughts on love. In his notebook from 24 January 1799, Joubert writes: “J.-J. Rousseau. L’impression de la chair qui touche l’esprit. Jamais homme n’a mieux fait sentir à l’amé et au corps les délices de leur hymen” (190). For Rousseau, body and spirit exist in a symbiotic relationship. The body influences the spirit, and the spirit influences the body. Yet despite their inextricable connection, it is nevertheless important to understand moral love in its own right before describing how it subsumes the power afforded by its physical counterpart.

Laurence D. Cooper contends that Rousseau’s conception of moral love amounts to a “hidden (and modified) Platonism” (“Human Nature” 108). Rousseau, like Diotima in Plato’s Symposium, argues that one should elevate the object of one’s love from the particular to the abstract (Cooper, “Human Nature” 117). According to

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65 “J.J. Rousseau. The impression of the flesh which touches the spirit. No one has ever before made the soul and the body more powerfully feel the delights of their bond.” The translation is my own.

66 The same comparison of Platonic and Rousseauian love is found in Cooper’s article “Human Nature and the Love of Wisdom: Rousseau’s Hidden (and Modified) Platonism” (117-119) and his monograph Eros in Plato, Rousseau, and Nietzsche: the Politics of Infinity (189-192).
Diotima, “love [...] may be described generally as the love of the everlasting possession of the good” (*Symposium* 165). For her, it is better to love the abstract form or idea of the good rather than its necessarily flawed physical incarnation. Similarly, Emile, in loving Sophie, loves nothing more than his ideal of wisdom and goodness, which he projects onto her person. Yet just because Emile’s love is imaginary does not mean its effects are:

> There is no true love without enthusiasm, and *no enthusiasm without an object of perfection, real or chimerical, but always existing in the imagination*. What will enflame lovers for whom this perfection no longer exists and who see in what they love only the object of sensual pleasure. [...] In love everything is only illusion. I admit it. But what is real are the sentiments for the truly beautiful with which love animates us and which it makes us love. This beauty is not in the object one loves; it is the work of our errors. So, what of it? Does the lover any less sacrifice all of his low sentiments to this imaginary model? Does he any the less suffuse his heart with the virtues he attributes to what he holds dear? Does he detach himself any the less from the baseness of the human I? (391)

Rousseau insinuates that if Emile truly knew Sophie, that is, if he knew all of her thoughts and sentiments, he would no longer maintain the same level of enthusiasm for her. Thus, it is his imagination’s ability to idealize her character which allows him to love her with such intensity and to pursue the good he fallaciously associates with her existence. Notably, Rousseau never claims that love is the most worthy means of inspiring moral behaviour. He merely deems it to be the most effectual.

Thus Rousseau’s desire to harness the power of love in the service of moral development is yet another example of his moral realism. Indeed his acknowledgment of love’s moral efficacy reveals a tinge of regret. He calls love “the realm of women” and believes that increasing its cultural importance, for example its role in the theatre, is to “extend the empire of the fair sex” (*Letter to d’Alembert* 47). He acknowledges
love’s potential to effect positive social change but not without reservation: “Nature’s most charming object, the one most able to touch a sensitive heart and to lead it to the good, is, *I admit*, an agreeable and virtuous woman” (*Letter to d’Alembert* 47, my emphasis). Rousseau’s reluctant admission of love’s power to form moral character recalls his ambivalent acceptance of compassion as the basis for social justice. Rousseau admires men like Socrates who found their morality on rational precepts, but he views them as the exception rather than the rule. In general, men require an emotional incentive in order to heed the arguments of reason. Love is merely the most powerful of these incentives. Despite love’s ability to promote goodness, actions whose motivation is either unreflected or purely emotional have no moral value in and of themselves. Rousseau emphasizes that “good is only truly such when reason enlightens it” (*Emile* 94). He concedes that love is capable of inspiring men to goodness, but he insists that their deeds have the mere semblance of goodness unless reason affirms the actions which emotions have engendered.

Rousseau’s definition of moral love can be compared with Platonic love insofar as they both revolve around forms or ideals of the good. But how does Rousseau define goodness? And how do his ideals of goodness differ from Platonic forms? Rousseau’s definition of the good is more psychological than Plato’s, but they nevertheless share

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67I agree with Grimsley who sees the same sort of moral realism motivating Rousseau’s creation of a civil religion: “Rousseau perhaps realized that mere rational assent to sound principles and the more temuous psychological acceptance of patriotic and other feelings might not be effective enough to secure the citizen’s wholehearted loyalty. The idea of civil religion is introduced as a radical, even desperate, attempt to provide the State with an ultimate sanction capable of putting the law above men” (114). Compassion, love, and religion are just a few of Rousseau’s tools for harnessing the passions of men in the service of rational morality.

68At one point Rousseau even describes his use of love in the pursuit of wisdom as utilitarian in nature: “When does he run after wisdom? Happy is the man who is led to it in spite of himself! What difference does it make what guide is used, provided that it leads to the goal?” (*Emile* 431).

69Compare also: “No good action is morally good except when it is done because it is good” (*Emile* 104).
surprisingly similar political implications. Unlike Plato, Rousseau is not primarily a metaphysician. On the contrary, the strength and beauty of his work lies primarily in his moral psychology (Reisert 14). Whereas Plato locates the good in transcendental forms of truth, beauty and justice, Rousseau develops his ideals of goodness within the sphere of human experience. He replaces Plato’s theory of forms with his own ideals of man’s psychological constitution. His emphasis is on natural rather than metaphysical goodness.

Rousseau’s psychological ideals of goodness constitute an “abstention from action […] a kind of rest,” which the political philosopher Leo Strauss brilliantly contrasts with the Faustian ideal of striving (94). Rousseau’s ideals of stasis depend on, or result from, a taming of the imagination and a virtuous development of _amour-propre_. Natural man is good by definition: his imagination is dormant and his self-love expresses itself as _amour de soi_ rather than _amour-propre_. Social man, on the other hand, has lost his natural goodness. His imagination subjects him to infinite desires, and his _amour-propre_ forces him to live in the opinions of others. Rousseau concludes that “what makes man essentially good is to have few needs and to compare himself

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70 I do not include comments from the Savoyard Vicar’s “Profession” in this discussion because the Vicar’s understanding of goodness is more Platonic than the understanding of goodness that Rousseau develops in the rest of _Emile_. For the Vicar, “justice is inseparable from goodness […] for the love of order which produces order is called goodness; and the love of order which preserves order is called justice” (282). I agree with Allan Bloom who emphasizes the differences between the Vicar’s morality and the tutor’s. He explains that “in some sense the Vicar’s “Profession” is meant to make the thoughtful reader measure the difference between conventional morality and the new morality that Rousseau proposes” (Love 84). The Vicar adheres to a Cartesian dualism, a separation of body and spirit, which is not otherwise found in _Emile_. Thus, his definition of goodness cannot be used to clarify Rousseau’s concept of sentimental love, which seeks to harmonize, rather than separate, body and spirit. Arthur M. Melzer takes a similar stance on the issue. His monograph _The Natural Goodness of Man: On the System of Rousseau’s Thought_ surveys Rousseau’s arguments on human goodness but excludes discussion of the Vicar’s “Profession” because of its psychological dualism, which Melzer also contends contradicts Rousseau’s thought as a whole (30).

71 Compare with Cooper’s differentiation between Platonic forms and Rousseauian ideals (“Human Nature” 119).
little to others; what makes him essentially wicked is to have many needs and to de-
pend very much on opinion” (Emile 214). For Rousseau, man’s ability to recapture
his natural goodness depends on his willingness to restrict his needs and exist within
himself rather than in the opinions of others.

As different as Plato and Rousseau’s definitions of goodness are, they nevertheless
have similar political consequences for the development of the state. Both Plato and
Rousseau locate injustice, a manifestation of evil, between the origins of civilization
and the development of luxury goods (Plato, Republic 55; Rousseau, Discourses 151-
60). The similarity of their conclusions lends additional support to Cooper’s thesis
that Rousseau’s concept of moral love constitutes a modified form of Platonism.
Whereas Plato describes the good, the worthiest object of love, as a transcendental
form, Rousseau attempts to locate a complement to that form within the individual’s
moral constitution. Essentially he agrees with Plato’s conclusions but wants to find a
different means of supporting them. Plato and Rousseau both believe that the good
is more than a subjective concept. They disagree with Hobbes who argues the good
is relative to the goals of the individual.72 Both for Plato and for Rousseau, the good
exists independent of men’s desires. The difference is that the former locates it in
heavens, the latter in the human spirit (Melzer 33).

For Rousseau, a purely abstract notion of good, such as the one developed by
Plato, is not enough to inspire men to virtuous actions. Rousseau insists that the
good be associated with a human body. That is where Sophie comes in. But who is
Sophie? And how does she manage to promote Emile’s “passion for virtue”?

72In Leviathan (1651), Hobbes writes “whatsoever is the object of any man’s appetite or desire;
that is it which he for his part calleth good” (42).
Silvia Bovenschen famously belittles Sophie as a papery victim of education, “papierene[s] Erziehungspfleger” (178). Bovenschen’s choice of the adjective “papery” presumably refers to the flatness of Sophie’s character. Sophie does indeed lack the lifeblood of a differentiated individual but, then again, so does Emile. As Shklar explains, Rousseau does not concern himself with the constructs of “unique personality” (54). On the contrary, he believes that “our individuality is the least part of ourselves” (Emile 83). Correspondingly, Sophie never strikes the reader as a character of flesh and blood. Her lack of individuality is typical of characters in the European literary Enlightenment. Wieland, for example, shares Rousseau’s partiality for that which particularly human rather than that which is merely particular.

Since the publication of Silvia Bovenschen’s Die imaginierte Weiblichkeit (1979), many scholars have come to view the eighteenth century’s paradigm shift in the concept of femininity as a regressive step toward inequality. In her seminal monograph, Bovenschen mourns the loss of the early Enlightenment’s ideal of the learned woman and criticizes the sentimental woman, or “beautiful soul,” of the late eighteenth century as a blow to women’s emancipation. In its philosophical form, as theorized by Schiller, the beautiful soul, is indeed idealized and restrictive. However, I would argue that the development of eighteenth-century aesthetics precludes the entrance of such a Schillerian beautiful soul onto the literary scene. The beautiful soul’s perfect harmony of spirit is irreconcilable with the flexibility of thought, upon which literature established its claim to autonomy vis-a-vis other eighteenth-century discourses (Hofmann 37). In her attack on the sentimental woman, Bovenschen references Rousseau’s Emile as a text presenting a conventional and flat portrayal of female character. But is the sentimental woman necessarily as idealized and regressive as Sophie? In opposition to Bovenschen, I maintain that the move away from the early Enlightenment’s ideal of the learned woman is a necessary step, one inherent to the theory of aesthetics. From its very beginning, aesthetics is developed under the banner of humanity, Menschlichkeit. It is conceived as a means ofhumanizing the abstract thought of philosophy, bringing it down to earth, so to speak. With that in mind, it is only logical that authors would not direct their attention toward the bookish female, who represents exactly the type of one-dimensional “Schulfuchs” that early aestheticians sought to criticize. Furthermore, the sentimental woman, as it is depicted in German literary texts, does not represent a regressive step toward women’s inequality. I argue that truly beautiful souls, such as Richardson’s Clarissa, died with the development of eighteenth-century aesthetics. They were replaced by a far more ambivalent female character, struggling, in parallel with aesthetic theory, to strike a balance between physical and metaphysical, the sensual and the spiritual.

As Buddecke explains, Wieland does not hesitate, “die Partei der Aufklärung zu ergreifen und das alte normative Bild vom Menschen gegen den Originalitätswahn der Modernen in Schutz zu nehmen” (65).
the quirky, idiosyncratic variety. Instead of portraying the traits which set humans apart from one another, Rousseau and Wieland concentrate on the traits which bind them together and therefore define their humanity.

Sophie is a personification of goodness and thus Emile’s perfect female compliment: virtuous, proud without being vain, and last but not least, realistic about her lover’s imaginative projections. Her “papery” quality, as offensive as it is to twenty-first-century feminists, is an indispensable part of Rousseau’s theory on how imagination promotes love and, by extension, virtuous conduct. In loving each other, Emile and Sophie love only their ideals of the good. Their passion for each other is nothing more than a passion for virtue which finds its expression in their sentimental attachments to one another.

Rousseau describes Sophie as possessing all of the characteristics which he outlined as definitive of human goodness: she has few material needs and her *amour-propre* manifests itself as a “passion for virtue” rather than a desire for inequality. As a result of her humble upbringing, Sophie has learned to live with relatively few material goods. Her father describes her as unfazed by their lack of wealth: “you [Sophie] make that poverty sweet for us, and you share it without difficulty” (401). Indeed far from desiring the superficialities associated with social and economic success, Sophie’s only aspiration is to be virtuous: “Sophie loves virtue. This love has become her dominant passion” (397).

Yet unlike Emile, Sophie did not develop her “passion for virtue” without the occasional example of human folly. Her initial interest in music was, for example, merely a product of vanity: “she thought only of making her hands appear to advantage on [the organ’s] black keys” (394). Sophie did not enjoy the same pre-emptive
education as Emile. Her imagination was not placed under the same controls, and thus she did not develop the same immunity to social vice. Yet, remarkably, Sophie manages to attain many of the same virtues as her male counterpart, the major exception being moral autonomy which Rousseau describes as undesirable in a female (Emile 370). Despite her rogue imagination, which Rousseau describes as “so active that it is difficult to moderate,” Sophie successfully avoids the evils of an inflamed *amour-propre* (393).75

Sophie’s imagination is, as is the case with Emile, both her strongest asset and her greatest liability. Following Rousseau’s initial description of her character, which emphasizes not only her goodness but also her gaiety, modesty, and domesticity, he relates a cautionary tale about the potentially devastating consequences of her overactive imagination. Upon returning from an extended trip to Paris, which her parents had arranged in order to find her a husband, Sophie’s affect suddenly changes. She becomes distracted, impatient, and worrisomely despondent. Her health begins to deteriorate. As her parents accurately surmise, Sophie has fallen in love. Yet her parents cannot seem to identify the object of her affections. The problem is that instead of falling for a handsome Parisian gallant, as might be expected of a girl of her age, Sophie has become infatuated with the hero of François de Salignac de La Mothe Fénelon’s *The Adventures of Telemachus* (1699). According to Sophie, only someone whose virtues rival those of the fictional Telemachus could satisfy her sentimental longings. Sophie eventually dies, a victim of her own “immoderate desires” (405). Yet immediately after her death, the omnipotent narrator decides to revive her, being careful to equip Sophie’s *doppelgänger* with a more temperate disposition.

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75As evidence of her humility the narrator describes how “she would kiss the ground before the lowliest domestic without this abasement causing her the least discomfort” (Emile 396).
Rousseau acknowledges his mistake: “Let us resuscitate this loveable girl to give her a
less lively imagination and a happier destiny. I wanted to depict an ordinary woman,
and by dint of elevating her soul I have disturbed her reason” (405, my emphasis).
Significantly, Rousseau describes the fatal flaws in his construction of Sophie’s imagi-
nation as a misguided attempt to elevate her soul. That is to say, he underscores the
imagination’s soul-enriching qualities while at the same time cautioning against its
potentially adverse effects on reason. Sophie Number One’s tragic fate enhances our
argument that Rousseau views the imagination as a sublime but potentially dangerous
element of the soul and therefore seeks to align it with reason.

The new Sophie cunningly employs her knowledge of the imagination to captivate
Emile, that is, to fashion herself as a projection screen for his moral ideals. Rousseau
does not explicitly discuss how the process of sublimation takes place. But he does
offer an interesting explanation of how Sophie’s clothing captivates her lover’s imag-
ination, which may be read as a metaphor of how to engage the imagination more
generally. Although Sophie is not vain, she puts great effort into her appearance.
Her outfits seem unstudied but in reality they are a product of conscious delibera-
tion: “not a single piece of her clothing is chosen at random, and yet art is apparent
nowhere. Her adornment is very modest in appearance but very coquettish in fact”
(394). Like Julie’s garden in The New Eloise or Sophie’s country dress in Geschichte
des Fräuleins von Sternheim (1771), Sophie’s outward appearance conforms to the
principles of neoclassical art: it resembles nature but is actually an idealized cultural
recreation of it. Sophie does not dress with modesty for modest’s sake but rather for
the express purpose of igniting Emile’s imagination. She covers her feminine charms
but “in covering them, she knows how to make them imagined […] one would say
that all this very simple attire was put on only to be taken off piece by piece by the imagination” (394). Sophie exposes just enough of herself to inflame the imagination and not enough to obviate its fantasies. Her balance between concealment and disclosure applies to her moral as well as her physical charms.

Rousseau leaves no doubt about the imaginary quality of Emile’s and Sophie’s love for one another. Before they have exchanged a single word, Emile regards her as the Sophie of his tutor’s descriptions and she him as the Telemachus of her dreams (415-17). Yet, it is not true that their attachment has no basis in reality; it does, but it also has an equal footing in their imaginations. Based on their first encounter, Emile knows that Sophie is gentle, sensitive, modest, and respectful but nothing more. Their second meeting does not deepen his understanding of her character. Indeed she purposefully keeps the details of her personality hidden from him: “It is no longer enough for her that he see her charms; she wants him to suppose them. Has he not seen enough of them to be obliged to guess the rest?” (417). Although the narrator poses this question, he attributes the thought behind it to Sophie. Analogous to her coquettishly modest appearance, Sophie’s elusiveness of character is no accident. It is the product of conscious deliberation. Curiously, Emile does not press her for details. The narrator emphasizes the lovers’ mutual desire for secrecy, claiming they “already sense the need for mystery before having said anything to each other” (417). Exactly how Emile and Sophie, two novices in matters of love, understand the psychology behind provocative distance is never explained. Apparently Emile and Sophie are humble enough to understand that the reality of their characters would be no match for the strength of their imaginations. Whatever the case may be, they keep enough

76 Notably Wieland parodies the use of female attire to trigger the male imagination in his “Die Geschichte des Priesters Abulfauaris,” where the priest’s gifts to the African women corrupt the men’s morals by setting their imaginations in play.
of their characters hidden from one another to allow their imaginations ample leeway for narcissistic projections.

Emile’s love for Sophie does not change the trajectory of his moral development; it merely reinforces the course he is already on: “He has new reasons to be himself. This is the single point where he differs from what he was” (Emile 433). Yet the constancy of Emile’s character does not undermine the role that love plays in his development. On the contrary, Rousseau describes love as “the most important and most difficult part of the whole of education” (Emile 415). Because men are ruled by passion and because Emile’s love for Sophie is the most intense passion he will ever experience, it must be made to strengthen, not oppose, his inclination for the good.

In sum, there are two necessary prerequisites to the process of sublimation: the breadth of Emile’s imagination and the suitability of Sophie’s character. Before the onset of adolescence, the tutor undertakes a complex scheme to widen Emile’s imagination. He believes that if Emile’s imagination is confined to the contemplation of sexual pleasure, he will be incapable of love. He argues that in order to proceed from a base physical love to virtue-inspiring moral love, the imagination must be able to create ideals, that is, to envision a reality superior to experience. Yet the mere existence of such ideals is not enough to influence human behaviour. For Emile to pursue his ideals of the good, they must be associated with a human body. The truth of Sophie’s character is secondary to Emile’s ideal vision of her but it is not wholly irrelevant. Sophie is not the incarnation but rather the projection screen for her lover’s ideals. She possesses just enough of the qualities he idealizes in order to ignite his imagination but not enough to constitute his ideal in and of herself. Because it is impossible for her to embody his ideal (her humanity subjects her to flaws just like
everyone else), she must rely on his imagination to furnish her with the perfection she cannot attain. She achieves this by maintaining an air of mystery. She conceals certain truths, in order to keep his imagination active, i.e., in order to support her function as a projection screen for his ideal morality.

Rousseau scholars, dating as far back as Mary Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), have concentrated so much on Sophie’s weaknesses, particularly her lack of moral autonomy, that they have forgotten to acknowledge her strengths. Sophie’s papery quality is not simply the product of her creator’s misguided views on women but, more importantly, of her own keen understanding of human nature. Rousseau equipped Sophie with a formidable understanding of the human imagination and the humility to submit herself to its rule. She knows she cannot be Emile’s ideal and thus settles for being its symbol. Although the twenty-first-century reader may abhor the weaknesses of her femininity, it is hard to discount the strength of her psychological realism. We will encounter a similar strength in the character of Danae, the heroine of Wieland’s *Agathon*.

3.5 “Everything is rooted in politics”*79*

At the height of their courtship, the tutor informs Emile that he must leave Sophie. The tutor’s explanation is simple: Emile’s education is not yet complete.

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*77 “I may be accused of arrogance; still I must declare what I firmly believe, that all the writers who have written on the subject of female education and manners from Rousseau to Dr. Gregory, have contributed to render women more artificial, weak characters, than they would otherwise have been; and, consequently, more useless members of society” (Wollstonecraft 22). See also Bovenschen (178).

*78 For a different refutation of the feminist perspective, see Susan Meld Shell’s “*Emile*: Nature and the Education of Sophie” in *The Cambridge Companion to Rousseau* (272-301).

*79 The full quotation reads: “I had seen that everything is rooted in politics, and that, whatever the circumstances, a people will never be other than the nature of its government makes it” (Rousseau, *Confessions* 395).
Emile understands his physical relationship to things and his moral relationships to men, but he needs to learn more about his relationship to the state as well as his relationship to himself. It is not a coincidence that these last two relationships are dealt with simultaneously. Indeed Emile’s induction to civil society gives rise to a reassessment of the self. As an independent, autonomous being, Emile was free to pursue his natural inclinations, i.e., his particular will. However, as a member of the body politic, Emile must learn to unite his natural inclinations with his social duties, i.e., the simplicity of goodness with the sublimity of virtue or, in political terms, his particular will with the general will of humanity.

There is much debate about how Emile’s moral education corresponds to his political education. Some scholars argue that Emile’s moral education, by making him autonomous and good, prepares him to be a truly democratic human being (Bloom, “Democratic Man” 140; Gay 549). Yet others are quick to point out that Emile does not settle down in a democratic republic but rather on a country estate, which he lords over like a benevolent despot (Jimack, Rousseau: Emile 17). Masters goes so far as to equate Emile with the educational programme of a philosopher-king (Political Philosophy 100). The contradiction between Emile’s democratic capacities and his aristocratic position can be explained by the chasm between Rousseau’s ideal state and his practical concessions to reality.

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80 See also Parry who argues that “more seems to be required [...] than, as Peter Gay has suggested, a society of Emiles if there is to be a reintegration of the good man and the good citizen” (266).

81 The tutor also emphasizes Emile’s leadership skills, claiming: “He is made for guiding, for governing his equals [...] Everywhere he will be first, everywhere he will become the chief of the others. They will always sense his superiority over them. Without wanting to command, he will be the master; without believing they are obeying, they will obey” (Emile 162). Similarly, he claims that “one does not lead the people when one resembles them” (Emile 187).
Although Rousseau idealizes the democratic republic, he also recognizes its incompatibility with human passions. In the end, Rousseau contrasts his ideals, the political as well as the moral, with their realistic counterparts. Democratic republics, he argues, are for those whose passions do not endanger the fulfilment of their duties, i.e., for the gods: “If there were a people who were Gods they would govern themselves democratically. A government so perfect is unsuited to men” (Social Contract 113). Recognizing that neither Emile nor his contemporaries are capable of maintaining complete control over their passions, he adjusts his political vision to include other forms of government.

Rousseau’s thought, the moral as well as the political, is characterized by a sustained tension between his ideals and the concessions he makes to reality. As Timothy O’Hagan explains, Rousseau’s ideal of democracy corresponds to his preference for moral beauty, in the same manner his distrust of non-democratic governments corresponds to his suspicion of virtue: “just as Rousseau’s political theory tells us that a social order based on force is by definition illegitimate, so, in his understanding of the human soul, he is never fully reconciled to the morality of virtue and duty” (26). Forcing oneself to submit to the dictates of reason and duty rather than follow one’s natural inclinations is analogous to submitting oneself to the laws of the state rather than one’s own convictions. Ideally, one’s duties should be one’s inclinations and the laws of one’s state should be the laws of one’s conscience. Indeed, such a state would constitute a utopia. It would require neither morality nor laws, for, as Rousseau argues, “the wise man does not need laws” (Emile 91). Human passions are the

82With reference to Rousseau’s concept of the wise man not needing laws, Gay stresses the rift between Rousseau’s political thought and Enlightenment liberalism. The Enlightenment tries to delimit the spheres of public authority and private freedom, treating the two as existing in a perpetual state of combat. Rousseau, on the other hand, eliminates the boundaries all together: “he was, after all, not a liberal. Rousseau’s citizen is at once ruler and ruled, lawgiver and subject” (Gay 550).
3.5. “EVERYTHING IS ROOTED IN POLITICS”

driving force behind morality and law insofar as they cause a division between what one wants to do and what one ought to do. As soon as Emile acquires such a passion, e.g., his desire for Sophie, he must begin to recognize laws exterior to himself.

However, in fulfilling the tutor’s request to separate himself from Sophie, Emile is not subjecting himself to the same state of dividedness, the same rift between inclination and duty, which his education was designed to avoid. Before Emile developed his passion for Sophie, he made a promise to the tutor. His promise contained the essence of the social contract (Bloom, “Introduction” 26). The tutor explained that there would come a time when Emile’s long-term happiness would depend on his ability to follow the tutor’s advice in direct opposition to his own desires. He then asked Emile if he would promise to do so, and Emile gave his assent.83 Hence, in separating himself from Sophie, Emile is not so much subjecting himself to the will of the tutor as he is subjecting himself to his own will, as it manifested itself before his passion took hold of him. The social contract that binds men together in a political state is Emile’s promise to the tutor writ large.

Rousseau maintains that Emile must, and will, confirm the social contract, but he is less particular about the type of state he should inhabit. Book 5 of Emile contains

83 The tutor explains the necessity of complementing Emile’s moral beauty with the capacity for virtue: “It is in vain that I have dipped your soul in the Styx; I was not able to make it everywhere invulnerable. A new enemy is arising which you have not learned to conquer and from which I can no longer save you. This enemy is yourself [. . . ] now your [sic!] are bound to all the attachments you have given yourself. In learning to desire, you have made yourself the slave of your desires” (443). Basically, the tutor argues that Emile can either be a slave to his passions or a slave to his promise. Once his passion takes over his reason, he is no longer in control of himself.

For those who argue that the signing of the social contract, i.e., the subjugation of the individual will to the general will, results in a totalitarian mentality, Rousseau offers the following defence of individualism: “If ever you substitute in his mind authority for reason, he will no longer reason” (Emile 168). In making his promise to the tutor, Emile is not substituting his own reason for the authority of the tutor. He is using his reason to safeguard himself against situations in which he will no longer be capable of reason: “Inasmuch as the individuals have subjected themselves only to the sovereign, and the sovereign authority is nothing other than the general will, we shall see how each man who obeys the sovereign obeys only himself” (Emile 461).
an abbreviated version of Rousseau’s *Social Contract*, which argues that each form of
government “is the best in certain cases, and the worst in others” (109). After Emile
leaves Sophie, he undertakes an extended journey, a political *Bildungsreise* of sorts.
During his time abroad, Emile learns about the various types of states which exist,
so that he will be better equipped to choose one for his permanent residency.

Emile’s education has brought him as close to moral beauty and thus as close to
Rousseau’s democratic ideal as possible. The correspondence between Emile’s nature
and his social existence, i.e., between his particular will and the general will of hu-
manity, is, as I have attempted to demonstrate throughout this chapter, inextricably
linked to the development of his imagination. The tutor has formed Emile’s imagina-
tion in order to guard him against materialism, fanaticism, egoism, and libertinism.
Conversely, he has opened Emile’s imagination to include an understanding of natural
theology, a passion for virtue, and a love of Sophie. It is at these points of tangency
that Emile’s natural inclinations coincide with his social duties. It is at these points
of tangency that he becomes a beautiful soul. However, Emile is not a man, not a
god; he has unruly passions which produce a rift between his particular will and the
general will of humanity. For such moments, he has his promise to the tutor, i.e.,
the social contract, which subjects him to reason, when he would otherwise enslave
himself to passion. In the next chapter, I argue that despite differences in narrative
and pedagogical approach, Wieland agrees with Rousseau about the importance of
the imagination in moral development. Just like Rousseau, Wieland views the imag-
ination as forming the bridge between the natural and the social, the body and the
spirit.
Chapter 4

The Pedagogy of Agathon’s Imagination: From Platonic *Schwärmerei* to Natural Religion, Cosmopolitan Enthusiasm, and Love

4.1 *Agathon* through the Lens of *Emile*

In both *Emile* and *Agathon*, ambivalence toward the imagination, an appreciation for its merits as well as a distrust of its excesses, pervades the fictional content of the text. In *Agathon*, however, this ambivalence is also thematized on a metafictional level. Although the entire premise of *Emile* is the rearing of an imaginary pupil under imaginary conditions, Rousseau’s narrator does not actively reflect on the role of imagination in the creation or reception of his text. In my introduction, I argued that Rousseau employs novelistic elements in order to appeal to his reader’s imagination, but exactly why he chooses to animate his pupil rather than present his argument in purely abstract, philosophical terms is never explicitly stated.

In the preface to *Emile*, Rousseau remarks that his readers are likely to perceive
the text less as an educational treatise than as a “visionary’s dreams about education” (Emile 34). Yet aside from this prefatory remark, Rousseau’s narrator remains silent on the subject of his own imagination, concentrating exclusively on the development of Emile’s. Bell thus calls Emile a “transitional” text, situating it between the literalistic illusionism of the sentimental novel and the formal self-consciousness of its modern counterpart (Open Secrets 47). Emile is “transitional” insofar as the narrator concedes that it is fictional but does not openly address the motivations or consequences of its fictionality.

Wieland’s narrator takes the exact opposite approach. He both denies that Agathon is a product of the imagination and, in open and direct contradiction to that denial, continually discusses the role of the imagination in the creation and reception of his text. I argue, in line with Ellis Shookman, that the narrator’s ambivalence toward the use of the imagination in the production of fiction mirrors his ambivalence toward the role of the imagination in the development of Agathon’s moral constitution (Noble Lies 69).

Agathon constitutes a dialectic between narrated imagination and the narrator’s imagination.¹ In the novel’s original preface (“Vorbericht zur ersten Ausgabe”) and historical preamble (“Über das Historische im Agathon”), the narrator thematizes his own self-conscious regulation of the imagination, while lamenting his protagonist’s unwillingness to do so. However, as the novel progresses, the narrator’s and the protagonist’s relationships to the imagination converge. As Agathon becomes more and more willing to tame his idealistic imagination, the narrator becomes increasingly willing to accept an element of imaginative idealism. In the utopian ending of the

¹Wolfgang Preisendanz argues that the novel represents a dialectic between narrated subjectivity and the narrator’s subjectivity (85). I have adapted his thesis to suit the theme of my study.
novel’s third version, both Agathon and the narrator display more imagination than the narrator initially deemed acceptable (Shookman, *Noble Lies* 69). The narrator himself acknowledges that his imagination outstrips the realm of the plausible in his description of Tarentum, the utopian republic where Agathon ultimately finds refuge from an otherwise morally and politically corrupt world. The contrast between the pessimism of the narrator’s empirical account of human nature, which characterizes the bulk of the novel, and the optimism of his self-consciously utopian conclusion produces a structural irony, which extends into his analysis of the imagination. The narrator’s pessimism indicates that he views the pleasures of the imagination in the same manner as Hippias, that is, as mere imitations of their sensual counterparts and thus incapable of offering epistemological support for Agathon’s ideals of virtue. But the novel’s optimistic ending suggests that the narrator elevates the pleasures of the imagination above those of the senses and hence corroborates Agathon’s conception of morality.

Similar to Rousseau, Wieland identifies the imagination as the foundation of his protagonist’s morality. Reading *Agathon* through the lens of *Emile* thus provides a new perspective on the text’s ambivalent portrayal of the imagination. Although sufficient attention has been paid to the pitfalls of the hero’s *Schwärmerei*, less has been said about the benefits of his imagination. Yet the narrator clearly states that Agathon’s heated imagination, his so-called *Schwärmerei*, provides the source for his weaknesses as well as his strengths: it is “die Quelle seiner Fehler sowohl

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2 Shookman, to whose work on the intersection of imagination in Wieland’s ethics and poetics I am greatly indebted, argues that the narrator’s view of the imagination aligns with Hippias’s, because they both cite the extraordinary pleasures that the imagination affords as well as the errors of judgement that too much of it can cause (*Noble Lies* 60).

3 Thomé draws attention to the abundance of scholarship on the problems surrounding Agathon’s *Schwärmerei* (“Menschliche Natur” 208).
Agathon’s youthful imagination causes him to develop erroneous notions of the divine, human nature, and love, which he ultimately abandons. However, after real-world experiences shatter the foundation of his Platonic idealism, Agathon rebuilds his belief in moral virtue. He bases his new “passion for virtue” on an anthropological rather than a Platonic worldview, but it is no less a product of the imagination. Wieland argues, as Rousseau does, that the laws of morality develop, with the aid of the imagination, out of the laws of nature. What is more, he portrays the ladder that elevates human beings above nature or, more accurately, that provides human beings with a second nature, as constructed out of the imaginative components of natural religion, cosmopolitan enthusiasm, and sentimental love.

Reading Agathon as dialectic between narrated imagination and the narrator’s imagination means exploring the ways in which the protagonist’s relationship to the imagination merges with the narrator’s (and vice versa). The protagonist tames his imagination, eliminating those aspects which are antithetical to reason. But what of the narrator’s development? I read the narrator’s decision to place Agathon in a utopian republic, thus allowing him to maintain some elements of his moral idealism, as an act of compassion, the circumstances of which stand in direct contradiction to his self-imposed empiricist aesthetic. Indeed, the narrator advocates an objective presentation of truth, but routinely plays the part of a compassionate friend (Budde

4Note that we defined anthropology as the science “Körper und Seele in ihren gegenseitigen Verhältnissen, Einschränkungen und Beziehungen zusammen zu betrachten” (Platner qtd. in Schings, Melancholie und Aufklärung 24).

5See Klaus Oettinger’s Phantasie und Erfahrung: Studien zur Erzählpoetik Christoph Martin Wielands for a historical contextualization and analysis of Wieland’s empiricist aesthetics (53-100). Sascha Michel and Werner Frick also make analogies between the narrator’s and Hippias’s empiricism (101 and 422, respectively).
53; Michel 106). After having stripped Agathon of the irrational excesses of his imagination, the narrator allows himself an imaginative excess. The narrator subverts his text’s original claims to empiricism in the name of compassion. The text’s narrative method begins, as Schings argues, “auf den Gleisen des Hippias/Helvétius,” but it ends with a concession to Agathon’s conception of virtue (“Pathologie” 47).

Wieland, like Rousseau, advocates a pedagogy of the imagination as a path to moral beauty. Both authors view natural religion, compassion, and love as the products of a well-formed imagination and, in turn, as the foundation for their moral and political ideals. However, the narrator both promotes Agathon’s quest for moral beauty as an ideal and decries it as a fallacy. Furthermore, the novel presents several other perspectives on morality, including those of Hippias and Archytas, which are predicated on reason rather than imagination. Notably, both Hippias and Archytas are described as lacking in imagination, albeit with opposing outcomes for their moral principles. Hippias espouses a form of hedonistic materialism, which views the pleasures of the imagination as mere imitations of the pleasures of the senses. Archytas, whom I compare to Rousseau’s Savoyard Vicar, advocates an austere philosophy of virtue, which considers neither the pleasures of the imagination nor the pleasures of the senses but relies instead solely on reason. Agathon tries to synthesize these two

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7 Frank Krause does not use the word compassion to describe the narrator’s subversive act, but he comes rather close: “Im offenen Widerspruch zur Ausrichtung der Fiktion am Maßstab empirischer Wahrscheinlichkeit verteidigt Wieland mit ästhetischen Mitteln das Ideal diesseitigen Tugendlohns notfalls auch gegen den herzlosen Verstand” (20). For me, Krause’s assertion that the narrator’s subverts his own aesthetic “in opposition to heartless reason” is interesting because it implies that the narrator’s decision has an emotional foundation. Others, such as Martini, have suggested that Wieland’s inability to let his hero suffer has more to do with his vestiges of Enlightenment optimism, or “sein Lebenswille, sein eigenes Lebensvertrauen” (955).
8 Thöme formulates the same point from a different perspective: “Auch innerhalb der naturwissenschaftlichen Denkformen sind Momente des ‘Höheren’ gewahrt” (Roman und Naturwissenschaften 127).
seemingly irreconcilable extremes, i.e., the sensual and the moral. But, in the end, he subscribes to Archytas’s dualism, to an irresolvable conflict between body and spirit, natural inclinations and moral duties. In accordance with Archytas’s philosophy, he assigns primacy to the mind over the body, to duty over inclination. Thus, on the discursive level of the text, one-sided rationality of the mind triumphs over the conciliatory nature of the imagination.

Yet the text maintains its analogy between the status of the imagination in fiction and the status of the imagination in moral beauty. On a philosophical level, Agathon cannot refute Archytas, or even Hippias for that matter. But Geschichte des Agathon is not a purely philosophical text. It is also a literary text, which argues as much with images as it does with philosophical discourse. Along these lines, Horst Thomé describes the purpose of the text’s fictional images as the endorsement or rejection of the various philosophies: “Die Überprüfung der Ideologien im fiktiven Gang der Geschichte ist das zentrale Moment des Romans” (“Menschliche Natur” 215).  

Wieland’s narrator also emphasizes the importance of images for the novel’s thematic argument. I read the following passage as providing a metafictional reflection on the relationship of philosophical discourse and literary imagery in Agathon as a whole. In it, the narrator justifies his unwillingness to offer an explicit refutation of Hippias’s materialism by claiming that Agathon has already done so. Agathon loses the philosophical debate in which he attempts to defend his idealism against Hippias’s materialism. However, he succeeds on a different, more important, plane of argumentation:

9Erhart comes to a similar conclusion, i.e., that the text’s literary images extend the philosophical debates onto another level: “Die Einbindung des Dialogs in ein narratives Kontinuum rückt die moralphilosophische Thematik von ihrer diskursiv einlösaren Geltung auf die Ebene ästhetischer Erfahrbarkeit” (Entzweieung 104). But Erhart does not believe that the fictional elements offer a better solution than the philosophical arguments.
Agathon widerlegt den Hippias beynahe auf die nehmliche Art, wie Dio-
genesis den Metafysiker, welcher läüngnete, daß eine Bewegung sey. Der 
Metafysiker führte seinen Beweis durch Distinkzionen und Schlussreden; 
und Diogenes widerlegte ihn, indem er, ohne ein Wort zu sagen, davon 
ging. (XX)

If you recall, Rousseau uses the exact same classical reference in order to illustrate 
an effective alignment of reason and imagination. In my introduction, I argued 
that Diogenes’s physical refutation of Zeno’s abstract argumentation exemplifies both 
Rousseau’s and Wieland’s pedagogical methods, which favour first-hand experience 
over abstract theorizing. Both Rousseau and Wieland believe in learning by experi-
ence rather than instruction. Their choice of fictional over abstract argumentation 
reflects this belief. Similar to Diogenes’s demonstrative leave-taking, literary images 
embody their argument instead of presenting it in purely abstract terms. They align 
reason and imagination in an effort to appeal to the spirit as well as the senses. Just 
as the text can only refute Hippias’s materialism by displaying Agathon’s virtuous 
conduct, so it can only undermine Archytas’s one-sided rationality by demonstrating 
the manifold connections between body and soul.

That is not to say, however, that the text endorses Agathon’s quest for moral 
beauty, or that it rejects Archytas’s worldly wisdom. On the contrary, the text cre-
ates the same tension around Archytas’s philosophy as it does around the philosophies 
of Agathon and Hippias. Wolfgang Paulsen trenchantly summarizes Wieland’s am-
bivalent relationship to his characters: “Er [. . . ] war dauernd darauf bedacht, seinen 
erzählerrischen Standort zu ihnen zu wechseln, ihnen seinen eigenen Atem mitzugeben, 
sich aber auch wieder ironisch von ihnen zu distanzieren, als ob sie nicht Kinder seines

10Relatedly, Bell’s thesis for Agathon is that “rather than concentrating on what the hero learns, 
the book exposes the failures of teaching and persuasion” (Open Secrets 67).
Geistes wären” (146). Although Paulsen cogently describes Wieland’s perspectival approach to character development, he does not extend his analysis to Archytas, whom he views as an unqualified ideal (188). Indeed, it is standard practice to view Archytas’s philosophy as the novel’s final and unqualified word on moral philosophy (McCarthy, *Fantasy and Reality* 91; Wellbery 601). Wieland himself promotes such a reading by referencing the final dialog between Agathon and Archytas as the crown of his three-decade-long project. In the preface to the novel’s third version, he explains his reasons for reworking the text in third person:

> Aber seine hauptsächlichste Bemühung war darauf gerichtet […] *dem moralischen Plane des Werkes durch den neu hinzugekommenen Dialog zwischen Agathon und Archytas […] die Krone aufzusetzen*, und vermittelst alles dieses das Ganze in die möglichste Übereinstimmung mit der ersten Idee desselben zu bringen. (1:XXVI)

Yet in a text in which the judgements of the narrator are constantly undermined by the judgements or actions of the characters, it is curious that anyone would regard this particular statement as containing an unequivocal truth (cf. Jacobs, *Prosa der Aufklärung* 173-75). The author himself does not assign universality to Archytas’s philosophy. In a letter to his daughter, Sophie Reinhold, on 26 November 1796, Wieland distances himself, albeit regretfully, from Archytas, explaining that his last book *Agathodämon* (1796/97) is a better reflection of his own beliefs. *Agathodämon* constitutes:

> das Allerheiligste meiner eigenen Haus Philosophie […] welche leider! nicht die Philosophie des Archytas im Agathon ist. Ich sage leider! weil ich in der That um meines innern Vergnügens und Gewinns an Zufriedenheit u Seelenruhe willen, wünschen möchte, wie Archytas zu glauben. Aber auch glauben hängt nicht mehr von meiner Willkür ab, als die Einrichtung meiner äusserlichen Umstände – und ich muß glauben was ich glaube, wie
ich mir gefallen lassen muß was ich nicht ändern kann. (Briefwechsel 13.1:426, my emphasis)

Wieland, who acknowledges Agathon as his fictional alter ego, confesses that no amount of force could convert him to Archytas’s way of thinking, regardless of his rational assent to Archytas’s philosophy. Wieland compares the intractability of his inner constitution to the immutability of his external circumstances, implying that one cannot change one’s beliefs just because one considers it advantageous to do so.

Relatedly, scholarship on Agathon has begun to draw attention to the text’s subtle subversion of Archytas’s philosophy. Jürgen Jacobs suggests, for example, that the narrator’s vitality stands in contrast to Archytas’s austerity, “daß der Erzähler zu einer sehr viel freieren, sinnenfreundlicheren Haltung neigt, als das die strenge Philosophie des Archytas” (Prosa der Aufklärung 175). Jan-Dirk Müller argues that Archytas’s perfection is the unique product of his disposition and circumstances and thus incompatible with Agathon’s path of development (90). Furthermore, Sascha Michel claims that Archytas’s solutions to Agathon’s identity crisis are presented with a rhetoric of violence (120-26). It is the same type of violence, I would add, that Wieland appears to have used on himself. In the above-cited letter to Sophie Reinhold, Wieland insinuates that he, like Agathon, tried to force himself to adapt Archytas’s philosophy, but that something in his inner constitution made it impossible for him to so.

The final version of Wieland’s novel contains indications that the same is true

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11To clarify, Jacobs argues that Archytas is supposed to represent the universal answer to the irresolvable internal contradictions of Agathon’s existence, but that the text fails in its endeavours to come to a univocal conclusion (Prosa der Aufklärung 173-75). Jacobs sees the tension between Archytas and the narrator as part of Wieland’s failure rather than as proof of Wieland’s desire to keep the text’s central questions open to interpretation. I agree with Jacobs that the text lacks the harmony that the preface foreshadows, but I disagree that we should take the argument of the preface at face value.
for Agathon, that something in his inner constitution prevents him from adopting Archytas’s rationalistic Weltanschauung. Shookman’s reading of Agathon’s intertextual links to Euripides’s ion suggests the unbridgeable gap between the eponymous hero and his wise mentor results from the former’s “Dionysian aspects” (“Intertextuality” 208). Approaching the topic from Rousseau’s Emile rather than Euripides’s Ion, I read the division between Agathon and Archytas as a product of their opposing relationships to the imagination. In this vein, I would like to deepen existing scepticism surrounding the universality of Archytas’s rationalistic philosophy. Using a comparison of Rousseau’s “Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar” and Wieland’s “Darstellung der Lebensweisheit des Archytas,” I suggest that Wieland, following Rousseau’s lead, creates a tension between the philosophy espoused in Archytas’s autofictional intertext and the thematic argument of the novel as a whole. Ultimately I argue that Archytas is both touted as a humanitarian ideal and criticized for his inhumane practices.

Read in this manner, Agathon demonstrates traits of the Menippean satire. Indeed, characterizing Agathon as a Menippean satire throws Wieland’s anti-systematic thought into sharp relief. In contrast to the novel, the Menippean satire “deals less with people than with mental attitudes” (Frye 309). According to Northrop Frey, it is “stylized rather than naturalistic and presents people as mouthpieces of the ideas they represent” (Frye 309). In relation to the satirical element, Frey argues that “[t]he novelist sees evil and folly as social diseases, but the Menippean satirist sees them as

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12 I refer to Rousseau’s “Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar” and Wieland’s “Darstellung der Lebensweisheit des Archytas” as autofictional intertexts. I use the term “autofictional” to denote the texts’ status as fictional autobiographies and the term “intertext” to reference their position as texts within texts. Other eighteenth-century examples of the autofictional intertext include: “The Man of the Hill” from book eight of Henry Fielding’s Tom Jones and “Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele” from book six of Johann Wolfgang Goethe’s Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre.
4.1. **AGATHON THROUGH THE LENS OF **EMILE 177

diseases of the intellect, as a kind of maddened pedantry” (309). Correspondingly, the narrator of *Agathon* presents three distinct intellectual patterns in the characters of Hippias, Agathon, and Archytas, all of which merit different combinations of praise and censure.

Through the lens of *Emile*, I read *Agathon* as outlining the possibilities and limitations of the imagination in the development of various moral perspectives. 13 Both texts describe the imagination as providing an emotional foundation for moral beauty through its involvement in religion, moral sentiments, and love. But both texts also acknowledge that reason, as it is employed by bastions of wisdom such as the Savoyard Vicar and Archytas, provides the foundation for a morality of duty and virtue, which, though not as emotionally endearing as moral beauty, demonstrates superior strength and stability.

This chapter is divided into seven parts which mirror those of the chapter on Rousseau’s *Emile*. The main difference is that the second section (4.2) explores the narrator’s metafictional discussions on the role of imagination in fiction, which was not relevant to my discussion of *Emile*. It provides the framework for my analysis of the imagination in *Agathon* by exposing the levels of irony on which that discussion takes place. The third and fourth sections compare the foundation and trajectory of Agathon’s education to Emile’s (4.3-4.4). The fifth section explores the role of the imagination in the development of Agathon’s moral constitution, in particular the changes in his relationships to natural religion, compassion, and sentimental love.

13 According to Vietta, both *Don Sylvio* and *Agathon* demonstrate the importance of multiple perspectives. The difference is, however, that *Agathon* grounds the existence of multiple perspectives in the activity of the imagination: “Der entscheidende Schritt des *Agathon* über den *Don Sylvio* hinaus liegt darin, daß er die konfligierenden Weltanschauungen [. . . ] auf die Tätigkeit der Einbildungskraft zurückführt (201). I second Vietta’s argument and I expand his analysis to include a discussion of the imagination’s particular role in the development of natural theology, compassion, and love.
4.2. DISTRUST OF IMAGINATION IN IMAGINATIVE FICTION

I argue that despite fundamental differences in their conceptions of education, Rousseau and Wieland ultimately come to similar conclusions about how to reconcile natural man and civil society. The imaginative components of natural religion, compassion, and love play the central role in both Emile’s and Agathon’s attempts to bridge the two sides of their nature. Following the discussion on imagination, I allow myself a short excursus, in which I discuss the relationship between the novel’s autofictional intertexts (“Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar” and “Lebensdarstellung des Archytas”) and the larger frame-narratives (4.6). The seventh and final section of the chapter draws parallels between the text’s presentation of moral and political ideals (4.7).

4.2 Distrust of Imagination in Imaginative Fiction

The narrator expresses his initial ambivalence toward the imagination through a metafictional discussion of his text’s historical source. In the opening line of the original preface, the narrator openly acknowledges that his reader is unlikely to believe his claims about the text’s status as a historical document and thus declares it inadvisable to make such a claim. Yet he simultaneously refers to himself as an editor (Herausgeber), not as an author or a narrator, thus implicitly making the claim he explicitly renounces (Erhart, Entzweiung 110). The ambivalence of this first line, its irresolvable ironic tension, characterizes the text’s treatment of its own fictionality.14

This same ambivalence may be seen in the text’s title. The German term “Geschichte”

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14Uwe Wirth correctly describes the first line of the preface as a performative contradiction, “einen performativen Widerspruch” (123). He compares it, and the preface as a whole, to the preface of Rousseau’s Julie, explaining the different ways in which each author uses the technique of performative contradiction (123-25).
can denote either a story or a history. In the historical preamble, the narrator openly acknowledges that *Geschichte des Agathon* is a work of the imagination (i.e., a story). However, he also claims that it merits the name “history” because of its credible presentation of the past: “daß ein Buch (ob es gleich in einem andern Sinne unter die Werke der Einbildskraft gehört) des Nahmens einer Geschichte nicht unwürdig sey” (1:5). The narrator claims that his text, regardless of its fictional trappings, is just as historical as the texts of Herodotus and Livy (1:XII).

The narrator does not want to write a novel, but nor does he desire to compose a factually-based historical account. He attributes his disinterest in the novel to novelists’ overuse of the imagination. He argues that novelists inappropriately exploit the powers of their own imaginations in order to engage the imaginations of their readers. Their willingness to disregard the laws of nature in favour of the sublime and the marvellous gives them an unfair advantage in obtaining the reader’s approbation. While preparing the reader for the ostensibly regrettable loss of Agathon’s virtue, i.e., his first sexual encounter with Danae, the narrator laments his own status as a historian or *Geschichtsschreiber*. He claims ironically that if he were a novelist he would have been able to save Agathon from disgrace, but as a historian he must adhere to truth: “Wie groß ist in diesem Stücke der Vortheil eines Romandichters [...] wenn seine Dichtungen durch den mächtigen Reitz des Erhabnen und Erstaunlichen schon sicher genug sind, unsere Einbildungskraft auf seine Seite zu bringen” (1:251). This lamentation is, of course, deeply ironic because the narrator can change his aesthetic approach anytime he chooses: he could, and eventually does, save Agathon from the morally corrupting influence of society. At this point in the story, however, saving

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15 Adelung’s entry for “Geschichte” lists both meanings, i.e., history and story, under the first heading/subsection: “Was geschehen ist, eine geschehene Sache [...]” and “in weiterer Bedeutung auch erdichtete Begebenheiten” (2:606).
Agathon from Danae’s seduction would conflict with one of the narrator’s main goals, which is to demonstrate the fate of a sheltered idealist who enters society. However, by reflecting on the decision of whether or not to save Agathon, the narrator does, in fact, accomplish one of his other goals, which is “to make it [Agathon] into a work of conscious art, highlighting the process of moral assessment” (Bell, *Open Secrets* 65).

In accordance with his goal of making self-reflexive art, the narrator draws an unflattering parallel between the novelist’s disregard for the laws of nature and Prometheus’s creation of demigods and goddesses. The *Sturm und Drang* and Romantic movements also compare the artist to Prometheus, but they do so in order to celebrate the artist’s creative capacities. That Wieland uses the Prometheus-artist comparison in a negative light reflects the distance between himself and the younger generation, between a classical and a romantic imagination, a “Nachahmungs – und Schöpfungsästhetik” (Oettinger 78). Wieland’s narrator expresses a desire to imitate nature, not reinvent it. Yet his expression of this desire is only half genuine. In the end, he proves himself more than willing to bend the laws of nature, as long as the process of bending itself is thematized. The narrator is interested neither in the literalistic illusionism of sentimental novels, which contain too much of the author’s unreflected imagination, nor in strictly factual histories, which contain none at all.

His main objection to a factual relation of historical events aligns with Aristotelian poetics, which values “the universal” of the literary text more than “the particular” of the historical text (Thomé, *Roman und Naturwissenschaft* 191). The exact lines from Aristotle’s *Poetics* read as follows: “The historian and the poet are not distinguished by their use of verse or prose [...] The distinction is this: the one says what has happened, the other the kind of thing that would happen [...] Poetry tends to express universals, and history particulars” (16).
Its claim to legitimacy lies not in historicity but in a higher form of truth, which Wolfgang Preisendanz aptly describes as psychological and sociological plausibility (92). Wieland’s narrator explains his empiricist aesthetic as follows:

Die Wahrheit, welche von einem Werke, wie dasjenige ist [...] besteht darin: daß alles mit dem Laufe der Welt übereinstimme; daß die Karakter nicht bloß willkürlich nach der Fantasie oder den Absichten des Verfassers gebildet, sondern aus dem unerschöpflichen Vorrathe der Natur selbst hergenommen seyen; daß in der Entwicklung derselben sowohl die innere als die relative Möglichkeit, die Beschaffenheit des menschlichen Herzens, die Natur einer jeden Leidenschaft, mit allen den besondern Farben und Schattierungen, welche sie durch den Individualkarakter und die Umstände jeder Person bekommen, aus genaueste beybehalten [...] kurz, daß alles so gedichtet sey, daß sich kein hinlänglicher Grund angeben lasse, warum es nicht gerade so, wie es erzählt wird, hätte geschehen können. (1:X-XI.)

In order to achieve his goal of psychological and sociological verisimilitude, the narrator is allowed to use his imagination but only in a controlled, self-conscious manner. He can fabricate details of his characters’ lives, but he must always offer a plausible psychological motivation for their actions. Wieland’s narratology thus aligns with Lessing’s dramatic theory insofar as they both require, “Begebenheiten […] die ineinander gegründet sind, nur Ketten von Ursachen und Wirkungen” (Hamburgische Dramaturgie 329).17 As a consequence, Lessing praises Agathon as “der erste und einzige Roman für den denkenden Kopf von klassischem Geschmacke’ (Hamburgische Dramaturgie 531). Wieland’s commitment to psychological realism has already been addressed in our discussion of his Beyträge. In that context we argued that his

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17Friedrich von Blanckenburg was the first to describe Wieland’s empiricist aesthetic in the spirit of Lessing’s Hamburgische Dramaturgie (1767-69) (Buddecke 162). In the Versuch über den Roman (1774), Blanckenburg explains: “Der Dichter hat in seinem Werke Charaktere und Begebenheiten unter einander zu ordnen und zu verknüpfen. Diese müssen nun [...] so unter einander verbunden seyn, daß sie gegenseitig Ursache und Wirkung sind, woraus ein Ganzes entsteht” (314).
criticism of Rousseau’s idealized depiction of humankind is unfounded, because both authors acknowledge the necessity of creating realistic characters, i.e., characters who are subject to moral weakness.

In sharp contrast to the psychological realism of their character development, both Wieland and Lessing make use of coincidence as the driving force of their plots. They both insist that the behaviour of their characters be psychologically plausible, but they are less concerned with the apparent plausibility of external circumstances. Take, for example, the coincidence of Agathon’s reunion with Psyche aboard the pirate ship or, to name another pair of sibling-lovers, the young templar’s rescue of Recha in Nathan der Weise. To be fair, Wieland’s narrator does acknowledge some exceptions to his claims of plausibility; however, he does not specify exactly which events constitute an exception. The reader is thus unable to distinguish between what the narrator deems “authenticated reality” and what he rejects as “decorative embroidery” (Swales 40).

Agathon himself recognizes the unlikelihood of his path in life and compares it to a dream: “Wie ähnlich ist alles dieß einem Fiebertraum, wo die schwärmende Fantasie ohne Ordnung, ohne Wahrscheinlichkeit, ohne Zeit oder Ort in Betracht zu ziehen, die betäubte Seele [...] fortreißt” (1:55)? He also ponders whether the dreamlike quality of his life undermines his belief in divine providence: “Und ist denn das Leben ein Traum [...] ein unbeständiges Spiel des blinden Zufalls” (1:55)? The protagonist, whom the narrator accuses of being a Schwärmer, now describes his life, whose details the narrator has invented, as the unlikely and disorganized product of a “schwärmende Fantasie” (1:55). Hence, the text’s structural irony targets both the naive protagonist and the unreliable narrator, cutting deep into the text’s already
shaky foundation. Whom is the reader supposed to believe? The protagonist is, in effect, questioning the reliability of the narrator, who has, in his turn, already questioned the reliability of the protagonist.\textsuperscript{18}

Yet the narrator and the protagonist demonstrate different types of unreliability: the narrator’s consists of developing an unrealistic series of events, whereas Agathon’s consists in holding an unrealistic understanding of human nature. Ironi-cally, Agathon’s reservations about the plot’s realism are dispelled by the novel’s happy end. The seemingly unrealistic coincidences become, to Agathon’s mind, more realistic because they result in a utopia, which validates his belief in the order and benevolence of creation. Agathon decides not to question his destiny, in particular his separation from Danae, because it causes him to be reunited with his sister Psyche and acquainted with his mentor Archytas (3:262). Yet, just as Agathon reaffirms his belief in divine providence, the narrator suddenly concedes that his plot has been artificially contrived in order to ensure the happiness of his protagonist.

The narrator knows that his readers will expect Danae’s return after Psyche has been revealed as Agathon’s biological sister and thus removed as a possible love interest.\textsuperscript{19} He anticipates, or perhaps prefigures, his readers’ incredulity by giving voice to their potential reservations: “Ohne Zweifel wird man nun auch die Dame Danae von irgend einem dienstwilligen Sturmwind herzbe führen lassen” (3:203).

\textsuperscript{18}Rüdiger Campe situates Agathon’s discussion of “improbable probability” in the context of eighteenth-century debates on the nature of evidence. Campe suggests that the protagonist and the editor/narrator offer contradictory solutions to the paradox of “improbable probability,” that the paradox itself reads “differently depending on whether one is outside or inside the narrated world” (155).

\textsuperscript{19}In the eighteenth century, aesthetic expectation was closely aligned with the doctrine of Providence or Leibniz’s “best of all possible worlds.” For example, in Hamburgische Dramaturgie Lessing quotes Aristotle, explaining that it would be ghastly to kill a wholly innocent man or even to render him unhappy: “man muß keinen ganz guten Mann, ohne alle sein Verschulden, in der Tragödie unglücklich werden lassen; denn so was sei gräßlich” (590).
Ironically, the narrator does in fact use the Classical/Baroque topos of a fortuitous storm in order to reintroduce Danae into the plot. He defends the unrealistic nature of Danae’s sudden appearance with reference to the positive effects it has on Agathon’s state of mind. In response to his readers’ hypothetical objections to her arrival, he questions: “warum nicht, da wir nun einmahl wissen, wie glücklich wir unsern Freund Agathon dadurch machen könnten?” (3:204). The narrator is not the only one to recognize the improbability of Agathon’s and Danae’s reunion. One of Danae’s slaves also expresses her disbelief: “Was für ein Zufall es ist! Wer hätte sich das nur im Traum einbilden können?” (3:221). At the beginning of the novel, the narrator explains his text as adhering to the laws of nature and probability. At the end, he acknowledges that he fabricates an unrealistic turn of events in order to make his protagonist happy.

Yet the narrator’s assessment of the plausibility or implausibility of the text’s conclusion is not the only perspective that the reader has to consider. Agathon, who found his life’s path from Delphi to Smyrna unrealistic, interprets his arrival in Tarcentum as the consequential fulfilment of divine providence. One might be inclined to assign more credibility to the narrator, but an interesting role reversal has undermined the integrity of the narrator’s point of view vis-à-vis Agathon’s. The narrator, who sets out to write a history, concludes by writing a novel, whereas the protagonist, whose imagination initially possesses a novelistic turn, “einen romanhaften Schwung,” finishes by producing a credible history (SW 1:95).

Agathon, in an effort to procure the advice of his mentor Archytas, relates his life story in written form. He purposely avoids narrating his memoirs orally, because he fears that the excitement of an oral delivery would trigger his imagination and
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subsequently undermine the factuality of his account:

Die Besorgniff, daß ihm bei einer mündlichen Erzählung, im Feuer der unvermerkt sich erhitzenden Einbildungskraft, mancher erheblicher Umstand entfallen, oder ohne seinen Willen manches in ein verschönerndes Licht, manches in einen zu dunkeln Schatten gestellt werden könnte, brachte ihn auf den Gedanken, seine Beichte schriftlich abzulegen. (3:361)

The description of Agathon’s autobiographical project thus spotlights his wilful suppression of his poetic imagination, “dichterische[ ] Einbildungskraft,” in favour of a more objective relation of events (SW 1:111). The increased credibility of Agathon’s perspective suggests that the reader needs to take the novel’s demonstration of divine providence seriously (Michel 71). Wellbery argues that the tension between psychological realism of the characters and structural idealism of the plot is one of the definitive characteristics of Agathon.20 Wellbery’s argument is of particular interest to us because he places the imagination at the centre of Wieland’s psychology, asserting that “die Einbildungskraft die Hauptkompetenz des Protagonisten ausmacht, während die Teleologie dessen narrative Verlaufsfüriger organisirt” (601). The narrator’s perspective is not the novel’s final word on truth. Wieland, as I have argued elsewhere, is a perspectivist. He juxtaposes the perspective of his narrator with those of his characters, without privileging one over the others (Vietta 199).21 The ironic tension produced by the existence of contradictory and irreconcilable perspectives is one the most characteristic and endearing traits of Wieland’s novel.

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20 The tension between the causality of character development and the teleology of the plot also forms the crux of Werner Frick’s argument. He claims, “daß man sowohl der strukturellen Anlage als auch der philosophischen Problematik näher kommt, wenn man ihn aus einer spannungsvollen Kontamination deskriptiver und normativer, kausaler und teleologischer Motive und Tendenzen verstehet” (392).

21 Vietta defines Wieland’s aesthetic by its polyperspectivity. He explains, “daß Wielands Dichtung wesentlich nicht den Weg einer nur sich selbst begründenden, keinem weiteren Sein verpflichteten Phantastik gegangen ist, sondern den der Mimesis von Wirklichkeit als Kampffeld konfigierender Einstellungen und Weltanschauungen” (182).
Wieland himself professes his love of irony in a letter to Sophie von La Roche from 17 November 1767, the same year he completes the first edition of *Agathon*: “Vous n’aimez pas infiniment l’Ironie, qui, je l’avoue est ma figure favorite, et pour laquelle je me flatte d’avoir quelque talent. C’est un talent assez dangereux, il est vrai” (*Briefwechsel* 3:481). Wieland locates truth, or truths, not in a single point of view but in the dialogical movement of thought. Hence, the reader should interpret events in *Agathon* neither as pure coincidence nor as unequivocal proof of divine Providence, but weigh both options equally. Agathon demonstrates this flexibility of thought when narrating his life-story to Danae. He describes the forces which reunited him with his father as coincidence or a compassionate deity, “Zufall oder eine mitleidige Gottheit” (2:68). It is interesting that Agathon mirrors his creator’s flexibility of thought during a transitional episode in his life. When he recounts the story of his youth to Danae, Agathon has already relinquished his Platonic idealism, but not yet embraced the philosophies of Hippias or Archytas. Thus, it is at a time when Agathon’s thought is devoid of a coherent system that he demonstrates Wieland’s characteristic openness.

Notably, it is Hippias who draws attention to the novelistic turn of Agathon’s poetic imagination, the “romanhaften Schwung” of his “dichterische[ ] Einbildungskraft” (*SW* 1:95; *SW* 1:111). Hippias argues that a lively imagination has its place in literature but not in philosophy. On one level, Hippias’s comments constitute an example of verbal irony or meiosis, because he uses the adjectives “novelesque” and “poetic” in a derogatory or belittling sense within the context of a novel. But, on another level, they also promote an element of structural irony, which figures prominently in

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22 Krause reads the novel’s ambivalent ending as forming part of Wieland’s argument for the autonomy of literature vis-à-vis other discourses: “Als ungesicherte Fiktion beansprucht der Schluß des Romans ästhetische Wahrheit” (21).
the novel’s dialectic of imagination. Through the mouthpiece of Hippias, the narrator reemphasizes the difference between his protagonist’s imagination and his own. Hippias’s description of Agathon’s “novelesque” imagination echoes the narrator’s own criticism of the novelist’s imagination. Both Hippias and the narrator caution against the “novel” imagination because of its tendency to idealize or otherwise distort reality. Yet what does it say about the narrator if he aligns his position on the imagination with that of Hippias? Should the similarities of their positions raise concerns about the moral consequences of the narrator’s distrust of imagination? In short, do the narrator’s proposed restrictions on the imagination result in Hippias’s materialism? Shookman argues that they do. He claims that “adhering consistently to the workaday world, as the narrator plans, would make him [the narrator], in literature, what Hippias is in life, a cynic whose system proves the folly of high moral ideals” (Noble Lies 65). Correspondingly, Shookman explains the narrator’s deviation from his empiricist aesthetic as an attempt to distance himself from Hippias’s materialism. Seen in this light, the text’s “novelesque” ending reflects a shift in the narrator’s stance on the imagination. The narrator replaces Hippias’s strict empiricism with an example of Agathon’s imaginative idealism, though not without a smattering of his characteristic irony.

In a final attempt to obscure the text’s origins, the narrator renews his claims of having used an ancient Greek manuscript as the source of his narrative. The narrator does not claim, however, to possess Agathon’s original journal but rather a copy or “Abschrift” (1:51), which has already been edited and interpreted by an ancient

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23 Michel explores the connection between the narrator and Hippias from the perspective of rhetoric rather than imagination, coming, however, to a similar conclusion, namely “daß sie [the irony of the rhetoric] den Herausgeber als Sophisten enttarnt – und damit in die Nähe der später auftretenden Romanfigur Hippias rückt” (84).
4.2. DISTRUST OF IMAGINATION IN IMAGINATIVE FICTION

Greek author, “der Griechische Autor” (1:270; 1:274). Nevertheless, the narrator maintains that Agathon’s personal autobiography is “probably” the source of his narrative, “nach aller Wahrscheinlichkeit die erste und reinste Quelle ist, woraus die in diesem Werk enthaltenen Nachrichten geschöpft sind” (SW 3:362, my emphasis). The narrator, who initially refuses to make an explicit statement about the text’s status as a historical document, now posits a conjecture about its origins. But the tentativeness of his conjecture causes yet another irritation. Why does he raise uncertainty about his text’s relationship to Agathon’s original autobiography? Why does he cast doubt on the credibility of his source? By placing an unnamed, elusive Greek author between Agathon’s biography and the text of Agathon, Wieland’s narrator destroys any claims he had to authenticity or narrative transparency. As Uwe Wirth explains, he creates a “space in between” authorship and editorship (122). The reader can determine neither who developed the plot nor how much of the plot he or she should consider plausible or implausible. By undermining the reader’s ability

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24 The first and second versions of Agathon contain three chapters in which the Greek author figures prominently: 1) “Nachricht an den Leser” (retitled “Worinn der Autor der griechischen Handschrift redet” in the version of 1773) 2) “Moralischer Zustand unsers Helden” 3) “Apologie des griechischen Autors.” As the purpose of my study in not to compare the various versions of Agathon, I will not go into detail about how the absence of these chapters changes the status of the Greek author within the third version. I will say, however, that history of the text’s origins (from Agathon’s journal over the Greek author’s manuscript to the eighteenth-century European remake) is less evident in the novel’s final version. Only two comments referring to “der Griechische Autor” remain. Both comments express the Greek author’s regret that the happiness of Agathon and Danae was so short-lived. It seems as if the contemporary narrator does not feel comfortable expressing his regret at the end of Agathon’s and Danae’s romance and therefore expressed the possibility of such regret indirectly through the mouth of his elusive Greek author.

25 Michel argues along the same lines: “Die eigentliche Ironie von Wielands Agathon [besteht] gerade darin, daß nicht einmal ein verläßlicher ‘Ursprung’ der ironischen Rede ausgemacht werden kann” (78). He reflects the absence of a credible narrative source by referring to the “Herausgeber/Erzähler” rather than an editor or a narrator (107). Furthermore, he underlines the reader’s inability to differentiate plausible from implausible: “Die Ambiguität von Wielands Agathon resultiert in erster Linie daraus, daß der Roman bei allem gegen Leibniz gerichteten Bewußtsein für die Verstrickung in ontologische Kontingenz doch nicht von dem Anspruch ablassen kann, die Geschichte des Agathon als Theodizee – und somit als Harmonie, Archie und Teleologie zugleich – zu erzählen” (94).
to answer questions about origin and plausibility, the text suggests that it is not so much the answers which are important but the questions themselves. Elizabeth Boa articulates this shift in emphasis. She writes, “Agathon raises many questions. Its fascination lies in its uncertainty of answer” (196). Authentic or inauthentic, plausible or implausible: Wieland suggests it does not matter as long as one explores the questions.26

In the coming sections, I show that the text’s discussion of the role of imagination in fiction mirrors its discussion of the role of the imagination in moral philosophy. The morality of a Schwärmer is akin to the fiction of a novelist: its imaginative component is emotionally compelling but psychologically unrealistic. The morality of an Archytas is comparable to the factual report of a historian: it holds an undeniable claim to truth but fails to account for the emotional dimension of human existence. Agathon’s quest for moral beauty reflects the narrator’s own ambivalent stance on the imagination: both Agathon and the narrator strive to combine compelling emotionality with undeniable truth. Ultimately the text undermines the transparency of its moral ideals in the same manner as it destroys the transparency of its narrative method. In the end, it offers no firm answers to the moral questions it poses, merely exploration.27

26 My emphasis on the narrator’s shift from answers to questions is a variation on the main argument of Wirth’s article to the extent that both theses articulate the importance of reader reflection: “Meine These ist nun, dass zur Darstellung dieses Konflikts die ‘Vorredenreflexion’ von der Mitte des 18. Jahrhunderts an in Form eines inszenierten performativen Selbstwiderspruchs vollzogen wird, der den Leser/die Leserin zum ‘Selbstdenken’ auffordert” (123).

27 Erhart makes a similar claim: Agathon “verankert die Problemlösung […] in einem nicht fixierbaren, ungefährten Raum, den die Theorie wie eine Leerstelle zu umkreisen versucht” (Entzweiung 267-68).
4.3 “Schwärmeriey unsers Helden”: the Foundation of Agathon’s Education

The starting point of Agathon’s education stands in direct opposition to that of Rousseau’s Emile. Emile’s education is preemptive. The tutor rears him from infancy to manhood, from the state of nature to his induction to civil society, ensuring all the while that his reason never errs and his imagination never strays. In contrast to Rousseau, Wieland’s pedagogical interests do not lie in the education of children but rather in the education of the self. In a letter to Zimmermann dated 5 December 1758, the same time he begins to contemplate Agathon, Wieland articulates a shift in his pedagogical focus: “Ehmals habe ich öfters gewünscht, mit jungen Kindern eine Probe einer Education zu machen […] Itzt hat mich die Erfahrung vieles gelehrt daß ich vor 5 Jahren nicht wußte. Ich habe genug mit mir selbst zu thun etc.” (Briefwechsel 1:392). Wieland translates his interest in the education of others into an interest in the formation of the self (Minden 64). Agathon’s education is, as a consequence, characterized by self-correction. Wieland’s protagonist does not so much learn truths as unlearn fallacies: In Agathon, so Wolfgang Paulsen, “[wird] eine Ver-bildung rückgängig gemacht, ein Fehler korrigiert” (157).²⁸

At the beginning of the narrative Agathon displays the overactive imagination that Emile’s tutor took such pains to avoid. Whereas Emile, an embodiment of the scientific method, believes only what he has the ability to prove, Agathon holds the products of his imagination or “innerliche Ahnungen” as an adequate foundation for his Platonic worldview (SW 1:82). Furthermore, Agathon’s pathological Schwärmeriey

²⁸There is a growing list of scholars who reject the classification of Agathon as a Bildungsroman including Jürgen Jacobs (Wilhelm Meister und seine Brüder 57-63), Wolfgang Paulsen (159), and Gerd Hemmerich (11).
is characterized by the very mind-body dualism which Rousseau’s *Emile* was explicitly designed to overcome.

The term “pathology” may seem rather harsh given the ostensible innocuousness of Agathon’s enthusiastic musings. Yet use of the term is in fact justified. It is supported both by the comparative nature of the present study, recent scholarship on *Agathon*, as well as a close reading of the novel’s first two chapters.

Rousseau attributes the moral decline of civil society to a fundamental disconnect between man’s natural inclinations and his social duties, a disconnect whose source he locates in the infinitely expansive quality of the imagination. Agathon, whose overzealous imagination causes him to disown his body and repress his natural inclinations, suffers from precisely this divide. Wieland, like Rousseau, acknowledges the pathology of his protagonist’s condition; but, unlike Rousseau, he does not view it as incurable. Whereas Rousseau attempts to minimize the distance between inclination and duty through a rigorously controlled development of the imagination, Wieland believes that experience will lead his protagonist on the path to self-correction, that is, to a wilful regulation of his own imaginative faculty.

Hans-Jürgen Schings, Manfred Engel, and David E. Wellbery also read Agathon’s *Schwärmerei* as a pathology of the imagination ("Pathologie" 42-47; 468-83; 603-15, respectively). They demonstrate that Agathon’s struggle to overcome his *Schwärmerei*, or pathologically enthusiastic imagination, allegorically reenacts the epistemological turn of the eighteenth century. According to Schings, *Geschichte des Agathon* depicts the hero’s transition from an idealistic belief system to an anthropological worldview as a healing process, which targets the pathologies of his imagination ("Pathologie"
4.3. THE FOUNDATION OF AGATHON’S EDUCATION

44). Schings lends biographical support to his use of the term “pathology” by explaining how Johann Georg Zimmermann, the man who had helped Wieland make his own transition from metaphysician to empirical thinker, used the term “Pathologie der Phantasie” in his medical practice (“Der anthropologische Roman” 252).

A careful reading of the novel’s first two chapters confirms our suspicions about the pathological nature of Agathon’s imagination and deepens our understanding of its particular form. Agathon, who has just been dispossessed of his fortune and exiled from his home in Athens, is undertaking a pilgrimage to Asia in search of the spiritual source of eastern philosophy. He is alone, on foot, and unsure of his whereabouts. In hopes of obtaining a better view of his surroundings, he endeavours to climb a nearby mountain. When he is halfway to the summit, Agathon, who is tired and weary from travelling, throws himself under a tree and decides to rest for the night. Agathon’s trek up the mountainside recalls a well-known eighteenth-century mountain topos, an example of which can be found in the frontispiece of Christian Wolff’s *Vernünftige Gedanken von der Menschen Tun und Lassen* (1720). The illustration features a mountain whose peak is bathed in sunlight while the base is covered by clouds. The emblem can be interpreted in light of the epistemological schema outlined in Leibniz’s *Reflections on Knowledge, Truth and Ideas* (1684) (Pugh 119). The sunbathed mountaintop represents the domain of clear representations associated with abstract sciences of mathematics, logic, and metaphysics. The clouds surrounding the base of the mountain represent the domain of clear but confused depictions associated with man’s empirical knowledge of the world, i.e., the knowledge he derives from his senses. Wieland’s evocation of this well-known mountain topos literally and figuratively sets the stage for his hero’s epistemological struggle. In accordance with the traditional
literary formula, the mountain’s peak represents Agathon’s ultimate goal, the attainment of pure, metaphysical truth. The base of the mountain represents Hippias’s world, the realm of sensual knowledge.\textsuperscript{29} The difference is, however, that the sun no longer shines on the mountain’s peak. Indeed the first line of the novel reads: “Die Sonne neigte sich bereits zum Untergang” (1:25). In the fictional world of Wieland’s _Agathon_, philosophical abstractions no longer lay claim to perfect clarity. On the contrary, Agathon’s Platonic idealism proves untenable when confronted with the reality of human experience. Wieland’s mountain analogy depicts his hero aspiring, and failing, to reach the summit, i.e, the realm of pure thought.\textsuperscript{30} Agathon must seek refuge somewhere in the middle, between the foot of the mountain and its peak, between the base sensuality of the materialists and the abstract knowledge of Platonic idealists. The image of Agathon’s resting place at the halfway point of the mountain is an allegorical depiction of his anthropological worldview. It is a perspective founded on the information derived from the senses but ennobled by the workings of reason and the imagination. Although Agathon’s position at the midpoint of the mountain accurately reflects his epistemological perspective, it is not one he is currently willing to accept.

Agathon prefers to view himself as a disembodied soul, “ein Mensch, der lauter Seele ist” (_SW_ 1:185). In a letter to Johann Heinrich Schinz from 25 May 1752,

\textsuperscript{29}Hippias parodies the idealist’s desire to align the truths of human nature with those of mathematics, claiming that they disembody human beings “um sie in die Klasse der mathematischen Punkte, Linien und Dreiecken zu erhöhen” (_SW_ 1:157). Interestingly, this parody anticipates Heinrich Heine’s humorous critique of the Enlightenment in _Harzreise_ (1826): “Vernunft! Wenn ich jetzt dieses Wort höre, so sehe ich noch immer den Doktor Saul Ascher mit seinen abstrakten Beinen, mit einem engen, transzendentalgrauen Leibrock […] Dieser Mann […] war eine personifizierte grade Linie” (42, my emphasis). Ironically, a materialist uses the same humour to discredit an idealist as a romantic later uses to discredit a rationalist.

\textsuperscript{30}Martens reads the mountain scene as a “projection”; she sees it as concocted to express Agathon’s mood (54). Michel and Vietta interpret it as a quotation from Dante’s _Divine Comedy_ (1472) (79 and 201, respectively).
4.3. THE FOUNDATION OF AGATHON’S EDUCATION

Wieland expresses his reservations about this aspect of Platonic idealism:

Plato ist ohnstreitig ein übertriebener Philosoph den es zuweilen zu verdrießen scheint, daß wir Menschen sind. Seine Betrachtungen werden sehr oft zu Phantomen u: Hirngespinstern. Es ist daher sehr gut daß mann, wenn mann zu tief in das Reich der Ideen hinein gekommen ist, wieder in die Körperwelt zurück kehre. (Briefwechsel 1:75)

Ten years prior to beginning his work on Agathon therefore, Wieland had already recognized the one-sidedness of the Platonic worldview. He had acknowledged the need to establish contact between the realm of ideas and the realm of bodies.

The text underlines the immaturity of Agathon’s initial Weltanschauung, by drawing parallels between his idealistic Schwärmerei and pagan superstitions. At the beginning of the novel’s second chapter, Agathon is roused from sleep by the clamour of a Bacchanalian female orgy. While watching the celebrations, he reflects on the differences between himself and the Bacchanalian women. He is disgusted by their animalistic sensuality and their base superstitions. The narrator too sets up a sharp contrast between “diese Unsinnigen” and his virtuous hero (1:30). Yet the subtext of the scene tells a somewhat different story. Both in his perception of nature and in his desire for communion with the gods, Agathon resembles rather than contrasts with the female revellers.

For both Agathon and the maenads, nature serves as the trigger to imaginative states. The beauty of the setting sun sends Agathon into raptures so intense that he forgets his physical deprivations. When he finally regains consciousness of his surroundings, his inflamed imagination transforms an ordinary mountain well into a benevolent water nymph: “er stand auf, und schöpfte mit der hohlen Hand von diesem Wasser, dessen fließenden Krystall, seiner Einbildung nach, eine wohltätige
Nymfe ihm aus ihrem Marmorkrug entgegen goß” (1:28). The vision itself is fanciful and charming, and thus apparently innocuous. But it takes on an altogether different dimension when juxtaposed with the equally irrational visions of his female counterparts. The Bacchalian women, in awe of Agathon’s beauty, mistake him for their god. Agathon’s unexpected appearance at their late-night gathering gives their imaginations a fantastic turn: “Blumen, so däucht’ es sie, entsprangen unter seinen Fußsohlen, und Quellen von Wein und Honig sprudelten von jedem seiner Tritte auf” (1:32). Agathon and the maenads demonstrate a similarly irrational view of nature, one which reflects their shared desire to establish direct contact with the spiritual world.31 One could argue that Agathon does not worship his mountain well in the same way that the women deify him. But the distinction does not withstand closer scrutiny.

At the height of his Schwärmerei, Agathon does indeed believe himself capable of communing directly with the spirit world. During his youth at Delphi, a priest named Theogiton tricks Agathon into believing that he is being visited by the god Apollo. The young Agathon is thus every bit as superstitious as the women who mistake him for Bacchus. The analogy between the two also manifests itself on the semantic level of the text. Wieland uses a similar word choice to explain how each is able to mistake a human for a god. In both cases, it is the imagination which supplies the decisive details. The maenads need only Agathon’s beauty and unexpected appearance to convince them of his divinity: the imagination “[dichtete] alles übrige hinzu” (1:32).

Agathon also admits that it was his imagination, not the priest’s theatrics, which

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31 Vietta contextualizes the maenads’ visions within the tradition of enlightened criticism of myth and theology: “Man denke an Voltaire und die französischen Materialisten sowie an David Humes Rückführung der Religion auf natürliche Funktionen des menschlichen Geistes in der Natural History of Religion von 1755” (201).
provided the pivotal evidence for his vision: “Einbildung that *das übrige hinzu*, was zu Vollendung einer idealischen Schönheit nöthig war” (2:20). Both formulations describe the imagination’s ability to embellish reality, to create gods out of mortals.

The analogy between the women’s superstitions and Agathon’s *Schwärmerei* does not confine itself to Agathon’s youthful credulity. When Agathon discovers the priest’s ruse, he does not abandon his belief in Apollo’s personal concern for him and participation in his life. He merely redefines his notions of spiritual communion from the physical to the idealistic:

Diese Begebenheiten führten mich natürlicher Weise auf viele neue Betrachtungen; aber meine Neigung zum Wunderbaren und meine Lieblingsideen verloren nichts dabei. Sie gewannen vielmehr, *indem ich sie nun in mich selbst verschloß*, und die Unsterblichen allein zu Zeugen desjenigen machte, was in meiner Seele vorging. (2:23)

The text draws a parallel between the inwardness of Agathon’s relationship to the spirit world and the outwardness of the women’s Bacchanalian orgy. Relatedly, Norbert Hinske argues that one can read the Enlightenment’s attack on *Schwärmerei* as a different manifestation of its battle against superstition (4). Indeed, while in the process of writing *Agathon*, Wieland himself compares *Schwärmerei* and superstition on the basis of their detrimental effects on reason: “Die Keime vom Aberglauben und Enthusiasmus [haben] von jeher und noch immer einen gewaltigen dégât im Gebiet der gesunden Vernunft und im gesellschaftlichen Leben gemacht” (*Briefwechsel*

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32 Hume also draws parallels between superstition and enthusiasm. In an essay conveniently titled “Of Superstition and Enthusiasm” (1741), Hume argues that religious thought oscillates between the poles of fear, which produces superstition, and excessive hope and pride, which produce enthusiasm or fanaticism (Potkay 255-56).
While the maenads externalize their irrational beliefs into superstitious behaviour, Agathon merely internalizes the same irrational drives. Expressed in more concrete terms, the Bacchanalian women dance and Agathon feels, but the motivating factor is the same.

In sum, the narrator juxtaposes Agathon’s romantic animation of nature and his Pietistic Schwärmerei with the superstitious revelry of the Bacchanalian women in order to expose the similarities of their belief systems. The chapter, which has received comparatively little critical attention, highlights affinities between Platonic idealism and pagan superstition in order to highlight the immaturity of the hero’s worldview. The fact that Agathon feels disgust at the women’s superstitious beliefs is proof that he is ignorant about the spurious nature of his own philosophy. His unwillingness to recognize his position on the epistemological ladder (or, in this case, the epistemological mountain) demonstrates the pathological nature of his imagination.

33The letter is dated November 7 1763. It emphasizes both the differences and the similarities that characterize the two forms of irrationality: “Je mehr ich den Menschen und die Menschen in allerlei Gesichtspuncten und Umständen, aus der Geschichte und meiner eignen Erfahrung kennen lerne, je mehr werde ich in dem Gedanken unterhalten, daß die Keime vom Aberglauben und Enthusiasmus, wovon jener den pöbelhaftern und thierischern und dieser den edlern und bessern Theil des menschlichen Geschlechts charakterisiert, durch die albernen Einbildungen, die abenteuerlichen und übertriebenen Leidenschaften, die sonderliche Art zu denken und die ausschweifende Entwürfe und Handlungen, die der letztere hervorbringt, und durch die leichtgläubige Einfalt, die Vorurtheile, den Eigensinn und die Brutalität, die eine Frucht des erstern sind, von jeher und noch immer einen gewaltigen dégât im Gebiet der gesunden Vernunft und im gesellschaftlichen Leben gemacht” (Wieland, Briefwechsel 3:206-07).

34Paulsen describes the connection between eighteenth-century Pietism and Agathon’s Platonism as their mutual desire for oneness with God (178).

35Paulsen offers a relatively in-depth reading of this scene. He sees the women as embodying “das Wissen des Mannes um die Möglichkeit eines alle Sinne überflutenden Lebensrausches” (199). Although I do not disagree with this reading, I think it could be more precise. If the women’s only function were to represent all-encompassing sensuality, then why does Wieland portray them as carrying out a religious orgy? Why not just show them at a Dionysius-style festival? Why is it important that they mistake Agathon for Bacchus? Shookman, in contrast to Paulsen, offers an untraditional reading of the bacchanalian orgy in his study of the intertextuality between Wieland’s Agathon and Euripides’s Ion. Because Agathon’s literary model, Ion, was the product of such a bacchanalian orgy, Shookman wonders whether Agathon “witnesses something like his own conception in this scene” (“Intertextuality” 207).
Agathon’s ignorance of his own pathology provides an interesting point of comparison with Rousseau’s *Emile*. Throughout his entire life, Emile maintains the identities of being and seeming and of wanting and having. Because no one ever openly impedes upon the exercise of Emile’s will, he never learns to dissemble. Moreover, because the tutor restrains the development of Emile’s imagination, his desire to have never surpasses his ability to obtain. Hence, Emile is exactly what he seems and only wants what he can have. He is never conscious of anything dividing him from the pursuit of his natural inclinations. For most of his young life, Agathon too is unaware of anything dividing him from the pursuit of his natural inclinations. But this is not because he maintains Emile’s identities of being and seeming or of wanting and having. On the contrary, it is because he falls prey to self-deception, “eine[n] subtilen Selbstbetrug” (2:220). In many ways, Agathon enjoys the “moral and social *cordon sanitaire*” that the tutor creates for Emile, but the outcome is the exact opposite (Bell, *Open Secrets* 68). Emile’s quarantine from society restrains his imagination and thus precludes him from harbouring false expectations. Agathon’s quarantine, by contrast, inflames his imagination and engenders expectations of himself and others, which are impossible to fulfil. Agathon is not what he seems to be. Yet he lies as much to himself as to others. He is neither asexual, nor devoid of personal vanity, but he claims to be both. Whereas Emile’s education provides him with a harmony of being and seeming, of wanting and having, Agathon’s education at Delphi sets him at odds with himself.

In hindsight, Agathon recognizes the imagination’s role in skewing his perspective. He explains, “daß bei zunehmendem Alter alles, was ich wirklich sah, weit unter demjenigen war, was sich meine Einbildungskraft zu sehen wünschte” (2:9). Initially,
Agathon responds to the rift between imagination and reality by creating new worlds rather than by accepting the world as it is. Hippias recognizes this particular coping strategy: “Leuten von dieser Art ist nichts schön genug was sie fühlen; die Fantasie muß ihnen andere Welten schaffen, die Unersättlichkeit ihres Herzens zu befriedigen” (1:95). The infinitely expansive quality of Agathon’s imagination produces a gap between what he is and what he seems to be, between what he wants and what he can actually obtain.

The result of this gap is that Emile and Agathon learn to align their imaginations with reason in different periods of their lives. Emile’s fictional tutor Jean-Jacques controls the development of Emile’s imagination from the moment of the child’s birth until his entrance into adulthood. Agathon, by contrast, confronts the problems of his imagination later on in life, when he is mature enough to consciously form his own character, to be “sein eigener zweiter Schöpfer” (Beyträge 135). Thus, whereas Emile’s education depends on an omnipresent governor to anticipate and prevent the corruption of his morals, Agathon learns to overcome his own moral weaknesses by interacting with the world, reflecting on his experiences and consciously taming his own imagination.

4.4 The Trajectory of Agathon’s Development: From a Spiritual to a Physical Being

Emile’s and Agathon’s paths of development run in diametrically opposed directions. Emile develops from a natural man, a purely physical entity, to an increasingly spiritual, compassionate, and loving being. Step by step, the tutor widens Emile’s imagination to include an understanding of natural religion, a love of humanity, and
a devotion to Sophie. Agathon, by contrast, progresses from an understanding of himself as a uniquely spiritual being to an acceptance of his own physicality. Hence, while Emile progresses from the sensual to the spiritual, Agathon advances from the spiritual to the sensual.

One can view the opposing trajectories of the protagonists’ development as a direct result of the authors’ opposing methodologies for the study of human nature, which I touched on in my discussion of Wieland’s *Beyträge*. Rousseau pursues a speculative method of philosophical inquiry. He asks himself what Emile, i.e., abstract man would look like if he were raised according to nature. Wieland, as he makes clear in the *Beyträge*, refuses to make conjectures about the characteristics of pre-social man. In direct opposition to Rousseau’s speculations, Wieland advocates observation as the best methodology for a study of human nature. Thus, while the tutor develops experimental conditions for Emile’s education, Wieland’s narrator exposes his protagonist to the vicissitudes of fortune. Bell brilliantly summarizes how the texts’ relative levels of control over their fictional elements contrast with their relative levels of control over their human elements. He explains that, “whereas Rousseau exercised a tightly imagined control over his pupil within a loosely fictional envelope, this work [*Agathon*] exercises an overt fictional and formal control within which the human material remains in some measure unaccountable” (Bell, *Open Secrets* 68). *Emile* recounts an experiment. *Agathon*, on the other hand, depicts an experience. Indeed Wieland believes there is no other way to learn than through experience or “Erfahrung.” He explains,

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36 I would like to thank my colleagues at the Waterloo Centre for German Studies environmental research group for helping to develop this line of thought.
The experimental conditions under which Emile develops preclude the mistakes, self-assessments, and radical changes in Weltanschauung that characterize Agathon’s path of development.

In accordance with the experiment versus experience distinction, Emile’s imagination develops perfectly in line with reason, while Agathon’s runs wild, providing him with misconceptions about the divine, human nature, and love. However, in the end, Agathon is able to overcome the misunderstandings of his youth. His political forays in Athens and Syracuse as well as his erotic liaisons in Delphi and Smyrna force him to acknowledge that the spiritual is not distinct from the sensual, i.e., that the workings of the soul are not distinct from the workings of the body. Thus, whereas Emile unerringly increases his capacity for abstract thought, Agathon learns to temper his abstract ideals with the realities of worldly experience. Furthermore, whereas the tutor continually widens Emile’s imagination, Agathon consciously works to restrict his own.

Unlike Emile’s educational trajectory, Agathon’s path from Schwärmerei to worldly wisdom is not a linear sequence. Agathon experiences highs and lows, progressions and regressions. What is more, one could argue that the story finishes exactly where it began. In a letter to Zimmermann dated 20 December 1762, Wieland describes his difficulties in establishing the circular pattern of Agathon’s development: “es wird Kopf=arbeit brauchen, den Agathon, nachdem er durch alle die media durch gegan
gen seyn wird, die ihm noch bevorstehen, wieder an eben den Punct zu bringen, von
4.4. THE TRAJECTORY OF AGATHON’S DEVELOPMENT

dem er ausgelaufen ist” (Briefwechsel 3:140). Under the mentorship of Archytas, Agathon does indeed return to the Orphic religion of his youth. He also refashions his sentimental relationship with Danae in the image of his sexless devotion to Psyche. Yet if one examines Agathon’s relationship to the imagination, it is clear that the foundation of his beliefs has changed. Although the mature Agathon adheres to the values of his youth, he understands them differently. They are no longer based on the fabrications of his imagination, but on a solid recognition of human strengths and weaknesses. The path of Agathon’s development is therefore best described as an upward-moving spiral rather than one-dimensional circle. For Wieland, as Jan-Dirk Müller points out, “verbindet sich die Idee des Forschritts mit dem Gedanken einer Wiederkehr des immer Gleichen” (125). Each movement that Agathon makes around the spiral is directly reflected by a change in his relationship to the imagination.37

37In an earlier footnote, I drew attention to the fact that Wieland understood the historical development of mankind as following a spiral-like pattern. In his essay “Über die vorgebliche Abnahme des menschlichen Geschlechts,” Wieland describes the history of man as an oscillation between two extremes: “[dem] höchsten Punkt der natürlichen Gesundheit, Größe und Stärke des Menschen” in the state of nature and “[dem] tiefsten Punkt der Kleinheit, Schwäche, Erschaffung und Verderbniß” in the state of culture (SW 14:306). Wieland himself also understood his own development as spiral-shaped (Paulsen 161-62). It might be interesting to see how the spiral of human evolution compares to the spiral of individual development.
4.5 Imagination: “dem räthselhaftesten [...] Theil unsrer Natur”\textsuperscript{38}

4.5.1 Wieland’s Ambivalence toward the Role of the Imagination in Moral Development

Like Rousseau, Wieland does not offer an explicit definition of the imagination but rather a piecemeal exploration of its various functions. In Agathon, Wieland outlines the imagination’s involvement in three different aspects of the protagonist’s moral development: religion, moral sentiments, and love.

In all three of these fields, the imagination plays an important but potentially damaging role. In Emile, harnessing the imagination became the means of preventing the fragmentation of the protagonist’s being, of maintaining the link between his body and spirit. In Agathon, controlling the imagination is not about preventing fragmentation. It is about reversing the fragmentation which has already occurred. By aligning his imagination with reason, Agathon gains new insight into the relationship between his body and spirit. He is forced to acknowledge connections which he previously denied. His new understanding of himself goes hand in hand with his new understanding of religion, moral sentiments, and love. Wieland’s treatment of these three fields of morality testifies to his ambivalence toward the role of the imagination in the moral development of the individual and, by extension, the political development of society. If, as Green claims, Rousseau was the first Enlightenment philosopher to hail the cultivation of the imagination as the key to morality, then it is safe to say that Wieland was among the pioneers in this sphere of human knowledge.

\textsuperscript{38}The quotation comes from Wieland’s “Euthanasia, drei Gespräche über das Leben nach dem Tote” (1805). The entire passage reads as follows: “Mir ists nicht unwahrscheinlich, daß ein solches Ahnungsvermögen in dem räthselhaftesten, noch viel zu wenig gekannten und erforschten Theil unsrer Natur, den man die Einbildungskraft nennt, schlummere, und vielleicht im Wachen sowohl als im Schlaf die Quelle mancher unsrer Träume sey” (SW 37:150).
(360). Agathon, whose first version was published four years after Emile, assigns the imagination a similar role in the development of the individual’s moral constitution, praising its merits and cautioning against its excesses.

4.5.2 Natural Imagination = Natural Religion

From the 1760s onwards, Wieland’s conducts his discussion of religion in the space between two extremes: dogmatic theology on the one side and radical criticism of religion on the other (Auerochs 60). Agathon’s spiritual development takes place within a similarly polarized intellectual landscape. The ancient Greek setting of the novel enables Wieland to change the names of the opponents, but the debate remains the same. Agathon vacillates between the Platonic ideals of Delphi on the one side and the materialism of Hippias on the other. That Agathon’s Schwärmerei has its eighteenth-century counterpart in British neo-Platonism and that Hippias’s materialism finds its correlate in the works of Julien Offray de La Mettrie and Claude Adrien Helvétius is part of the standard “handbook” interpretation of Wieland’s Agathon (Erhart, Geschichte des Agathon 264; Grimminger 692). Yet Wieland’s analysis of Agathon’s and Hippias’s opposing worldviews goes beyond a one-for-one mapping of Enlightenment discourse onto ancient Greek philosophy. Wieland uses analogies between the Enlightenment and Antiquity to explore the differences between idealism and materialism more generally.39

Wieland explains the tension between idealism and materialism as arising out of contradictory interpretations of the imagination. The idealist, who views the body

39Martini highlights the allegorical character of Wieland’s classical Greece: “Da es um Typisches, um Exemplarisches ging, mußte die Umwelt dazu stilisiert werden, was eine Distanz von der zeitgenössischen, zu komplexen Realwelt erforderte” (951). In a similar vein but a very different tone, Minden describes the Greek setting as “at once a fancy-dress game, a mannered rococo courtly discourse, and a symbolic setting for an exposition of human nature” (78).
and spirit as separate entities, rejects the pleasures of the senses, valuing only those of the ostensibly God-inspired imagination. The materialist, who believes that humans are nothing more than Hobbesian “matter in motion,” understands the pleasures of the imagination as inferior imitations of those afforded by the senses. In order to mediate between the extremes of idealism and materialism, Agathon must develop his own interpretation of the imagination. He does in fact accomplish this. He acknowledges, in line with the materialists, that the imagination is founded on the workings of the body, but he nevertheless elevates the pleasure of the imagination above those of the senses. He concludes that the imagination is indeed natural, confessing to Danae “wie sehr diese scheinbare Magie der Einbildungskraft in der That natürlich ist” (2:17). However, if the imagination is natural, one must also respect what it produces as natural. This includes religion. In accordance with this logic Wieland develops an anthropology of metaphysics (Frey 106). For Agathon, acknowledging the imagination as a product of nature means acknowledging religion as a product of nature or, what amounts to the same thing, a natural religion.

Hippias distinguishes between three different types of pleasure but reduces them all to a single source. In his “Theorie der angenehmsten Empfindungen,” Hippias classifies the seemingly endless list of the pleasant sensations into three groups:

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40 Frey argues that one of the clearest expressions of Wieland’s anthropology of metaphysics is to be found Agathodämon (1796/97), where one of the characters claims, “daß es dem Menschen natürlich ist, übernatürliche Dinge zu glauben” (SW 32:182).

41 Frey claims that Agathon correctly demonstrates the radical subjectivity of enlightened religious belief: both Pietism and natural religion place the individual at the centre of religion. The difference is that Pietism concentrates on the individual’s feelings, whereas natural religion emphasizes humankind’s natural, innate predisposition to the otherworldly, “Hang zum Wunderbaren.” Frey explains: “Dabei geht es allerdings weniger um das religiöse Fühlen, als vielmehr um ein Wirklichkeit generierendes Denken jenseits des verifizierbaren Wissens” (114). Wieland, so Frey, thought that religious belief was innate and natural to the extent that the imagination was innate and natural: “Die Idee läuft darauf hinaus, dass der Mensch qua Einbildungskraft und quasi naturegeleitet zum Glauben an Übernatürliches findet” (111).
So unendlich die Menge dieser angenehmen Empfindungen zu seyn scheint, so ist doch leicht zu sehen, daß sie alle entweder zu den Vergnügen der Sinne, oder der Einbildungskraft, oder zu einer dritten Klasse, die aus beiden zusammen gesetzt ist, gehören. (1:116)

In this passage, Hippias appears to grant equal status to the pleasures of the senses and the pleasures of the imagination. However, he builds up his distinctions between sensual and imaginative pleasures with the express purpose of tearing them down again. They constitute rhetorical lip service to Agathon’s partiality for the world of the imagination. In truth, Hippias relegates the pleasures of the imagination to an inferior sub-class of the pleasures of the senses. He claims that the former are mere imitations of the latter.

Hippias offers several different arguments in support of his claim. The first of these arguments centres around the human tendency to anthropomorphize God. He posits that even the most abstract ideas have physical counterparts, and that it is these physical counterparts which give rise to pleasure, not the abstractions themselves.42 Hippias challenges Agathon to conceive of God without a physical presence: “Bemühe dich so sehr als du willst, die Götter ohne Gestalt, ohne Glanz, ohne etwas, das die Sinne rührt, vorzustellen; es wird dir unmöglich sein” (1:118). Hippias’s challenge to Agathon recalls the assertion of Voltaire and Rousseau that all ideas are ultimately images (“Idée” 223 and Confessions 170, respectively). Hippias, like the French philosophes, believes that sensation is a precondition for thought. But Hippias makes a logical leap, which not all of the philosophes, least of all Rousseau, are willing to make. For Hippias, it follows that if sensation is the basis of thought, then thought should not, and indeed cannot, extend beyond the realm of sensation.

42 That pleasure is the ultimate goal of all sentient beings is a point even Agathon concedes (SW 1:114-15).
Similarly, Helvétius claims that metaphysics are an abuse of language. According to his materialist doctrine, the imagination, in contemplating metaphysical concepts, disingenuously emancipates itself from perception, positing the existence of things metaphorically with a language developed for and within empirical reality (Thomé, *Roman und Naturwissenschaft* 135). For Hippias, as for Helvétius, the fact that Agathon cannot conceive of God without forming a mental image of him means that his mind cannot truly transcend his physical experiences. Furthermore, if all thought is reducible to sensation, then why not focus on the source rather than the superfluous extrapolations?

Laß uns also gestehen, Kallias, daß alle Vergnügen, die uns die Natur anbeut, sinnlich sind; und daß die hochfliegendste, abgezogenste und geistigste Einbildungskraft uns keine andere verschaßen kann, als solche, die wir auf eine weit vollkommenere Art aus dem rosenbekränzten Becher, und von den Lippen der schönen Cyane saugen könnten. (1:121)

For Hippias, the pleasures of the imagination exist, but they are mere imitations of
the pleasures found in the sensual realm. Instead of pondering ethereal beauties, Agathon should enjoy the physical charms of Cyane, the most attractive of his female servants.

Hippias’s desire to reduce the pleasures of the imagination to the same level as the pleasures of the senses recalls a distinction which Allan Bloom makes between the status of the sublime in the works of Rousseau and Freud. According to Bloom, Rousseau “knew that there is no place for the sublime in the modern scientific explanation of man. Therefore, the sublime had to be made out of the nonsublime” (“Introduction” 16). Accordingly, Rousseau theorizes the process of sublimation as the “raising of the lower to the higher” but continues to respect the separate dignity of the higher (Bloom, “Introduction” 16). Freud, so Bloom, takes the opposite approach. Instead of raising the lower to the higher, he reduces the higher to the lower. The same distinction holds true for Agathon and Hippias. At the end of the novel, Agathon and Hippias both agree that the imagination is natural, but they

43Hippias’s devaluation of the pleasures of the imagination vis-à-vis the pleasures of the senses seems to contradict his preoccupation with art. But this apparent contradiction is quickly resolved by a closer examination of the type of art with which Hippias surrounds himself. It is not that Hippias is oblivious to the benefits of the imagination as such. He acknowledges that the products of the imagination increase his standard of living, e.g., that his elaborately decorated house and gardens are more comfortable than a savage’s hut. Yet just because Hippias values the products of the imagination does not mean that he values the imagination in and of itself. On the contrary, Hippias merely exploits the products of other people’s imaginations to promote his own sensual pleasure. Indeed he describes the process of exploiting the imaginations of others as the key to his philosophy: “Die Kunst über die Einbildungskraft der Menschen zu herrschen [...] ist die Kunst, welche die Sofisten lehren und ausüben” (1:142). The art with which Hippias surrounds himself is part of his process of exploitation. Hippias enlists people to paint, dance, sing, and recite poetry in order to satisfy his appetite for sensual pleasure. Agathon, who regards himself as a connoisseur of art, avoids the artistic performances in Hippias’s house, because their ostentatious sensuality leaves no room for imaginative play. Wieland’s narrator describes a pantomime performance at one of Hippias’s social gatherings, emphasizing the manner in which it thwarts the imagination: “Lydische Flöten, deren girrendes, verliebtes Flüstern die redenden Bewegungen der Tänzerinnen ergänzte, und ihrem Spiel eine Deutlichkeit gab, welche der Einbildungskraft nichts zu errathen übrig ließ” (1:79, my emphasis). Hippias values the imagination for its material products, not its immaterial pleasures. In his view, the powers of the imagination should be subjugated to the desires of the senses.
come to different conclusions about what that should mean. Agathon, like Rousseau, continues to respect the separate dignity of the sublime, whereas Hippias, like Freud, reduces sublime things back to their sensual elements. For example, Agathon looks at the order and harmony of nature and sees the foundations of religion, morality, and law (3:421), but Hippias looks at nature and sees only its individual elements, devoid of any higher meaning: “Je besser wir die Körperwelt kennen lernen, desto enger werden die Grenzen des Geisterreichs” (1:128). Admittedly the difference is a question of interpretation. However, by juxtaposing the results of their contradictory interpretations, Agathon’s ideal of humanity and Hippias’s egotistical hedonism, the text demonstrates that interpretation matters.

Hippias is especially wary of the imagination’s propensity to transgress the boundaries of physical world. He describes the priesthood as a band of successful sophists, who, just like himself, mastered the art of mastering other people’s imaginations. Hippias’s denunciation of the priesthood echoes the theories of Jean Meslier, a French Catholic priest who, in his memoirs, described religion as a conspiracy of church founders, prophets, and clergy to gain control over the masses. This so-called “Priestertrugs-theorie” becomes a central moment in the French materialists’ attack on religion (Jakobi 410). According to the logic of Meslier’s conspiracy theory, the only difference between Hippias and the priesthood is that the former directs his victim’s imagination toward the promise of this-worldly satisfaction, whereas the latter directs it toward the potential of otherworldly rewards. Hippias views humans’ penchant for

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44 Carsten Jakobi argues that religion matters to Wieland only insofar as it impacts morals and society, i.e., insofar as it helps to produce cosmopolitan enthusiasts like Agathon rather than egotistical hedonists like Hippias: “Unter seinen deutschen Zeitgenossen ist Wieland […] womöglich der radikalste Religionskritiker, insofern er nicht mehr von den Voraussetzungen der Religion ausgeht, sondern sie allein in ihrem – nützlichen oder schädlichen – Verhältnis zum Staat betrachtet” (408).

45 Wieland also touches on the idea of priests as swindlers in Göttergespräche (1789-93), but acknowledges that the Christian swindlers may have been better than the alternative (Stamm 22).
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contemplating the otherworldly, “diesen Hang der Menschen zum Wunderbaren,” as a weakness which puts them at the mercy of power-hungry religious orders (1:129).

This argument is supported intratextually by Agathon’s own experiences with the corrupt priests and priestesses of Delphi. Both the priest Theogiton and the priestess Pythia attempt to use their positions of power in order to exploit Agathon for their own sexual pleasure. From the perspective of Agathon’s susceptibility to manipulation, Hippias’s wariness of the imagination seems like a defence mechanism, a strategy for warding off would-be oppressors. According to Hippias, the imagination directs the energies of the two most intense human passions, hope and fear (1:129). If religious orders place the object of people’s hopes and fears in the next world, they obtain absolute control over what those people do in this world. Thus the text contextualizes Hippias’s distrust of the imagination as a logical response to the abuses of power committed by religious authorities. If one locates the source of one’s susceptibility to manipulation in the imagination’s drive to contemplate the divine, the easiest way to restore oneself to power is to discredit the source of such contemplation.

Agathon, however, suggests a completely different solution for combating the priesthood’s potential abuses of power, one which aligns surprisingly well with the advice of Emile’s tutor. The tutor makes Emile immune to ecclesiastical exploitation by ensuring that he formulates his own personal understanding of the divine, rather than relying on church dogma. Agathon wishes he had enjoyed a similar freedom. When recounting his life story to Danae, Agathon expresses discontent with his religious indoctrination. His recommendations on how to rectify the failures of his Delphic education mirror those described in by the tutor in *Emile.*
The tutor, you may recall, suggests that religious instruction be postponed until the child’s mind naturally develops a curiosity about the origin of things. Furthermore, he warns that a precocious introduction to matters of religion will foster fanaticism and materialism in the place of true belief. Not coincidentally, Agathon falls prey to both of these extremes. I do not wish to imply that the tutor’s advice on religious instruction influences Wieland’s depiction of Agathon’s alternating bouts of Schwärmerei and materialism. What I mean to argue is that Rousseau and Wieland maintain a similar ambivalence regarding the role of the imagination in religious belief. Both authors recognize the imagination as the cornerstone of religious thought. If well-developed, the imagination can provide the individual with profound insights into the relationship between the physical and spiritual worlds. If poorly developed, the imagination will do one of two things. It will either substitute material reality with spiritual reality, meaning that the individual disavows the former in preference for the latter. This is the case in the anecdote involving the Swiss woman whose fanatic child “saw God everywhere” (Emile 259). Alternatively, it will cause the individual to negate the existence of the spiritual realm altogether. Agathon takes recourse to both of these alternatives in turn.

When reflecting on his youth at Delphi, Agathon expresses criticism of his aesthetic education. He insinuates that the Greek priests exploit the power of the fine arts in order to advance their own goals, which are not necessarily the goals of religion. He explains that the priests’ influence is predicated upon the strength of the impressions they make on young minds before those young minds are able to reason for themselves. In a typically long, convoluted Wielandian sentence, Agathon advocates for a formative education based on a direct relationship with nature rather than
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religious art:


Similar to Emile’s tutor, Agathon views a precocious introduction to religious matters as deforming rather than enhancing spiritual belief. He argues that an engagement with nature will foster the development of reason, whereas a preoccupation with otherworldly art will encourage superstition. One must be careful here to contextualize Agathon’s comments. His purpose in relating his life story to Danae, and thus in describing his early education, is to come to terms with his own shift from transcendence to immanence. Agathon is trying to explain to Danae, and to himself, how he could have pursued his idealistic relationships with the gods for so long without concern for his physical existence. He finds the source of his previous Schwärmerie in the otherworldly education of Delphi.

Agathon’s struggle to come to terms with the failures of his Delphic education can be read as a struggle to renegotiate the importance of the imagination for his spiritual life. Although he rejects the form of aesthetic education he received, it is not clear that he rejects aesthetic education as such. Agathon is critical of his particular form of education because it furnished him with misconceptions about human nature, leading him to believe in the superhuman, “das mehr als Menschliche” (2:7). However, he continues to believe in the benefits of idealism, just not of the Platonic variety.
People formulate their ideals, he explains, based on the objects with which they are first surrounded: “daher der grobe Materialismus des plumpen Handwerkers [. . .] die mechanische Unempfindlichkeit des Soldaten” (2:8). The objects in one’s environment, whether they are statues of the gods or weapons of war, form one’s conceptions of what is beautiful and good, “schön und vortrefflich” (2:7). From Agathon’s condescending remarks about the coarse materialism of the crude labourer it is clear that everyday, unaestheticized reality is not enough to furnish human beings with a satisfactory outlook on life, or Weltanschauung. They must have something “ideal,” i.e., not just nature as is but an elevated or aestheticized nature, which defines the limits of the possible but also encourages the pursuit of perfection. How does one attain such a picture? Emile’s education is one example. The tutor’s education programme may be seen as a work of art, in which the tutor lays bare nature’s deepest connections. It is through his engagement with this work of art that Emile progresses from the child, who is insensible to nature’s perfections, to an adult, whose enthusiasm for nature constitutes the entirety of his religious belief. Agathon, as a novel, likewise offers an aesthetic representation of the human condition which delimits the realm of the possible while simultaneously gesturing toward moral improvement.

Even after he has distanced himself from Platonic ideals, Agathon continues to believe that enthusiasm is the frame of mind most conducive to human happiness. He does, however, acknowledge the existence of certain restrictions, “gewisse[] Einschränkungen” (2:9). But what type of restrictions? How does the enthusiasm which

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46 As critical as Wieland is of Schwärmerei, he does not condemn enthusiasm on the whole. In Geschichte des Danischmend (1775), Danischmend describes enthusiasts of virtue, “Enthusiasten der Tugend,” as responsible for the whole of human progress: “Ich berufe mich auf die Geschichte wie Du, wenn ich behaupte: daß das menschliche Geschlecht dieser Art von Enthusiasten alles, was von Vernunft, Tugend und Freiheit noch auf dem Erdboden übrig ist, zu danken hat. Dieß alles ist sehr wenig, wirst du sagen. Aber, so wenig es seyn mag, für uns ist es unendlich viel; denn dieß Wenige macht, daß wir Menschen und keine Orang-Utangs oder noch was ärgeres sind” (SW 8:124).
Agathon advocates to Danae differ from the Schwärmerei to which he falls prey in Delphi? The main difference is that Agathon shifts the object of his enthusiasm from the gods to the Graces, from the transcendent to the immanent. The “restrictions” on his enthusiasm correspond to the boundaries of the natural world and thus to the laws of reason. Indeed Wieland defines the difference between Schwärmerei and enthusiasm by the objects which produce them. Schwärmerei and enthusiasm both constitute a warming or heating of the soul, “eine Erhitzung der Seele.” The difference is that the Schwärmer’s soul inflames for things that do not exist in nature, whereas the enthusiast feels this excitement about earthly perfections. For Wieland, enthusiasm is a “Wirkung des unmittelbaren Anschauens des Schönen und Guten, Vollkommenen und Göttlichen in der Natur und unserem Innersten” (“Enthusiasmus und Schwärmerei” 135). As Archytas explains, it is within Agathon’s power to tame his Schwärmerei into enthusiasm: “es hängt ja bloß von uns selbst ab, dem Hange zum Wunderbaren die Vernunft zur Grenze zu setzen, Spielen der Fantasie und Gefühlen des Augenblicks keinen zu hohen Werth beyzulegen” (SW 3:410). In direct opposition to Hippias, Archytas and Agathon value the human predisposition to the otherworldly, but they also recognize the need to constrain it within the limits of reason.

That said, the imagination is no less integral to Agathon’s new form of enthusiasm than it was to the old. Wolff’s distinction between the two different types of imagination, his “Manier der Einbildungs-kraft,” which I described in my introduction, helps to illuminate the change in Agathon’s relationship to imaginative thinking. During his phase as a Platonic Schwärmer, Agathon’s imagination produces Wolff’s empty impressions, “leere Einbildungen,” i.e., images of things which neither exist
nor ever could exist and therefore bear no relevance to human existence. After his shift from transcendence to immanence, Agathon’s imagination is satisfied with images of earthly perfection. He uses his imagination in accordance with Wolff’s second “Manier”; he compiles various images of the natural world and synthesizes them into their ideal forms. He no longer founds his beliefs on the Platonic idealism of his youth (i.e., on unrestrained imagination) but on Deistic or Rousseausque insights into the order and benevolence of the material world (i.e., an alignment of reason and imagination).

Archytas describes what remains of Orphic philosophy after the Schwärmerei recedes. Natural theology, he explains, requires no dogmatic support beyond the recognition of a wise and just creator whose creation reveals both reason and purpose, “einen so genauen Zusammenhang von Ursache und Wirkung, Mittel und Endzweck” (3:401). As I mentioned earlier, Agathon’s path from the Schwärmerei of Delphi to the worldly wisdom of Archytas does not follow a linear progression. Between these two stages of belief, Agathon also experiences a period of unbelief.

Agathon, finding idealism at variance with experience, descends temporarily into materialism, just as Emile’s tutor forewarns. The tutor cautions that if one’s belief system has no foundation in the material world, it is susceptible to attack. He describes two paths by which one can develop abstract notions, such as the belief in a deity. The first path is quick and consequently unstable. The second is arduous but solid.

Consider also that since we are limited by our faculties to things which can be sensed, we provide almost no hold for abstract notions of philosophy and purely intellectual ideas. To arrive at them we must either separate ourselves from the body – to which we are so strongly attached – or make a gradual and slow climb from object to object. (Emile 255, my emphasis)
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Agathon initially ascends to his conception of the gods via the tutor’s first path: he denies the connection between body and soul and contemplates Platonic forms. Incidentally, Rousseau describes this first path with a humour more typical of his Swabian counterpart. With Wielandian irony, Rousseau pokes fun at those who, like Agathon, long to separate themselves from the bodies “to which we are so strongly attached.” Both authors hold abstract notions which are not grounded in one’s knowledge of the physical world to be an insufficient and unstable foundation for religious belief. Correspondingly, when experience forces Agathon to acknowledge the importance of the body, his idealism falters and temporarily deteriorates into materialism.

Disillusioned with humanity, Agathon begins to question the fundamental difference between idealism and materialism. He ponders the truth of Hippias’s assertions, questioning: “vielleicht sey es allein dem verschiednen Schwung unserer Einbildungskraft beyzu messen, wenn wir uns zu einer Zeit geneigter fühlen, uns mit den Göttern, zu einer andern mit den Thieren verwandt zu glauben” (2:224). I read Agathon as an extended exploration of the question posed by this passage. The novel’s materialist views the pleasures of the imagination as inferior imitations of the pleasures of the senses. If Agathon is to defend his belief in the divine and, by extension, his commitment to virtue, he must prove they are not. The question thus becomes: what is real about the imaginary? If we embrace the eighteenth century’s epistemological turn, that is, if we forsake a theological belief system for an anthropological worldview, then what basis do we have for a belief in the divine? For Wieland, religion cannot be reduced to an alternative between materialists and idealists, between the former’s accusations of the priesthood’s deceptions and the latter’s penchant for
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self-deception (Auerochs 60). Both Rousseau and Wieland advocate a form of natural religion based not solely on the workings of the imagination, but also grounded in an understanding of the material world (Heinz, “Wielandizität” 462; Paulsen 218). They both suggest that a prolonged engagement with the laws of nature will inevitably lead to a belief in the existence of a wise and just creator. The difference is that Emile’s education precludes the very development of an overactive childhood imagination and thus ensures a steady path toward Deistic belief, whereas Agathon’s education allows him to experience the dangers of Schwärmerei before finally putting him on the path to wisdom.

In sum, Emile and Agathon both portray the protagonist’s belief in a natural religion as point of tangency between the physical and spiritual worlds. Rousseau and Wieland both argue that religion is natural insofar as the imagination is natural. The imagination, they claim, will inevitably explore the boundaries of empirical reality and beyond (Frey 111). It is thus the task of education to form the imagination in such a way that it aligns with reason, that its conception of the otherworldly is founded on an understanding of the this-worldly. Furthermore, both texts outline the perversions of belief to which a malformed imagination can lead. An overactive imagination produces fanaticism, superstition, and Schwärmerei. An unjust dismissal of the imagination results in materialism.

4.5.3 “Was ist das Mitleiden, welches uns zur Gutthätigkeit treibt?”:
From Compassion to Cosmopolitan Enthusiasm

From the mid to late eighteenth century, the terms pity, compassion, sympathy,
Mitleid, and pitié become buzzwords in Enlightenment moral philosophy (Engell 143-60; Marshall 3; Schings Der mitleidigste Mensch 22-45). Throughout my discussion of Rousseau’s Emile, I focused on the terms pitié, pity, and compassion. To refresh your memory, the French pitié refers both to man’s innate repugnance to see his fellow man suffer (pity) and his ability to imaginatively experience the pain of others (compassion). In turning our attention to Wieland’s Agathon, it is important to add the term Sympathie to our repertoire.

The theme of sympathy is present in all three versions of Agathon, but its importance is significantly curtailed in the final version from 1794. By comparing the treatment of sympathy in the novel’s first and third versions, one can better understand how and why the social pessimism of the first version gives way to the relative optimism of the third. My argument for this section is twofold. First, I define Wieland’s concept of sympathy and show how its treatment differs between the novel’s first and third versions. I argue that Agathon’s adherence to virtue develops from one which is contingent upon a sympathetic social environment to one which is of apparent, though untested, self-determination. Second, I show how the third version advocates generalized compassion and amour-propre as the twin foundations of Agathon’s virtue. My thesis is that Agathon’s imagination is central to his virtue insofar as his compassion, his ability to imaginatively experience the pain of others,

\footnote{Note the absence of the term “empathy,” which both Engell and Marshall agree was not used during the Enlightenment (157 and 3, respectively).}

\footnote{Our definition of the English compassion is similar enough to the German Mitleiden so as to justify using them interchangeably: Adelung’s Grammatisch-kritisches Woerterbuch der hochdeutschen Mundart (1793-1801) defines “das Mitleiden” as “eine schmerzhafte Empfindung des Gemüthes, so fern es durch das Leiden anderer erregt wird” (3:238).}
is a necessary stepping stone to his “enthusiastic cosmopolitanism, “kosmopolitis-
che[r] Enthusiasmus” (3:133).\textsuperscript{49} Agathon is not Dion, i.e., a cold-hearted rationalist. Even after his virtue is made independent of his social environment, it still retains an emotional appeal.\textsuperscript{50} Agathon, like Emile, has a “passion for virtue,” from which he derives pride but not vanity.

As Adelung’s entry on \textit{Sympathie} suggests, the Greek \textit{Sympathia} actually means compassion, “[bedeutet] eigentlich Mitleiden” (4:510). However, by the eighteenth century, both the English and the German terms for sympathy have departed from the meaning of the original Greek word. In \textit{The Theory of Moral Sentiments} (1759), one of the century’s key contributions to the subject, Adam Smith explains both how the term sympathy has evolved and how it compares to pity and compassion:\textsuperscript{51}

Pity and compassion are words appropriate to signify our fellow-feeling with the sorrow of others. Sympathy, though its meaning was, perhaps, originally the same, may now, however, without much impropriety, be made use of to denote our fellow-feeling with any passion whatever. (5)

As Smith points out, sympathy is actually an umbrella term of which compassion is a

\textsuperscript{49} Wieland offers the following definition of cosmopolitanism in “Das Geheimniss des Kosmopoliten-Ordens”: “Die Kosmopoliten führen den Nahmen der Weltbürger in der eigentlichsten und eminentesten Bedeutung. Denn sie betrachten alle Völker des Erdbodens als eben so viele Zweige einer einzigen Familie, und das Universum als einen Staat, worin sie mit unzähligen anderen vernünftigen Wesen Bürger sind, um unter allgemeinen Naturgesetzen die Vollkommenheit des Ganzen zu befördern” (\textit{SW} 30:167).

\textsuperscript{50} Wieland, of course, uses the German term \textit{Eigenliebe} rather than the French term \textit{amour-propre} (\textit{amour de soi} is innocuous and thus irrelevant in this context). However, because my point is that Wieland and Rousseau see similar solutions to the problems surrounding vanity, I maintain Rousseau’s terminology throughout my discussion of Wieland.

\textsuperscript{51} Although I refer to Adam Smith above, Adelung’s entry on \textit{Sympathie} also explains the difference between sympathy and compassion, listing a few occasions in which \textit{Sympathie}, not \textit{Mitleiden}, is the more exact term. Only the first is of interest to us: “Die Eigenschaft eines lebendigen Wesens, vermöge welcher die Vorstellung des Zustandes eines Dinges ähnliche Empfindungen in uns hervor bringet […] Wir sympathisieren mit jemandem, wenn wir ähnliche Empfindungen mit ihm haben” (4:510).
specific example. Sympathy denotes “an imaginative feeling of identification with another human being” (Engell 157). Compassion is the same imaginative identification, but it is restricted to feelings of pain and suffering.

In the context of Emile, compassion is the most appropriate term because Rousseau emphasizes suffering as the source of human connectedness: “it is our common miseries which turn our hearts to humanity” (Emile 221). For Rousseau, all forms of sympathy, including friendship and sentimental love, evolve out of compassionate identification. In Wieland’s Agathon, however, there is nothing to suggest that sympathy is contingent upon an experience of shared suffering. Wieland’s use of the term sympathy denotes fellow-feeling, including but not limited to expressions of compassion. Hence, while pitié constitutes a leitmotif in Rousseau’s thought, Sympathie numbers among Wieland’s favourite expressions (Ermatinger 223; Paulsen 146).

Wieland does not theorize the difference between sympathy and compassion but uses the terms in different contexts. Agathon experiences sympathy with his kindred spirits, Psyche, Danae, and Kritolaos, and compassion with the less fortunate.

For Wieland, sympathetic souls exhibit a similarity of thoughts and sentiments which is felt by intuition before it is understood by reason (McCarthy, Wieland 65). In an early work entitled Sympathien (1754), Wieland advances a Platonic interpretation

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52 In his article “Das Romantische bei Wieland,” Ermatinger assembles Wieland’s various references to the term sympathy and highlights the tension between his two contradictory interpretations of the concept: one Platonic/mystic and the other rationalistic (223-27). But for Ermatinger, the Platonic interpretation takes precedence. He argues, “daß für Wieland […] die Sympathie ein durchaus irrationaler, symbolischer, also romantischer Begriff war” (227).

53 Agathon experiences sympathy with Psyche (2:67; 3:199), Danae (1:238; 2:176; 2:241; 3:240), Kritolaos (3:232) and the rest of Archytas’s family (3:416). Additionally, the term sympathy is used to describe feelings of which Alcibiades is incapable.

54 Agathon experiences compassion with the slaves at the market in Smyrna (1:61) and the abandoned Danae (2:210). Aside from these examples, the term compassion is used in the following cases: 1) The Athenians express compassion for the fallen Agathon, which Agathon spurns (2:131). 2) Hippias demonstrates either a lack of compassion or a false compassion on several occasions (2:162; 3:142). 3) The fisherman’s wife expresses compassion for the shipwrecked Psyche (3:206).
of sympathy, explaining sympathetic souls as two halves of the same soul which were separated during their fall from heaven and reunited on earth. He describes their harmonious rapport with the following enthusiastic outcry: “kein großer Gedanke, keine schöne Empfindung, keine frohe Hoffnung, keine edle That, die sie nicht, unter sich gemein haben!” (SW 13.3: 131). Wieland’s mature work *Aristipp und einige seiner Zeitgenossen* (1800-02) counters the Platonic interpretation of sympathy with a rationalist viewpoint. The Hippias of *Aristipp* refutes the existence of sympathetic intuition, “sympathetische Ahnung,” claiming: “Ich weiß von keiner andern Sympathie, als von Übereinstimmung der Gemüter aus Ähnlichkeit der Gefühle und Neigungen” (SW 34:44). The differences between these two conceptions of sympathy is echoed in *Agathon*. The former describes Agathon’s youthful enthusiasm for Psyche. The latter is a close, though imperfect, representation of his mature kinship with the Archytas circle. I say it is close but imperfect because although Agathon’s anthropological worldview has a rationalist foundation, it does not preclude the possibility of sympathetic intuition.

By the time he writes the first version of *Agathon*, Wieland regards sympathetic intuition as a mysterious but nevertheless natural phenomenon (Heinz, “Wielandizität” 462). In *Don Sylvio*, published approximately two years prior to *Agathon*, Wieland’s narrator summarizes the Platonic and materialistic interpretations of sympathy, ostensibly leaving it up the reader to decide which option he or she finds more convincing, but in truth making his preference clear:

Wir überlassen es unsern Lesern, sich hierüber diejenige Hypothese auszuwählen, die ihnen anständig ist. Es mag nun seyn, daß die Seelen solcher sympathischen Geschöpfe in einem vorherigen Zustand sich schon gekannt und geliebt haben; [...] oder daß eine musikalische Gleichstimmung ihrer
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Fibern oder Fibrillen auf eine mechanische Art diese Wirkung hervorbringt: genug, daß diese Sympathie sich eben so gewiss in der Natur befindet, als die Schwere, die Anziehung der Elasticität, oder die magnetische Kräfte. (SW 11:239)

In the first sentence of this passage Wieland’s narrator lends equal credibility to the Platonist and materialist interpretations. But in the last sentence he suggests that sympathy is as natural as gravity, elasticity, and magnetic force. Isaac Newton demystified the laws of gravity in the previous century. By comparing sympathy to gravity, Don Sylvio’s narrator intimates that the former will someday undergo the same process of scientific explanation as the latter.55

As an adult, Agathon mourns the loss of the all-encompassing sympathy which characterized his childhood. His celebration of childhood sympathies is reminiscent of Emile insofar as it emphasizes children’s proximity to nature: “Diese Blüte der Empfindlichkeit, diese zärtliche Sympathie mit allem was lebt oder zu leben scheint […] verliert sich unvermerkt mit dem Anwachs unsrer Jahre und kann nicht wieder gefunden werden” (3:187). As a child, Agathon feels sympathetic affinities indiscriminately; but, as an adult, that is, as he becomes increasingly aware of the differences between himself and others, his experiences of unfettered sympathy diminish. Yet even after Agathon has recognized the rift between himself and his fellow human beings, the incompatibility of their ideals and aspirations, one form of sympathy remains, namely, compassion. Thus, although Wieland does not build sympathy out

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55 Correspondingly, Agathon’s narrator is careful to distance himself from Platonic thought when he discusses the strengthening of sympathetic ties also known as the blending of souls or “Seelenvermischung.” The narrator explains that one need only mention the name Petronius, the man responsible for the expression “Seelenvermischung,” in order to clear oneself from accusations of Platonism (1:270). Furthermore, although the expression “Seelenvermischung” may seem Platonic, the narrator’s definition of it is closer to the one give by the Hippias of Aristipp than by the enthusiast in Sympathien. He describes “Seelenvermischung” as a process by which two people’s thoughts and sentiments blend together, “durch welche ihrer beider Denkungsart, Ideen, Geschmack und Neigungen in einander zerfließen” (1:274).
of compassionate identification (as Rousseau advocates), he does suggest that sympathy is reduced to compassion after other types of affinities fade. Again, Agathon’s development occurs in the reverse order of Emile’s. Emile begins with compassion and progresses to sympathy, whereas Agathon begins with sympathy and regresses to compassion. In both cases, imaginative sympathies are held in check by a rational recognition of differences between the self and the other.

In the novel’s first version, Agathon requires both sympathy and compassion in order to sustain his “passion for virtue.” In the third version, generalized compassion and *amour-propre* suffice. Wieland, in line with Rousseau, views compassionate identification as forming the foundation of social justice. However, in the *Agathon* of 1766/67, Wieland goes one step further, suggesting that one’s ability to exercise universal compassion, also known as humanity, is contingent upon one’s experience of other sympathetic relationships.56

As objects of sympathetic attachments Emile has both Sophie and his tutor, but it is not clear from the text that he needs them in order to maintain his moral integrity. On the contrary, in the sequel to *Emile*, he loses both and claims that his separation from them enhances rather than undermines his commitment to humanitarian principles: “In breaking the bonds that attached me to my country I extended it over the whole earth, and in ceasing to be a Citizen, I became all the more a man” (“Emile and Sophie” 296). Emile’s goodness is completely self-sustaining. It does not depend on personal, sympathetic attachments.

The original Agathon, by contrast, must have kindred spirits. The novel’s first version makes Agathon’s virtue dependent on his social environment. It suggests

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56Rousseau defines humanity as universalized compassion: “what are generosity, clemency, humanity, if not pity applied to the weak, the guilty, or to the human species in general?” (*Discourses* 131).
that if it were not for his reunion with Psyche, Danae, and Kritolaos, Agathon would lose his basic faith in man’s nobility and thus his desire to continue working for the common good. In a chapter entitled “Apologie des griechischen Autors,” the narrator contemplates the novel’s various possible endings:

In the first version of the novel, the narrator suggests that he has to send Agathon to the utopian republic of Tarentum because any other ending would rob him of his remaining ideals. Thus, in the Agathon of 1766/67, the protagonist’s virtuousness is completely dependent upon the virtuousness of his social environment. If Agathon is surrounded by sympathetic souls who share his thoughts and sentiments, he will continue to pursue what he knows is right. If, however, he is surrounded by Hippiases, he will relapse into materialism and abandon his ideals of moral goodness. Yet the chapter containing the pessimistic statement about the contingency of Agathon’s virtue has been removed from the novel’s third and final version. Instead of undermining the strength of Agathon’s moral integrity, the third version leaves the reader to speculate about what might have happened if Agathon had attempted more political reforms in other morally corrupt states. The Agathon of 1794 is no longer a “de facto riposte to Rousseau’s pedagogical optimism” (Bell, Open Secrets 66). It is, in fact, a cautious endorsement of such optimism (Schaefer, “Schluß” 49). But
the following questions remain: on what does Wieland base his new-found optimism? How does Agathon’s virtue go from being utterly contingent upon his social environment to being ostensibly self-sustaining? Wieland’s answers to these questions mirror Rousseau’s answers from *Emile*. Similar to Emile, Agathon learns to generalize his compassion and *amour-propre* so that he may derive satisfaction from acts of altruism irrespective of whether they are commended or condemned by those in his surroundings.

The doctrines of sympathy and compassion initially gain traction in the wake of Shaftesbury’s theory of “moral sense.” In direct opposition to Hobbes, who understands human action as motivated entirely by selfish concerns, Shaftesbury argues that human beings can also be motivated by a genuine concern for the well-being of others. In his “Inquiry Concerning Virtue or Merit,” Shaftesbury explains how the concept of moral obligation arises out of the existence of benevolent affections, including sympathy and compassion (192-200).

Shaftesbury’s follower, James Arbuckle, is the first to locate the source of sympathetic concern in the power of the imagination (Bate 148; Engell 145). The connection between sympathy and the imagination is developed further by such prominent names as Francis Hutcheson, David Hume, Adam Smith, and Edmund Burke (Engell 144-49). According to Arthur Schopenhauer, it is, however, Rousseau who becomes the most important spokesman for sympathetic/compassionate morality in the eighteenth century (Schings, *Der mitleidigste Mensch* 42). Others give that distinction to David Hume (Williams, *Morality* 12). Relative importance aside, the doctrines of sympathy and compassion form a key part of the eighteenth century’s project to reevaluate the importance of the imagination for morality. Enlightenment philosophers, among them
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Rousseau and Wieland, demonstrate how the imagination, by means of sympathetic and compassionate identification, is able to bridge the gap between the natural and the social, the self and the other, the body and the spirit.

Wieland demonstrates his familiarity with the most recent British and French contributions to moral philosophy by explicitly linking Agathon’s compassion to his imaginative faculty. Agathon’s compassion for his fellow human beings is based not on what they are, but on what he believes them capable of being. The cruelty of the slave market in Smyrna rouses Agathon out of the emotional stupor into which he had fallen after his separation from Psyche. Though not as barbaric as the markets in Barbados, the scene at the slave market in Smyrna is appalling enough to trigger the compassion of the otherwise insentient Agathon:

Sie [die Scene] hatte doch genug, um eine Seele zu empören, welche sich gewöhnt hatte, in den Menschen mehr die Schönheit ihrer Natur, als die Erniedrigung ihres Zustandes, mehr das, was sie nach gewissen Vorraussetzungen seyn könnten, als was sie wirklich waren, zu sehen (1:61, my emphasis)

Wieland, who chides Rousseau for hypothesizing about the natural goodness of man, has his protagonist, and self-professed alter ego, base his compassion for others on a hypothesis which emphasizes their natural goodness rather than their actual state of being. The following sentence reveals Wieland’s consciousness of his own hypocrisy. He uses his characteristic irony to highlight the contradiction of loving humanity in spite of one’s antipathy for humans. He describes Agathon as someone particularly capable of disliking humankind precisely because of his devotion to humanity: “in- dem sein Herz von Mitleiden und Wehmuth zerflossen, brannte es zugleich von einem zürnenden Abscheu vor den Menschen, dessen nur diejenigen fähig sind, welche die
Menschheit lieben” (1:61, my emphasis). Hippias, who does not think much of human nature, is not disgusted or disappointed by the barbarity of the slave market. He is there to purchase slaves. Agathon, by contrast, hates what humans are because he fantasizes about what they could be. His paradoxical misanthropic cosmopolitanism prompts the question whether he truly loves his fellow man or just the image of himself he projects onto them.

Negotiating the relationship between love of others and love of self, altruism and egoism, is in fact one of the greatest challenges to employing sympathy and compassion as the foundation for one’s moral philosophy (Schings, Der mitleidigste Mensch 42). In the remainder of this section, I explore Wieland’s answer to the question: how selfless is selflessness? I argue that Emile and the third version of Agathon come to similar conclusions about how to resolve the tension between compassion and amour-propre. Both texts articulate the need to remove compassionate impulses, which are founded on the benign love of self amour de soi, from the destructive influence of an inflamed amour-propre aka vanity. They portray their protagonists channelling the emotional thrust of compassion and amour-propre into an abstract love of humanity. Compassion, which forms the foundation for a morality of sentiment, becomes a stepping stone to cosmopolitan enthusiasm, which unites that morality of sentiment with a morality of reason. The result is an understanding of morality which aligns the emotional appeal of imaginative identification with the rational appeal of universal equality and justice. At a time when moral philosophers were divided into two main streams, the rationalists and the sentimentalists, Rousseau and Wieland took a third path, creating a hybrid of rationalism and sentimentalism, a sentimental rationalism, so to speak.
At first glance, Agathon does not appear to be a particularly compassionate character. He dedicates himself to the well-being of his fellow men, that is, to the political life of Athens, Syracuse, and Tarentum, but his reforms, insofar as they are the subject of discussion, are always directed at faulty social structures rather than ailing individuals. Unlike Sophie von Sternheim, we do not see Agathon coming to the rescue of pitiable, unfortunate families. His platform for change is broader than that and thus less recognizably compassionate. In fact, it is sometimes downright self-absorbed.

Indeed Agathon’s motivations for political involvement are ambiguous at best. He gives two contradictory accounts of why he pursues a political career in Athens. On the one hand, he suggests that he entered politics not out of vanity or ambition, but rather out of goodness and benevolence, claiming “ein von Güte und allgemeiner Wohltätigkeit beseeeltes Herz” (2:85). On the other, he explains that he sought fame in politics exclusively so that Psyche would hear his name and find her way back to him. The first motivation is incredibly altruistic, the second absurdly and dangerously egoistic. As always with Wieland, it is best not to validate one of these statements in preference to the other. Agathon’s reasons for entering the political arena are neither completely selfless nor uniquely self-serving. Wieland thematizes the dynamic between altruism and egoism, compassion and _amour-propre_, suggesting, as does Rousseau, that they should be channelled in the same direction, i.e., that one’s acts of compassion should help reenforce one’s sense of self worth.

Negotiating the role of compassion in moral philosophy becomes a question of how one interprets the imagination. Not accidentally, this is the exact same question which defined Agathon’s and Hippias’s opposing conceptions of religion in the

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Paulsen correctly emphasizes the dangerous egoism inherent in Agathon’s second motivation: “Agathon muß Schlachten schlagen, nur damit Psyche […] seinen Namen hört und weiß, wo er ist” (208).
previous section. Just as Hippias views the belief in a divinity as an error of the imagination, so too he understands the sweetness of compassion as nothing more than a sensual response to the absence of a fallaciously perceived pain. He segues between his discussion of religion and his discussion of compassion by questioning, “sind etwa die Vergnügen der Wohlthätigkeit und Menschenliebe weniger sinnlich?” (1:120). For Hippias, responding to one’s compassion, that is, aiding an individual in distress, is not an altruistic but rather a selfish endeavour, which arises naturally out of the drive for self-preservation _amour de soi_. The imagination causes us, as human beings, to feel the suffering of distressed individuals. We put an end to their pain not for their sake, but for our own _amour de soi_, because helping them relieves our pain and enables us to share in their joy. Hippias questions:

> Was ist das Mitleiden, welches uns zur Gutthätigkeit treibt? Wer anders ist desselben fähig, als diese empfindlichen Seelen, deren Auge durch den Anblick, deren Ohr durch den ächzenden Ton des Schmerzens und Elends gequält wird, und die in dem Augenblicke, da sie die Noth eines Unglücklichen erleichtern, beynahe dasselbe Vergnügen fühlen, welches sie in eben diesem Augenblicke an seiner Stelle gefühlt hätten? (1:119-20, my emphasis)

Notably, Rousseau, like Hippias, views self-interest as the ultimate source of human benevolence. In truth, the difference between Rousseau’s and Wieland’s ideals of morality and the materialist tradition, to which Hippias belongs, is not as clear cut as one might suppose. Adam Smith, in a letter to the editor of the _Edinburgh Review_ in 1756, describes Rousseau as a propagator of Bernard Mandeville’s “licentious system” from _The Fable of the Bees_ (1714), i.e., of the idea that private vices promote public goods, or, to be more precise, that the egoistical sweetness of pity promotes acts of social benevolence. Smith admits that Rousseau softens Mandeville’s system, but he
Along similar lines, I argue that Rousseau and Wieland merely reinterpret the importance of the imagination in order to set themselves apart from materialists. Whether compassion, and by extension morality, should dictate human behaviour becomes a question of how, or to what extent, we value the contribution of the imagination to the human experience. Do we value the imagination because it provides us with new and varied forms of sensual pleasure (such as the pleasure we find in helping others), or do we see the imagination as elevating the human experience above base sensuality, as gesturing toward a different purpose for human existence?

As you may remember, this is the exact same question thematized by Tlantlaquacapatli in his excursus on moral beauty in “Koxkox und Kikequetzal.” Tlantlaquacapatli claims that he believes in the wisdom and justness of nature because of nature’s decision to unite the ultimate purpose of human existence with the greatest source of human happiness, i.e., moral goodness. Tlantlaquacapatli, like Agathon, takes the contributions of the imagination seriously. He acknowledges that acts of compassion produce a physical effect similar to the one attained through sensual experiences, recalling Rousseau’s assertion that “pity is sweet.” However, Tlantlaquacapatli does not demote the pleasures associated with moral goodness to mere imitations of their sensual counterparts, as Hippias advocates. On the contrary, he takes the fact that acts of altruism provide such pleasure as a hint from nature about the greater purpose of human existence. By uniting acts of selflessness with feelings of pleasure nature has

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58 Comparing Rousseau’s Second Discourse to Mandeville’s *The Fable of the Bees*, Adam Smith writes that in “Mr. Rousseau […] the principles of the English author are softened, improved, and embellished, and stript of all that tendency to corruption and licentiousness which has disgraced them in their original author” (qtd. in Kuehn 92)
revealed moral goodness to be man’s second nature and “den großen Endzweck unsers Daseyns” (*Beyträge* 129). Unlike pure, unadulterated sensuality, moral goodness unites both sides of human nature, the animalistic and the spiritual.

In accordance with the findings of Tlantlaquacapatli’s excursus on moral beauty, Agathon admits that acts of altruism afford him the highest degree of pleasure. In reference to his good deeds in Athens, he explains: “Ich that jedermann Gutes, weil ich meinem Herzen dadurch ein Vergnügen verschaffte, welches ich allen andern Freuden vorzog” (2:112). Thus, Agathon willingly concedes that there is a selfish component to his selflessness. In his darkest moments, while he is imprisoned in Syracuse, he even contemplates Hippias’s point of view, questioning whether or not his ostensible altruism is just Hippias’s egoism by another name: “Sollte nicht auch das Streben nach einer mehr als menschlichen Größe, Stärke und Erhabenheit der Seele bloße Täuschung und *subtiles Gaukelwerk* eines sich selbst vergötternden Egoismus seyn?” (3:136). The answer to Agathon’s question is yes: altruism is indeed a subtle, imaginative variation on egoism. But Agathon is not asking the right question. The question is not whether altruism is an elevated form of egoism but whether that elevation matters.

Hippias, for his part, refuses to acknowledge a qualitative difference between those who derive pleasure from acts of pure sensuality and those who derive pleasure from acts of compassion. He finds the breath of one’s imagination irrelevant: whether one focuses one’s imagination on the pursuit of sexual pleasures or the pursuit of world peace, the motivation is, according to Hippias, the same, i.e., the attainment of sensual pleasure. He describes the pleasures of the heart as providing a voluptuous warmth which pervades the entire body, “eine wollüstige Wärme” (*SW* 1:119). In
Hippias’s view, it is that feeling of warmth that Agathon seeks, not the ostensibly altruistic good he does for others.

Emile’s tutor, by contrast, goes to great lengths to widen Emile’s imagination. He does so, you may recall, by ensuring that Emile takes pleasure in compassion before he discovers the joys of sex. He develops three maxims which govern the human ability to experience compassion and then plans Emile’s moral education according to those maxims. First, he forms Emile’s imagination so that Emile pities the less fortunate (first maxim), believes himself vulnerable to their predicaments (second maxim), and recognizes the equality of their sentiments (third maxim). Second, he steers the development of Emile’s *amour-propre* in a manner which strengthens rather than weakens his compassionate disposition. Emile’s acts of kindness will reaffirm his sense of self worth. The tutor’s ultimate goal is to “extend […] the human I over all humanity, and in this manner to preserve [Emile] from the vile passions that concentrate it” (“Emile and Sophie” 272). If Emile can generalize his compassion to the extent that his “love of mankind is nothing other than the love of justice,” then he can extricate his moral goodness from the negative influence of an inflamed *amour-propre* (*Emile* 252). He will not allow his desire to be esteemed by particular individuals tempt him to commit acts of injustice. On the contrary, he will have a “passion for virtue” which supersedes all other passions.

Wieland’s narrator describes Agathon as grappling with similar issues. Agathon has a compassionate disposition, but his *amour-propre* sometimes stifles his desire to act in the service of others. Particularly in the autobiographical rendering of his time in Athens, Agathon reveals his struggle between what he knows is right and what he

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59 The remainder of this paragraph summarizes my analysis of Rousseau’s theory of compassion. See section 3.4.3.
4.5. IMAGINATION

finds offensive to his pride. He gives two contradictory impressions of his own stage of moral development. On the one hand, he describes himself as having generalized compassion and \textit{amour-propre} in the manner advocated by Emile’s tutor. On the other, he suggests that the Athenians’ ingratitude wounds his \textit{amour-propre} and thus stifles his ability to be compassionate toward them.

In Athens, Agathon comes to the painful realization that one’s virtue and good deeds do not always garner people’s esteem and gratitude but often their hatred and persecution. His first reaction to this knowledge is to claim that it does not matter, i.e., that virtue is its own reward, regardless of how it is received. He exclaims, “Ich verwies es der Tugend nicht, daß sie mir den Hass und die Verfolgungen der Bösen zugezogen hatte: ich fühlte daß sie sich selbst belohnt” (2:126). Agathon’s understanding of virtue as independent of external rewards aligns perfectly with the tutor’s description of a virtuously developed \textit{amour-propre}. Like Emile, Agathon appears to have a self-sustaining “passion for virtue,” which “flatters and feeds \textit{amour-propre} with the good witness of [itself]” (\textit{Emile} 436). Indeed, he has an “Achtung für sich selbst, welche eine von den stärksten Schwingfedern der Tugend ist” (\textit{SW} 2:213). These two statements, the former from \textit{Emile} the latter from \textit{Agathon}, are mirror images of each other. They outline the potentially symbiotic relationship between altruism and egoism, love of others and love of self.

In addition to the virtuous development of his \textit{amour-propre}, Agathon also shows signs of having generalized his compassion such that his “love of mankind is nothing other than the love of justice” (\textit{Emile} 252). He asserts, for example, that he will not allow his loyalty to Athens to overpower his cosmopolitan principles. In his final speech to the Athenians, Agathon advises them to banish him from their republic
because his concept of morality is clearly incompatible with theirs. He relates the content of this speech to Danae: “so würden sie sehr weislich handeln, einen Menschen aus ihrem Mittel zu verbannen, welcher nicht gesonnen sey, den Pflichten eines allgemeinen Freundes der Menschen zu entsagen, um ein guter Bürger von Athen zu seyn” (2:133). The Athenians, who have already started to regret their treatment of Agathon, want to pardon him without losing face. He is counselled to appeal to their compassion rather than their sense of justice. Ironically, his appeal to their compassion would actually be an act of compassion on his part. In a twist of logic, the persecuted is being asked to show compassion for his persecutors by not asking them to acknowledge their own wrongdoing. Agathon refuses. Showing compassion for the Athenians would be akin to putting his love for the Athens above his love of justice, which is not something he is willing to do.

As Agathon’s responses to the Athenians demonstrate, he and Emile’s tutor share a similar ideal of virtue: both promote a “passion for virtue” which is self-sustaining and therefore does not require the acknowledgment and gratitude of others. Moreover, both believe in extending compassion to the whole of humanity and thus protecting oneself against injustices committed in the name of favouritism. Yet, although Agathon knows what it means to generalize _amour-propre_ and compassion, he nevertheless struggles with the weaknesses of vanity.

Rousseau, you may remember, singles out inflamed _amour-propre_ as the silencer of human sympathies. He explains that one’s desire to assert one’s own superiority quells one’s innate ability to see oneself in the other. Agathon experiences bring him to a similar conclusion. He recognizes that the same consciousness of his own moral worth which enables him to stand up to the Athenians also lessens his ability
to sympathize with them. Agathon’s feelings of superiority render him incapable of experiencing the sweetness of pity. He explains how his loss of respect for the Athenians changes his attitude toward what he had done for them: “Dieses Volk ward mir so verächtlich, daß ich kein Vergnügen mehr an dem Gedanken fand, ihm Gutes gethan zu haben” (2:128). Within the same narrative, Agathon expresses two contradictory views on the rewards of virtue. First, he says that virtue is a reward in and of itself. Second, he says that his virtue offers him no reward, because he disdains the recipient. Agathon’s contradictory statements thematize the relationship between virtue and vanity. Agathon knows that his ideal of virtue is devoid of personal vanity but nevertheless continues to struggle with his own wounded pride.

Indeed Agathon admits to Hippias that it was his vanity that caused him to temporarily abandon his cosmopolitan enthusiasm, “kosmopolitische[r] Enthusiasmus,” in favour of materialism (3:163-69). This is of course precisely the situation which Emile’s tutor takes such great pains to avoid. The warmth of Agathon’s imagination makes him particularly compassionate, but his experiences in society diminish his concern for the well-being of others. Once he has given up his belief in the nobility of human nature, he no longer finds pleasure in working for the common good: “Was für einen Reiz könnte der Gedanke, für das Glück des Menschengeschlechts zu arbeiten, für denjenigen haben, der in den Menschen nichts edleres sieht, als eine Herde halb vernünftiger Thiere [. . . ]?” (3:133). Note that no one, neither the narrator nor the text as a whole, denies Agathon’s right to expect emotional rewards, i.e., happiness, for acts of virtue. In that sense, Wieland is closer to Rousseau than to Kant (Corkhill 52).60

Both Wieland and Rousseau strive to integrate emotion into their moral theories

60I discuss the Kantian nature of Archytas’s philosophy in the following section.
without undermining the primacy of reason. Rousseau, as I have already mentioned, voices scepticism about Socrates’ attempt to acquire virtue through reason, suggesting that his approach is appropriate for “Socrates and Minds of his stamp” but unrealistic for the rest of humanity (Discourses 133). Wieland too expresses his reservations about such superhuman notions of virtue, “übermenschlichen Tugenden” (2:255). Dion, for example, is introduced as a character who practices virtue for virtue’s sake irrespective of emotional rewards. But neither the narrator nor the protagonist likes or admires him.\textsuperscript{61} The narrator summarizes Agathon’s aversion to Dion’s unassailable virtue: “Eine Tugend, welche mit Stolz, Unbiegsamkeit und Härte vermischt war, schien ihm wo nicht verdächtig, doch wenig liebenswürdig” (3:122). Moreover, the narrator argues that to esteem an effortless virtue is akin to honouring an athlete for the elasticity of his tendons (2:255). The uninspiring nature of Dion’s perfect virtue is the reason why Agathon is the hero of the novel and not Dion. Agathon’s struggle with vanity is what makes his story worth telling.

If we agree with Rousseau and Wieland that virtue should be both emotionally and rationally appealing, the question then becomes: how can Agathon derive an emotional appeal from virtue after he acknowledges the materialism practiced by most of his fellow men?\textsuperscript{62} For, as Rousseau suggests, “the pity one has for another’s misfortune is measured […] by the sentiment which one attributes to those who suffer it” (Emile 225). If Agathon no longer believes people capable of finer sentiments, he will neither pity them nor take pleasure in alleviating their pain.

\textsuperscript{61}The narrator says that if he were true to Plutarch, he would count Dion among the heroes of virtue: “Männer, welche fähig sind, aus dem erhabenen Beweggründe einer reinen Liebe der sittlichen Ordnung und des allgemeinen Besten zu handeln; und, über dem Bestreben andere glücklich zu machen sich selbst aufzupfert” (2:254).

\textsuperscript{62}Even before he goes on his Bildungsreise, Agathon acknowledges, “daß die Menschen, im Durchschnitte genommen, überall so sind wie Hippias sie schilderte” (3:419).
In the spirit of *Emile*, Agathon must learn to generalize his *amour-propre* so that he does not rely on the esteem of other human beings in order to take pleasure in doing right. He must learn to live within himself rather than within the opinions of others. Hippias, of all people, helps him to realize this. After Agathon has hit rock bottom, that is, after he has abandoned his moral ideals and contemplated the advantages of materialism, Hippias pays a visit to his prison cell and reminds him of his greater purpose. Similar to what happened after his political failures in Athens, Agathon has begun to regret having sacrificed his immediate welfare for the good of the Syracusan people. The difference is that this time he recognizes the incompatibility of that regret with his moral code. He describes how giving into such regret would rob him of his “highest good”:

> [. . . ] dieß [the fact that I began to regret my own goodness] überzeugt mich, daß der verpestete Dunstkreis eines unverdorbenen Hofes bereits [. . . ] die Gesundheit meiner Seele angegriffen haben mußte, und daß ich der Gefahr nur zu nah war, das letzte und höchste Gut des Menschen, das einzige was ihn über den Verlust alles andern trösten kann, zu verlieren (3:167, my emphasis).

So what does Agathon see as humankind’s “highest good”? The answer, which seems remarkably vague at first, comes a few paragraphs later. Agathon cites the integrity of the self as not only his own personal standard of goodness but as the highest good of humankind in general. He hopes to secure the integrity of the self by making it impenetrable to vanity.

> Nur indem ich der gekränkten Eigenliebe des sichtbaren Agathons Gehör gab [. . . ] sank mein besseres Ich einen Augenblick unter sich selbst herab

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63He explains his regret as follows: “daß ich mich’s reuen liess, so viel für die Menschen gethan zu haben, die mir, [. . . ] so vieler Sorge für ihre Wohlfahrt und so vieler Aufopferungen unwürdig schienen” (3:167).
Agathon defines virtue as the desire to do good regardless of external rewards. Moreover, he suggests that the only thing which stops him from being virtuous is his own *amour-propre*, i.e., his desire to secure recognition of his goodness from others. Significantly, Archytas also expresses shame at having previously relied on others for his motivation to do good. He questions himself: “du thust edel und großmütig als Mensch, um durch fremden Beyfall dafür belohnt zu werden? Erröthe vor dir selbst!” (3:388).

Rousseau and Wieland come to the exact same conclusion about how to sustain their protagonist’s “passion for virtue” or “cosmopolitan enthusiasm” in a corrupt social environment. Both assert the need to secure one’s *amour-propre* from external influences. The main difference is that Rousseau does not allow Emile to develop an inflamed *amour-propre*, which would undermine his compassionate relationship to humanity, whereas Wieland describes how Agathon struggles with vanity, recognizes its corrupting influence on his character, and wilfully overcomes it. In the end, both protagonists have the same “passion for virtue” or “Leidenschaft der Tugend” (*SW* 3:241), which satisfies their sense of self-worth irrespective of social recognition.64

But Agathon’s story does not end with a self-sustaining virtue based on generalized compassion and *amour-propre*. After Hippias unintentionally provides him with new insight into his own ideals of virtue, Agathon is called away to Tarentum, where he is united with his kindred spirits: Psyche, Danae, and Kritolaos. Thus, his newly formed convictions about the integrity of the self are never tested. Instead, he finds a

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64 Wieland also uses the expression “Liebe der Tugend” (*SW* 2:233).
safe haven amongst sympathetic souls, who do not fail to recognize his goodness for what it is.

Juxtaposed with *Emile* this ending is significant. *Emile* shows his character to be impenetrable to the weaknesses of vanity. Remember, for example, his refusal to seek Sophie’s approval for acts he knew to be virtuous, i.e., his aid to the injured man and his pregnant wife. Although Wieland points to the same moral ideals as Rousseau, that is, to generalized compassion and *amour-propre*, he is less unequivocally optimistic about their realization. I did not say that he is pessimistic, because that is indeed not the case. In the novel’s third version, Wieland removes the pessimistic statement about the contingency of Agathon’s virtue, but he also does not go to great lengths to test Agathon’s new resolve. *Agathon* probably, though not necessarily, lives up to its motto: “Quid Virtus et quid Sapientia possit Utile proposuit nobis exemplum” (*SW* I:VII).65

4.5.4 Seducing a *Schwärmer*

Thus far, I have argued that Rousseau and Wieland share similar views on the role of the imagination in the development of natural religion and cosmopolitan enthusiasm, but this is not an argument I need to make in reference to their conceptions of love. I do not need to make it, because Wieland himself already has. In *Agathon*, Wieland praises Rousseau’s *Julie* as the first novel in history to capture the charms of sentimental love, the commingling of sensual and spiritual longing, and he likens Rousseau’s sentimental lovers Saint Preux and Julie to his own Agathon and Danae.66

65 *Agathon*’s motto comes from Horace’s *Epistolae*. The following translation comes from the *Oxford Companion to German Literature*: “He has furnished us with a useful example of what virtue and wisdom can achieve” (“Geschichte des Agathon” 279).

66 See section 2.2 of the present work.
In a private letter to Jacobi, he describes *Julie* as a divine book, “ein göttliches Buch” which was written for him and his kindred spirits (*Briefwechsel* 4:417). Because Wieland himself acknowledges the affinities between *Julie*’s portrayal of sentimental love and his own, all that remains for me to do is to argue that these affinities also hold true for *Emile*. However, even this has been partially taken care of. In her Biberach prize essay “Sex and Sensibility: Wieland’s Portrayal of Relationships Between the Sexes in the *Comische Erzählungen, Agathon, and Musarion*,” Elizabeth Boa draws parallels between the gender relations in Book 5 of Rousseau’s *Emile* and Wieland’s Rococo works (193). In particular she emphasizes the similarities between Rousseau’s and Wieland’s concepts of sublimation.⁶⁷

When discussing Rousseau’s theory of sublimation, it is important to broaden one’s text corpus to include both *Julie* and *Emile*. *Julie*, as Wieland notes, contains Rousseau’s most poetic descriptions of the charms of sentimental love. But *Emile* takes Rousseau’s analysis of love one step further, detailing the process of sublimation which gives rise to such charms. In the following, I argue that *Emile* and *Agathon* promote a similar understanding of sublimation. For both Rousseau and Wieland, the sublimation of the human sex drive into sentimental love requires the fulfilment of two conditions: the breadth of the lover’s imagination and the moral realism of the seductress.

As you may recall from my discussion of the *Beyträge*, Rousseau and Wieland both acknowledge a continuum of various types of love. In Rousseau scholarship, the two extremes of the continuum are generally referred to as the physical and the moral, mirroring Rousseau’s terminology from the First and Second Discourses and *Emile*.

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⁶⁷Boa suggests that Wieland’s and Rousseau’s “women are endowed with a refining influence which sublimates the mere mechanics of sex into a subtle play of sensation and emotion” (193).
In Wieland scholarship, the two extremes are often described as the sensual and the spiritual (*sinnlich* and *geistig*), also reflecting the author’s own word choice.\(^{68}\) Despite these variations in terminology, the concepts themselves are roughly the same. Moreover, both authors identify a composite form, i.e., sentimental love, which lies between the extremes of the physical/sensual and the moral/spiritual. Indeed Wieland explicitly commends Rousseau for finding a middle ground for love between the moral and the physical, “das Mittel zwischen der Platonischen und Büffonischen” (*Beyträge* 252). In *Emile* and *Agathon*, this middle ground is achieved by the faculty of the imagination. “Die Quelle der Liebe,” Wieland writes, “ist das Anschauen eines Gegenstandes, der unsere Einbildungskraft bezaubert” (*SW* 1:232).

Similar to Emile, Agathon’s imagination is prepared for sentimental love through a postponement of his sexual education. Emile’s tutor consciously defers his pupil’s introduction to matters of sex in order to widen the scope of his imagination, that is, to prevent it from becoming fixated on the pursuit of sexual pleasure. Although Wieland’s text does not outline the reasons for delaying Agathon’s sexual awakening, it is clear that the end result is the same. In fact, the priests and priestesses of Delphi unknowingly follow the tutor’s advice on how to rein in the troublesome horse called human sensuality. Jean-Jacques counsels educators to “put their [pupils’] nascent imaginations off the track with objects which, far from inflaming, repress the activity of their senses” (*Emile* 230). Agathon’s spiritual guides do indeed manipulate their pupil’s imagination, but their method is somewhat different from the one adopted by Jean-Jacques. Emile’s tutor stifles the imagination in order to stifle the senses. Recall, for example, Emile’s trips to the syphilis ward at the hospital. Agathon’s

\(^{68}\) For sensual love, Wieland also uses the terms “animalisch” and “antiplatonisch.” For spiritual love, he uses “intellektuell” and “platonisch.”
educators do the exact opposite. They inflame his imagination in order to stifle his senses. They direct Agathon’s attention to the otherworldly in order to quell his interest in the mundane. By the time Agathon is old enough to experience sexual desire, he finds it morally and philosophically beneath him.

Initially Agathon opts for a Platonic love affair. As was the case in the chapter on Rousseau, it is helpful to understand what this spiritual love looks like, before one describes how it subsumes the energy of its sensual counterpart. Emile’s love of Sophie was equated with a love of wisdom. Similarly, Agathon’s love for Psyche, and ultimately for Danae as well, is synonymous with his love of virtue. But how does he define virtue, and does this definition change over the course of the novel, i.e., between his youthful love for Psyche and his mature love for Danae?

Agathon’s initial definition of virtue is necessarily vague. As a Platonic form, it is a purely intellectual idea. Correspondingly, he and Psyche share an excitement for the metaphysics of intellectual love, “d[ie] ganze[ ] Metafysik der intellektualen Liebe” (2:45). In their first meeting together in the groves of Delphi, they connect with one another over their mutual desire to break free from their physical senses and thereby gain access to the mind’s eye or inner sense. Agathon’s admittedly unconventional advances include an enthusiastic speech promoting “[das] Einschlummern der Sinne, und [das] Erwachen der innern geheimnißvollen Kräfte unsers unsterblichen Theils” (2:51). In Psyche, Agathon sees not a girl but a soul, “kein reitzendes Mädchen, sondern die liebenswürdigste aller Seelen” (2:54). In him, she sees not a boy, but a reflection of her own sentiments: “ein bloßer Wiederhall ihrer eigenen Empfindungen” (2:51). Unfortunately, their ideals of virtue do not extend beyond the ability to transcend physical existence. Agathon and Psyche do not sit in the groves of Delphi
discussing social reforms. And why should they? The only moral issues they have encountered thus far are the repeated attacks on Agathon’s virginity. Hence, their concept of virtue revolves around silencing the physical drives that provoked such attacks.\textsuperscript{69}

It is not until after his experiences in Athens, Smyrna, and Syracuse, that Agathon’s conception of virtue, and consequently of love, develops from idealistic to psychological, from Platonic to Rousseausque. In the end, he continues to see virtue as a universal and incorporeal principle, describing it as “das, was ewig wahr und recht und gut ist, das einzige Bedürfniß und Interesse meines edlern unsichtbaren Ichs” (3:169). But Agathon’s notions of everlasting truth and the invisible self have changed. Notice how he defines virtue as the need, but not the product, of his spiritual existence. In Delphi, Agathon and Psyche believe that the transcendence of physical existence will gain them access to Platonic forms. By the time he arrives in Tarentum, Agathon recognizes the need to locate virtue within the sphere of earthly existence. It is not his mystic “inner sense” but his reason which helps him to comprehend what is virtuous and, by extension, what is lovable. His adventures in Athens, Smyrna, and Syracuse have taught him that neither Platonic forms nor earthly experiences suffice as the sole foundation of one’s worldview. Boa provides an excellent summary of this point, highlighting the importance of the imagination for bridging the gap between idealism and empiricism:

Ideas and experience, Wieland suggests, are inextricably entwined in the human psyche. Pure rationalism or idealism ignores how sense experience determines our ideas and feelings. Pure sensualism or empiricism

\textsuperscript{69}Relatedly, Buddecke argues that Agathon would never have shown his altruistic character had Pythia not driven him from Delphi. Agathon found his life with Psyche fulfilling and did not speak of political aspirations (193).
ignores how our imagination shapes and interprets the material of sense experience. (203)

Agathon’s love affair with Danae is, following natural religion and cosmopolitain enthusiasm, the third point of tangency between his mind and his body, his ideals and his experience.

The imagination creates this point of tangency by sublimating his sensual energy into a love of spiritual ideals. Just as the tutor and Sophie target Emile’s imagination in their match-making scheme, so Danae engages Agathon’s imagination in her finely choreographed acts of seduction: “Wenn er für subalterne Reitzungen empfindlich gemacht werden sollte, so müßte es durch Vermittlung der Einbildungskraft [. . .] geschehen” (1:218). Danae’s aesthetic performances exploit the imagination’s role as the link between the body and the spirit. She knows she cannot appeal directly to Agathon’s senses, because Hippias has warned her that such efforts would be fruitless. Furthermore, she does not want to appeal solely to his spirit, because she considers herself too old for a Platonic lover. Danae thus opts for an appeal to Agathon’s imagination, which she hopes will transcend the mind-body dualism altogether or, at the very least, mask her sexual intentions. Her seduction “müßte [. . .] auf eine solche Art geschehen, daß die geistigen und die körperlichen Schönheiten sich in seinen Augen vermengten, oder daß er in den letztern nichts als den Wiederschein der ersten zu sehen glaubte” (1:218). Just as Sophie’s coquettish clothing and provocative distance speak to her understanding of human psychology, so Danae’s carefully crafted plan of seduction testifies to her profound knowledge of sublimation. Emile’s and Agathon’s idealism in matters of the heart is predicated on the psychological realism of their female counterparts. Sophie and Danae know that they do not embody ideals of virtue. But they also know that their bodies’ ability to represent those ideals is what
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brings the heart in line with the head, i.e., the passions in line with reason.

Significantly, Wieland’s narrator describes the process of sublimating the sensual into the spiritual as being carried out in the context of aesthetic performance: one pantomime dance and one lyrical play, or Singspiel. Danae’s pantomime of the mythical Daphne’s flight from Apollo has received significant critical attention, but far less has been said about the novel’s musical intermezzo. One reason for this oversight might be the need to contextualize the scene within Wieland’s thoughts on music in general, without which the passages of musical description appear thematically vague. Viewed in light of Wieland’s music theory, Danae’s lyrical seduction provides some of Wieland’s most compelling arguments against the extremes of Platonic idealism and hedonistic materialism. Her musical performance illustrates how the imagination sublimates the energy of the senses into the ideals of the spirit.

The narrator describes Danae’s musical performance in significant detail, highlighting the effect, both sensual and spiritual, on its target audience. The narrator’s poetic images capture music’s ability to produce an experience in which the sensual is spiritual and spiritual is sensual. During the scenes of musical seduction, Agathon both forgets himself in sensual ecstasy and disappears into spiritual reveries, all at the

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70 For an in depth analysis of the pantomime scene, see Kurt Wölfel’s highly influential article “Daphnes Verwandlungen.” Here is a brief summary of his argument: Danae performs a pantomime of the mythical Daphne’s flight from Apollo, in which she appears to embody Agathon’s ideals of femininity (i.e., innocence and virtue). But Danae’s Daphne is neither completely innocent nor wholly virtuous; she is also a highly sophisticated seductress. While dancing, Danae is simultaneously Daphne, the innocent nymph resisting Apollo’s unwanted seduction, as well as Danae, the coquettish seductress seeking to increase Agathon’s longing with her physical charms. Correspondingly, Agathon is simultaneously a Platonist, in love with his image of Danae’s moral purity as well as a sensual being, desirous of her feminine beauty.

71 This idea was influenced by John Pizer’s “Confusion of Transcendent Illumination? Lessing and Wieland and Music and its Interface with Poetry.”

72 The following analysis is a revised version of a conference paper entitled “Seducing a Schwärmer: the (Im)materiality of Music and Musical Performance in Wieland’s Agathon” which I presented on 29 October 2011 at the annual NEASECS meeting in Hamilton, Ontario.
same time. His seemingly paradoxical responses to the heroine’s musical performance transcend the mind-body dualism which characterizes the novel’s philosophical debates. Musical performance, and more specifically, poetic descriptions of musical performance succeed where philosophy has failed. Unable to logically refute the cardinal philosophical doctrines of his day, Wieland attacks them from a different angle, having his heroine sing them into insignificance. He replaces Hippias’s and Archytas’s discursive reason with his own blend of reason and imagination, word and image.

My close reading of the primary text, the chapter entitled “Die Magische Kraft der Musik,” is couched in an analysis of Wieland’s theoretical works on music. I briefly examine Wieland’s influential treatise “Versuch über das Teutsche Singspiel, und einige dahin einschlagende Gegenstände” (1775) as well as a lesser known text entitled “Erster Versuch über die Frage: Was würkt am stärksten auf des Menschen Seele, Mahlerei oder Musik?” (1781). Using Wieland’s Singspiel theory as a lens through which to view “Die Magische Kraft der Musik” is a methodology implicitly promoted by Tina Hartmann, the author of the article on Wieland’s relationship to music in the Wieland Handbuch. Hartmann classifies Danae’s musical performance as a “Singspiel,” thus paving the way for a parallel between musical theory and literary practice (76). Ultimately, musical performance becomes an analogy for love. Wieland’s ideas on the perfect balance of music and poetry, note and word, mirror his ideal of harmony between the body and the spirit.

In his theoretical works on the nature of music in general and the development of the German Singspiel in particular, Wieland complains that contemporary European opera neglects the spiritual element of music, emphasizing instead the sensual delights of musical performance. For Wieland, the undesirable primacy of the sensual over
the spiritual is a direct result of composers foregrounding decorative instrumentals over poetic meaning. He concludes his “Versuch über das Teutsche Singspiel” with an appeal to German composers to subordinate their musical creations to the work of their poets. Instrumental music, he claims, should support the poet’s text, not overpower it. He degrades what he sees as the superficial sensuality of the European operatic tradition: “Ohren- und Augenlust [war] alles, was die Zuhörer verlangten, und alles womit man sie zur Sättigung bediente” (“Singspiel” 332). Significantly, Wieland excludes the so-called “reform operas” of Christoph Willibald Gluck from his censure, claiming that they mark the first step toward reviving opera’s poetic component (Flaherty 265).

Yet it is not that Wieland believes music in general to be inferior to poetry. On the contrary, Wieland claims that the combination of instrumental music and poetic text produces an ideal language which is superior to the spoken word: “Musik und Gesang [machen] eine Art von idealischer Sprache [aus], die über die gewöhnliche Menschensprache weit erhoben ist” (“Singspiel” 323). That said, music loses its ideal quality as soon as the instrumentals overshadow, rather than enhance, the poetic text. Wieland joins the Italian art critic Francesco Algarotti in warning artists to maintain the hierarchy of word over note. He seconds Algarotti in claiming, “daß Musik und Poesie Schwestern und nur durch ihre Vereinigung allmächtig sind, aber daß auch wenn sie sich vereinigen, die erste der andern untergeordnet seyn muß, und daß alles verloren ist, so bald sie anstatt zu gehorchen, herrschen will” (“Singspiel” 332). According to Wieland, instrumental music must remain subservient to poetry because of its inherent generality, that is, its high level of abstraction, which precludes it from engaging the imagination. Essentially, Wieland’s theoretical works lament the exact
same characteristic of music which the Romantics would later apotheosize. Whereas the Romantics view the generality of musical expression as granting their feelings access to the infinite (Babbitt 93), Wieland sees the same generality as condemning instrumental music to remain thematically vague and therefore predominantly sensual.

In “Erster Versuch über die Frage: Was wirkt am stärksten auf des Menschen Seele, Mahlerei oder Musik?” Wieland continues to develop his views on the disadvantages of an operatic tradition which values sensually captivating instrumentals to the detriment of spiritually enriching vocals. He uses the contemporary debate on opera reform, spearheaded by Johann Adolf Hasse and Christoph Willibald Gluck, to bolster his argument. Hasse’s opera seria was known for the domination of its embellishment-orientated singers. Gluck, on the other hand, wished, as Wieland did, to do away with the purely ornamental elements of opera. In the foreword to his second reform opera, Alceste (1767), Gluck explains: “Ich suchte […] die Musik zu ihrer wahren Bestimmung zurückzuführen, das ist: die Dichtung zu unterstützen, um den Ausdruck der Gefühle und das Interesse der Situation zu verstärken” (qtd. Duboc 188). This passage, which mirrors one I quoted from Wieland’s “Versuch über das deutsche Singspiel,” demonstrates the similarities of the two men’s efforts at operatic reform. Indeed in his correspondence with the composer Philipp Christoph Kayer, Wieland refers to Gluck’s epoch-making opera Orfeo ed Euridice as a “Singspiel” (Briefwechsel 5:553). Wieland’s unorthodox classification of Orfeo reflects his belief that Gluck’s masterpiece exemplifies his theory of the Singspiel, in particular his desire that the sensual reinforce the spiritual, i.e., that the instrumentals strengthen the poetic meaning. He calls the famous aria “Che faró senza

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73The original preface is in Italian so I have quoted the most commonly used German translation.
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Euridice?” “What shall I do without Euridice?” tender and soul-melting, “liebevoll[ ]
und seelenschmelzend[,]” thus emphasizing its spiritual dimensions (Briefwechsel 5:553).

It is not the case, however, that Wieland discounts Hasse’s *opera seria* altogether. On the contrary, Wieland praises Hasse’s music as full of life, warmth and fine feeling, “Leben und Wärme und feines Gefühl” ("Erster Versuch" 54). But this praise notwithstanding, Wieland claims that Hasse’s beautiful harmonies cannot compete with Gluck’s *Orfeo*, particularly the famous aria “Che faró senza Euridice?” Wieland explains that whereas Hasse’s instrumental passages could be adapted to at least twenty different heart-wrenching scenarios, Gluck’s aria channels its emotional energy onto a single image in the imagination (i.e., that of Orpheus grieving the loss of his beloved wife), thus intensifying the emotional effect ("Erster Versuch" 54). Moreover, Wieland believes that music’s spiritual dimension derives from the listener’s emotional reaction. He agrees with Algarotti that music without feeling is wholly superficial: “daß die Musik, wenn sie nicht Empfindungen vorträgt, und dadurch bestimmte Eindrücke auf unsere Seele macht, nur ein schäler Ohrenschmaus ist” ("Singspiel" 332).74

74It is interesting to note that Gluck’s reform opera *Orfeo*, which Wieland uses to illustrate his views on the primacy of vocal over pure instrumental music, premiered in 1762, only four years prior to the publication of Wieland’s Agathon. I am not, however, suggesting that *Orfeo* influenced Wieland’s musical descriptions. In fact, it is unlikely that Wieland became acquainted with Gluck’s opera until many years later. Wieland’s first reference to Gluck’s opera is to the French version *Orphée et Euridice* which premiered in 1774 (Briefwechsel 5:553). What is more likely is that *Orfeo* and Agathon are both artistic responses to the theoretical work of Francesco Algarotti. In the case of Gluck, Algarotti’s influence is well documented. In the case of Wieland, it remains speculative. It is unclear exactly when Wieland first read Algarotti’s texts. John D. Lindberg believes Wieland may have read Algarotti’s “An Essay on the Opera” (“Saggio sopra l’opera in musica”) in the original Italian, that is, the version published in 1755 (21). My reading of “Die Magische Kraft der Musik” from Agathon lends support to Lindberg’s speculations. I argue that Wieland uses the chapter on music to explore the relationship between note and text, insisting, as Algarotti did, that instrumental music complement poetry in the order to produce an element of truth, which speaks to the imagination as well as the senses.
In the chapter entitled “Die magische Kraft der Musik” Danae arranges a competition, a “Wettgesang,” in which her attendants clothe themselves as Muses and Sirens and vie with one another for the title of best musician. The competition contains several movements, alternating between vocal solos, choruses, and orchestral interludes. The narrator describes not only the type of music being performed but also its effect on the protagonist. The progression of the music from unpolished natural sounds to an ideal combination of poetry and music mirrors the progression of the protagonist’s state from pure sensual delight, which the *Schwärmer* ironically mistakes for spiritual enlightenment, to a transcendence of the mind-body dualism, which lies at the heart of the novel.

Significantly, the competition begins with an ostensibly harmonious union of natural and artistic sounds. As Agathon takes his seat, he hears a “ein wühlendes Platschern im Wasser” accompanied by “eine sanft zerflossene Harmonie von allen Arten musikalischer Instrumente” (1:244); but, he does not see the source of his auditory delights. As the muses emerge from nearby laurel trees and the sirens from their grotto, they step into the water, apparently causing a rippling effect, whose sound Agathon registers as a complement to their music. The combination of concentric waves and musical harmony leads Agathon to believe that he is experiencing the Pythagorean harmony of the spheres. According to Pythagorus, heavenly bodies produce harmonious music as they move through space. Correspondingly, Agathon interprets the union of nature and culture, manifest in the competition’s musical overture, as proof of divine perfection. Furthermore, it is important to note that Agathon is tempted to believe, “zu glauben versucht,” that he experiences this evidence of divine perfection through his inner senses, specifically “sein inneres Ohr;”
rather than by means of physical perception (1:244). Thus, at the beginning of this short, six-page chapter, Agathon still prefers to consider himself a uniquely spiritual being, “ein Mensch, der lauter Seele ist” (1:185). The great irony is, of course, that whereas Wieland emphasizes the sensuality of pure instrumental music, his enthusiastic protagonist views such music as granting him access to Platonic truths.

The narrator proceeds from a description of Agathon’s spiritual state to a relatively long description of Danae’s physical beauty. He compares Danae’s presence among her attendants with the appearance of Venus among the Graces. Admittedly, the picture of Danae’s beauty causes disquiet in the protagonist’s senses. Yet, as he has proven before, Agathon does not consciously allow sensual delights to influence his behaviour. Danae, of course, is aware of how successfully Agathon opposes all direct appeals to his sensuality. She therefore decides to cloak her corporeal seduction as an appeal to his imagination, i.e., his incorporeal longings. She intends for the sound of her voice to transplant her physical image in Agathon’s consciousness: “Ihr Stolz verlangte keinen geringern Triumf, als ein so reitzendes Gemälde durch die Zaubergewalt ihrer Stimme und ihrer Saiten in seiner Seele auszulöschen” (1:246). Her ultimate strategy is to make Agathon forget her material presence so that he will believe, fallaciously, that his connection with her is of a purely immaterial nature.

Following the initial overture, the sirens and the muses take turns challenging each other with their musical achievements. The sirens’ first musical performance is described as wanton and overly self-confident, “muthwillig” and “übermüthig” (1:245-46). The muses respond with an orchestral movement which also appears to express, “auszudrücken schein[t],” that they are also confident of their victory (1:246). When describing the muses’ symphonic interlude, the narrator employs the verb “scheinen”
in order to underline the opaqueness of the muses’ musical argument, which they have constructed solely out of instrumentals.

Yet the verb “scheinen,” and the vagueness of expression it denotes, is not reserved solely for instrumental music. On the contrary, the sirens’ second musical offering, in which a series of flutes accompanies an unidentified female vocalist, also falls short in the category of thematic clarity. The soloist’s vocals appear to express all of the pleasures of sensual love. But the narrator’s diction, that is, his repetition of the verb “schienen,” suggests that something remains wanting. Even the sirens’ combination of poetry and music, which maintains the desired hierarchy of word over note, does not achieve thematic precision: “das wollüstige Getön der Flöten erhöhte die Lebhaftigkeit dieses Ausdrucks [i.e., the soloist’s vocals] auf einen Grad, der kaum einen Unterschied zwischen Nachahmung und der Wahrheit übrig ließ” (1:248).\(^\text{75}\) The narrator’s praise of the sirens for their use of instrumentals to support, rather than overshadow, the song’s poetic content provides a clear example of Wieland’s literary practice anticipating his theoretical works. As early as the first version of *Agathon* (1766/67), we find Wieland agreeing with Algarotti that instrumentals ought to buttress rather than overshadow poetic meaning. The problem with the sirens’ performance is clearly not in the composition of their music but rather in the subject matter of their song.

Danae, both of whose songs feature the concept of spiritual rather than sensual love, does not fall victim to the narrator’s accusations of opacity. Indeed her first solo poignantly expresses, as opposed to merely appearing to express, the superiority of spiritual over sensual attachments. Yet it does not achieve her desired goal, i.e., the

\(^{75}\text{For Torsten Voß, this narratorial comment about the sirens’ musical performance can be read as a refutation of Plato’s “Künstlerscheibe” in Book 10 of } \textit{Politeia} \text{ (2).}\)
seduction of the novel’s hero. For Agathon, Danae’s first performance is so perfect as to appear godly rather than human: “In solchen Tönen, dachte Agathon, ganz gewiß in keinen andern, sagen die Unsterblichen einander was sie empfinden; nur eine solche Sprache ist der Götter würdig” (1:247). The failure of Danae’s first performance to overpower Agathon’s defences reinforces the obvious, namely that univocal glorifications of spiritual love are not the right tool for seducing a Schwärmer.

In her second performance, Danae changes the theme of her song from the merits to the sweet agonies of spiritual love. The poetic ambiguity she introduces into her theme produces the desired effect. Agathon’s experience of her second performance is utterly paradoxical. His physicality takes on a spiritual form, while his spirituality manifests itself as a physical entity. The narrator writes: “Alle seine Sinne waren Ohr, während sein ganzes Herz in die Empfindungen zerfloß, die in ihrem Gesange herrschten” (1:249). The notion that all of Agathon’s senses combine in order to produce an auditory experience anticipates the Romantic ideal of synesthesia. Agathon’s experience of the music is so intensely sensual that he requires the power of all five senses in order to process it. He hears her music not only with his ears but with his eyes, skin, nose, and taste buds. Yet, while his sensuality is heightened to supersensual level, Agathon’s spiritual self is completely subsumed by the content of Danae’s song, by the sweet agonies of true love. It is significant that the narrator uses the term true love, “die wahre Liebe,” instead of Platonic or spiritual love. The division between sensual and spiritual love, initially embodied by the sirens and the muses, has been completely overturned by Danae’s performance. Indeed the narrator describes Agathon’s soul as having a physical presence, as something Agathon longs to exhale at his lover’s feet. The protagonist threatens, “in die Flut herab zu stürzen,
zu ihr hinüber zu schwimmen, und seine in Entzücken und Liebe zerschmolzene Seele zu ihren Füßen auszuhauchen” (1:250). I read the image of Agathon exhaling his soul at Danae’s feet as an implicit reference to Rousseau’s Julie (See section 2.2.). Understood in this context, Agathon’s reaction to Danae’s music constitutes a Deist profession of faith. Accessing the spiritual world no longer requires an act of transcendence, because the spiritual world dwells within the world of the senses: “die ätherischen Geister, wenn sie ja noch einigen Zutritt bey [Agathon] hatten, mußten sich gefallen lassen, die Gestalt der schönen Danae anzunehmen, um vorgelassen zu werden” (1:236). For Agathon, the sensual is the spiritual and the spiritual is the sensual: one cannot separate the one from the other, and nowhere is the indivisibility of body and spirit more apparent than in the human response to music.  

In “Versuch über das deutsche Singspiel,” Wieland claims that the combination of music and poetry creates an ideal language which is superior to the spoken word. In “Die magische Kraft der Musik” the meaning of this statement becomes apparent. Music captures the essence of what it truly means to be human. The combination of music and poetry promotes an experience similar to sentimental love, in which human sensuality and human spirituality are inextricably linked. The musical notes appeal to our senses, and the text channels the energy of our inflamed senses onto an image in our imagination. To the question “what does it take to seduce a Schwärmer?,” Wieland answers: a music which captivates his senses and his imagination to such a degree that it leaves no place in his consciousness for resistance.

Danae’s aesthetic performances give an erotic bent to Agathon’s affections, but

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they do not fundamentally alter his understanding of love and virtue. The pantomime
dance and the Singspiel serve to sublimate Agathon’s sensual desires into his love for
Danae. But, on a conscious level, he continues to view Danae as the embodiment
of his youthful notions of virtue. Indeed he argues that his love for Danae has not
changed his commitment to Platonic ideals, “Daß sie allein dazu gemacht gewesen
sey, seine Begriffe von idealischen Vollkommenheiten und einem überirdischen Grade
von Glückseligkeit zu realisieren” (2:144). The narrator and Danae both express
their reservations on this point. The narrator explains Agathon’s desire to connect
his love for Danae with his Platonic ideals as the height of his Schwärmerei (2:144).
Danae, for her part, is troubled when she realizes that the true object of Agathon’s
affections is not she herself but rather his ideal of her perfection (2:150).

The narrator’s and Danae’s reservations also encourage the reader’s scepticism.
They prompt questions about what aspects of Agathon’s ideals have survived Danae’s
seduction. In Delphi, his ideals of virtue were defined by a desire to overcome the
senses in the pursuit of universal truths. In Athens, he transferred his ideals of
selflessness into a social context, i.e., into a desire for political reform. Yet, during
their love affair, Danae is neither physically ascetic nor socially active. What aspects
of his ideals does he fancy she encapsulates? To be clear, I am not questioning the
profound connection established between Agathon and Danae. I am merely under-
mining his particular interpretation of it. Similarly, the narrator describes Agathon’s
attempt to explain his affection for Danae under the guise of Platonism as the height
of Schwärmerei.

After having deserted Danae and made off for Syracuse, Agathon comes to realize
the flaws in this thinking. But instead of redefining his notions of love and virtue in
a manner befitting his connection to Danae, Agathon allows a gap to form between his head and heart, between his reason and feeling. His experiences in life seem to affirm Hippias’s understanding of man as a base, selfish creature, but his heart still clings to the lofty ideals of Delphi. In his newly acquired scepticism, he reduces his entire love affair with Danae to an error of the imagination:

War nicht dieses zauberische Licht, welches seine Einbildungskraft gewohnt war über alles was mit seinen Ideen übereinstimmte auszubreiten; war nicht diese unvermerkte Unterschiebung des Idealen an die Stelle des Wirklichen die wahre Ursache warum Danae einen so außerordentlichen Eindruck auf sein Herz machte? (2:222)

Agathon’s description of his penchant for confounding the real and the ideal recalls Rousseau’s description of love as an illusion. Rousseau claims that “we love the image we make for ourselves far more than we love the object to which we apply it” (Emile 329). But there is a key difference between Agathon’s understanding of narcissistic projection and Rousseau’s. Agathon’s insights into the psychology of projection lead him to adopt, at least temporarily, the materialist conception of love, whereas Rousseau’s lead him to promote the cause of sentimental love all the more adamantly. This difference is explained by the opposing directions from which they approach the topic. For the idealist, the idea that love is a matter of projection constitutes a painful disillusionment. For the philosopher who builds his understanding of human behaviour upon a foundation of Lockean sensationalism, the theory of narcissistic projection constitutes exciting new knowledge about human psychology, about the points of tangency between body and spirit. As Rousseau explains, the imagination projects the mind’s ideals onto a human body, thus uniting the pursuit of ideals with the pursuit of sensual pleasure. Sentimental love, he argues, is defined by narcissistic projection and sexual sublimation. That said, one ought to celebrate the sublime for
what it is rather than demean it for its base origins. Sentimental love may be an illusion, but it is an illusion worth having.

In his moments of bitterness, Agathon does not do justice to his feelings for Danae; however, in moments of clarity, he recognizes the truth and depth of their connection. When he decides to defend the profundity of his love, he resorts to the same arguments he used against Hippias in his defence of Platonic idealism. He explains, “Ich fühlte es, und fühl’ es noch, so wie ich mein Daseyn fühle, daß es wahre Freuden sind, so wahr in ihrer Art, als die Freuden der Tugend!” (2:233). Agathon’s defence of love is based on intuition rather than reason. Unsatisfied with the inadequacy of his argument, he begins to contemplate possible solutions for mending the rift between his heart and head. He fantasizes about ways to connect his ideals of love with his ideals of virtue: “Agathon hätte also diese Art zu lieben, wie er die schöne Danae geliebt hatte und von ihr geliebt worden war, gern mit seinem erhabenen Begriffe von der Tugend verbinden mögen” (2:242). Having abandoned his Platonic idealism, Agathon is searching for a new, rational foundation for his belief in love and virtue.

However, according to his mentor Archytas, one of the necessary steps to eliminating the gap between Agathon’s heart and his head is the renunciation of his sentimental love for Danae (3:364). For Archytas, a universally binding moral code can only be attained at the expense of human sensuality. Agathon’s embrace of Archytas’s ascetic philosophy is one of the most intensely debated aspects of the entire novel.

There are several streams of interpretation. One of the most widely accepted is H.W. Reichert’s attempt to understand Agathon’s decision against the backdrop of the French Revolution and Kantian philosophy. Reichert argues that Wieland, shocked by the excesses of the French Revolution, undergoes his own personal “Kant

\[\text{\footnotesize\textsuperscript{77}}\text{See, for example, Buddecke (112).}\]
crisis,” leading him to adopt a more morally rigorous philosophy than was characteristic of his thought (12-14). Other readings emphasize the prevailing bourgeois norms which would have opposed the marriage of a virtuous hero to a fallen hetaira (Auteri 112; Grimminger 700). One feminist interpretation suggests that Agathon and Danae cannot marry “because there exists no synchronicity between Agathon’s (man’s) and Danae’s (woman’s) development, no equality in their social participation and no actual reciprocity in their personal relationship” (Glockhamer 373). Finally, Minden argues that Wieland in not allowing Agathon and Danae to be united “is refusing to devalue the real significance of their relation by permitting it to end in the banal motif of marriage” (80). Without refuting any of these interpretations, I would like to pursue a different avenue of thought.

By drawing a parallel between Archytas and the Savoyard Vicar, I lend support to an argument originally put forward by Jan-Dirk Müller. Müller maintains that Archytas’s philosophy is the unique product of his disposition and circumstances, and that it is therefore neither binding nor appropriate for Agathon (90). Although Müller’s interpretation has been contested by other scholars, most notably by Jürgen Jacobs (Prosa der Aufklärung 174), Wieland himself make a statement which lends it credibility (McCarthy, Fantasy and Reality 96). In a letter to Zimmermann on 20

78 Thomé argues that the problem is not in the prevailing bourgeois norms but rather in human nature in general. For him, the fact that Agathon and Danae’s love functions neither in Smyrna nor in Tarentum suggests that human nature has a defect, namely that human beings cannot be permanently happy (”Menschliche Natur” 222).

79 In the article “Wieland und die Frauenfrage – Frauen und die Wielandfrage” Thomas C. Starnes examines the gendered reception of Wieland in the eighteenth century, particularly during his time in Erfurt (1770-75). Starnes demonstrates that men were often critical of Wieland and women, by contrast, more often full of praise. He hypothesizes that the men were critical precisely because the women were full of praise. The men feared the immorality of Wieland’s writings, which they thought would lead women to want more than their due. Relatedly, Zimmermann writes to Wieland that his Agathon was the cause of moral corruption, responsible for at least “100 Hurereyen und 100 Ehebrüche” (qtd. Starnes 225).
December 1762, Wieland announces the introduction of philosopher more dangerous than Hippias: “[…] Hippias ist nur ein Sophist; es wird im vierten Teil noch ein Philosoph zum Vorschein kommen, der ein noch weit gefährlicherer Mann ist als jener, weil er zugleich ein ehrlicher Mann ist” (*Briefwechsel* 3:140). Wieland’s comments clearly refer to Archytas, who may be understood as a mirror image of Hippias. Although existing at opposite ends of the egoism/altruism spectrum, Hippias and Archytas resemble one another insofar as they both suffer from the basic fault of one-sidedness. As McCarthy explains, “Hippias turns the human intellect into a slave of the passions. Archytas, on the other hand, calls for complete hegemony of the intellect” (*Fantasy and Reality* 97). Still, as interesting as Wieland’s warning about the dangers of Archytas’s philosophy is, it is clearly not enough on which to base a solid interpretation of *Agathon*. To substantiate Müller’s claims about the contingency of Archytas’s asceticism, I would like to interject an excursus comparing Wieland’s Archytas to Rousseau’s Savoyard Vicar. This comparison bears direct consequences for the novel’s treatment of moral beauty. The argument that Agathon’s character and circumstances preclude a sustainable adoption of Archytas’s ascetic philosophy keeps the novel’s analysis of moral philosophy open and dynamic. It suggests that neither Hippias, nor Agathon, nor Archytas has a claim to a universally binding philosophy, that *Agathon* truly is more about asking questions than it is about finding answers.

To sum up, the previous three sections outline the role of the imagination in religion, moral sentiments, and love. I show how Agathon reinterprets the imagination in order to distance himself from the materialism of Hippias and his own former *Schwärmerei*. Once Agathon has relinquished his Platonic idealism in favour of an
anthropological worldview, he must find a new, rational foundation for his belief in
God, his ideal of humanity, and his attachment to Danae. Although he ultimately
concedes that the imagination is natural, he refuses to place the pleasures of the
imagination on equal footing with the pleasures of the senses. On the contrary, his
actions suggest that he continues to value the products of the imagination higher than
his own physical contentment. Whereas Hippias dismisses otherworldly speculation as
an error of the imagination, Agathon regards it as a natural byproduct of having such a
faculty. For Agathon, recognizing the beauty and harmony of creation inevitably leads
to an enthusiasm for its creator. The acknowledgment of a natural imagination thus
translates into the acknowledgment of a natural religion. Agathon’s reinterpretation
of the imagination also causes him to hold a different view on the role of compassion in
human behaviour. Whereas Hippias views compassion as affording an additional form
of sensual pleasure, Agathon sees the “sweetness of pity” as nature’s way of providing
humans with a hint about the greater purpose of existence. Ultimately, Agathon must
generalize his compassion and *amour-propre* in order to make them independent of his
social environment. Agathon’s cosmopolitan enthusiasm will satisfy his sense of self-
worth regardless of whether he receives external recognition of his goodness. Lastly,
Agathon’s reassessment of the imagination elevates his love for Danae above Hippias’s
conception of base physical attractions. Agathon pays tribute to the profundity of his
love for Danae without ever understanding its nature. Instead of fighting to preserve
it, he embraces Archytas’s ascetic philosophy. In the following excursus, I argue that
the text undermines the universality of Archytas’s worldview and thus the necessity
of Agathon’s adherence to it.
4.6 Excursus: The Wisdom of Mentors and the Ideals of their Pupils

Rousseau’s “Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar” and Wieland’s “Darstellung der Lebensweisheit des Archytas” are both fictitious autobiographical texts which are at once distinct from, and integral to, the novels’ larger “frame narrative.” They both relate the life story and philosophy of a character, other than the main protagonist, who is known for his wisdom and dignity. Focusing on the relationship between these autofictional texts and the moral development of the novels’ title protagonists, I argue that Wieland, following Rousseau’s lead, creates a tension between the philosophy espoused in the autofictional intertext and the thematic argument of the novel as a whole.

Both Rousseau’s “Profession” and Wieland’s “Darstellung” subscribe to a theory of Cartesian dualism, that is, to an unresolvable conflict between body and spirit, between natural inclinations and moral duties (Emile 278; SW 3:392). What is more, the Savoyard Vicar and Archytas both respond to the mind-body problem by assigning primacy to the mind over the body, to duty over inclination (Emile 281; SW 3:394). The novels themselves, however, insist on a necessary albeit futile attempt to permanently overcome the mind-body dualism. Emile and Agathon delineate a path toward moral beauty, a quest for the harmonious reconciliation of body and spirit, natural drives and social existence. Emile is not the Savoyard Vicar and Agathon is not Archytas, nor should they strive to be. The Savoyard Vicar and Archytas represent bastions of wisdom: they are sublime or dignified in the Schillerian sense of the terms. But Emile and Agathon strive for the ideals of moral beauty and grace,

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80 The following is a revised version of a conference paper entitled “Autofictional Intertexts in Rousseau’s Emile and Wieland’s Agathon,” which I gave on 9 April 2011 at the annual meeting of NEMLA in New Brunswick, New Jersey.
for a harmony of “Pflicht und Neigung” (Schiller, “Über Anmut und Würde” 486).

The Savoyard Vicar begins his “Profession of Faith” with a brief summary of his life. He explains that his parents belonged to the peasantry but wanted their child to join the educated classes. They encouraged him to become a priest, more for practical reasons than out of deeply held religious convictions. The Vicar adopted his parents’ practical approach to the matter; he went through the motions of becoming a priest without truly examining his beliefs. Shortly after taking orders, he was dismissed from the priesthood for having broken the vow of chastity: “It was not long before I sensed that in obliging myself not to be a man I had promised more than I could keep” (Emile 267). It is clear from this statement that the Vicar understands sexuality as a definitive part of humanity. Yet he remains deeply hostile toward all things sexual. The affairs that cost him his priesthood are not mentioned by name. The Vicar gives no indication that they were anything more than physical liaisons.

For the Vicar, the presence of the body is a necessary albeit unfortunate fact of life. He describes his understanding of the mind-body problem in a manner reminiscent of Faust’s two souls:

In meditating on the nature of man, I believed I discovered in it two distinct principles; one of which raised him to the study of eternal truths, to the love of justice and moral beauty [...]; while the other took him basely into himself, subjected him to the empire of the senses and to the passions which are their ministers. (278)

Depending on one’s perspective, the Vicar’s dualism represents either a discouragingly misanthropic or an inspiringly sublime view of human nature. It may be considered misanthropic due to its inherent anti-physicality; according to the Vicar, man’s sensuality is the root of his moral corruption and, by extension, of all that is wrong with
the world: “Man, seek the author of evil no longer. It is yourself” (282). On the other hand, the existence of two contradictory substances, the materiality of the body and the immateriality of the soul, also forms the philosophical foundation for human freedom and moral autonomy.

Essentially, the Vicar advocates Cartesian dualism in order to prove that man possesses an autonomous free will. His intellectual adversaries, the materialists, argue that man consists of only one substance, namely matter, and that his behaviour is dictated by the needs and desires of that one substance (i.e., the body). The Vicar’s experiences with sexuality have instilled in him the impossibility of understanding man as a uniquely spiritual entity; for him, Platonic idealism is not a credible option. He feels he must submit himself to one of the two following explanations: either man is a simple being, composed solely of matter, as the materialists posit, or he is a compound being, torn between matter and spirit, body and mind. The Vicar opts for the latter. He sees the existence of two substances as the basis of human freedom and moral virtue: “My will is independent of my senses; I consent or I resist; I succumb or I conquer; and I sense perfectly within myself when I do what I wanted to do or when all I am doing is giving way to my passions” (280). For the Vicar, the mind-body divide is so complete that he refers to his mind with the pronoun “I” and describes his passions as alien to the self. The anti-physicality of the Vicar’s belief system culminates in a longing for death: “I aspire to the moment when, after being delivered from the shackles of the body, I shall be me without contradiction or division” (293).

There has been much discussion on how the “Profession of Faith” fits into the plan of Emile’s education. I read the Vicar’s autobiographical text as demonstrating,
among other things, the virtues and the dangers of a moral philosophy based on sublimity. The Vicar promotes sublimity in the Schillerian sense of the term; he sees moral virtue as the triumph of the mind over the body, of the will over the senses. Emile’s education, on the other hand, seeks to establish moral beauty.

Emile’s entire education is constructed so that he will not experience the mind-body dualism which plagues the Savoyard Vicar. For the first fifteen years of his life, Emile has no comprehension of the words “duty” or “obligation.” He acts upon his natural inclinations with no conscious regard for social conventions. It is definitive of Rousseau’s plan that Emile maintains his natural wholeness, that he not be consciously torn between what he wants to do and what he ought to do. However, in the end, despite a lifetime of precautions, Emile does eventually come to crossroads at which his duties towards society conflict with his natural inclinations. He wants to marry, but he is asked to wait. This is the first time in his life where Emile must exercise virtue, where he must postpone the fulfilment of his desires in favour of an arbitrary social convention. Thus Rousseau ultimately concedes the necessity of sublimity for men living in society. But he prefers moral beauty. Moral beauty is an ideal: it allows men to enjoy their natural sensuality while simultaneously fulfilling their social duties. The morally beautiful individual, also known as the beautiful soul, harmoniously unifies and engages all of man’s faculties, the sensual and the moral sides of his nature. By contrast, Rousseau’s Savoyard Vicar and Wieland’s Archytas both display admirable dignity; but, in so doing they disregard a definitive aspect of the human experience, namely their own sensuality.

As Thimotheus Klein argued as early as 1903, the Savoyard Vicar serves as a model for the creation of Wieland’s Archytas (427). Indeed the two characters’ lives and
philosophies display remarkable similarities. Archytas advances a theory of dualism akin to that of the Savoyard Vicar:

Das erste, was die auf mich selbst gehetete Betrachtung an mir wahrnimmt, ist, daß ich aus zwey verschiedenen und einander entgegen gesetzten Naturen bestehe: einer thierischen, die mich mit allen andern Lebendigen in dieser sichtbaren Welt in Eine Linie stellt; und einer geistigen, die mich durch Vernunft und freye Selbstthätigkeit unendlich hoch über jene erhebt. (SW 3:392)

Like the Vicar, Archytas accepts the existence of two contradictory substances. However, in contrast to the Vicar, Archytas initially appears willing to integrate the body into his moral philosophy. At the beginning of his narrative, he champions the ideal of moral beauty, describing human perfection as a harmonious coming together of two different natures. He questions: “Worin anders könnte die höchste denkbare Vollkomenheit der Menschheit bestehen, als in einer volligen, reinen, ungestörten Harmonie dieser beider zu Einer verbundenen Naturen?” (SW 3:394). But Archytas’s glorification of aesthetic morality is, in fact, disingenuous. In truth, his anti-physicality is just as profound as the Vicar’s. He too is convinced that the mind alone constitutes the self, “daß der Geist allein mein wahres Ich seyn kann” (SW 3:403). He refers to the body as his “hidden enemy” or “versteckten Feind” (SW 3:399). And, although he does not explicitly voice the Vicar’s same longing for death, he does lament his physical existence: “Nur die Unkunde seiner eigenen Natur und Würde kann den Geist in einen so unnatürlichen Zustand versetzen, daß er, […] anstatt sich vom Stoffe los zu winden, immer mehr in ihm verwickelt wird” (SW 3:397-98). Archytas’s attack on physicality prompts the question why he initially espouses an ideal of moral beauty. I believe the answer to this question lies in the placement of his autobiographical narrative with the novel as a whole. Archytas’s appeal to moral
beauty can be read as an empty concession to Agathon’s struggle for inner harmony. Archytas relates his life story shortly after having read Agathon’s own biographical account. On the whole, he disapproves of Agathon’s various attempts to reconcile the moral and physical sides of his nature. The wise Tarentine statesman hopes to convince his young protégé to strive for dignity rather than moral beauty, for a primacy of the mind over the body rather than a harmonious reconciliation of the two.

Before Archytas begins his autobiography, Agathon still clings to the ideal of moral beauty, which he describes as desire to unify the heart and mind, “das Interesse seines Herzens und die Tugend [...] auf immer mit einander zu vereinigen” ([SW 2:157]). When he is reunited with Danae in Tarentum, Agathon regrets having sacrificed his love for her to an empty ideal of virtue:

Diese Tat, auf welche er sich damahls, – da er sie für einen herrlichen Sieg über die unedlere Hälfte seiner selbst, für ein großes, der beleidigten Tugend gebrachtes Söhnopfer ansah, – so viel gut gethan hatte, schien ihm itzt eine undankbare und niederträchtige That. ([SW 3:200-01, my emphasis])

Before Archytas reveals his philosophy, Agathon still believes in the desirability of balancing the two sides of his nature, in harmonizing his love for Danae with his love of virtue. But following Archytas’s autobiographical narrative, Agathon adopts his mentor’s ideal of sublimity, ostensibly renouncing his sentimental love for Danae in favour of a strictly non-physical attachment.

Because Agathon’s preface refers to Archytas’s philosophy as the crown of the novel’s moral plan, scholars often identify the “Darstellung” as the logical conclusion to Agathon’s moral development ([SW 1:XXVI]). I disagree with this assessment for several reasons. I believe that Wieland, like Rousseau, uses the “Darstellung” to
present an additional perspective on moral philosophy, one which is admirable but by no means faultless. Indeed the text undermines the perfection of Archytas’s doctrine on several occasions.

Note, for example, how Wieland’s narrator emphasizes the expressivity of Archytas’s eyes directly following his speech on the fundamental division between body and soul. The narrator claims that the wise man’s eyes express his soul in a way that his words are incapable of doing:

Hier hielt der ehrwürdige Greis ein, um seine noch nicht dunkel gewordenen Augen auf dem Gesichte seines jungen Freundes ruhen zu lassen, aus welchem ihm die reine Beystimmung seiner ganzen Seele lebendiger und stärker entgegen glänzte, als er sie durch die beredtesten Worte auszudrücken vermögend gewesen wäre. (SW 3:414)

The narrator’s praise of languageless communication recalls his earlier references to the Zeno-Diogenes debate. In that context, Zeno’s languageless communication, his demonstrative leave-taking, was used to refute Diogenes’s specious conclusions about the impossibility of motion. The same logic applies here: the narrator contradicts Archytas’s mind-body dualism by portraying the manifold connections between the mind and the body. It is a question of discursive reason versus embodied argumentation, or pure reason versus an alignment of reason and imagination, to which Wieland responds: “Wehe ihm, wenn seine Vernunft die einzige Führerin seines Lebens ist!” (SW 24:44).

Another cause for questioning the suitability of Archytas’s philosophy as the culmination of Agathon’s development concerns their fundamental differences of character. The narrator describes Archytas as possessing character traits which predispose him to wisdom and virtue. It is not a coincidence that just before he outlines the existence
4.6. EXCURSUS: THE WISDOM OF MENTORS AND THE IDEALS OF THEIR PUPILS

of such traits, he stresses the importance of nature for the formation of character. As is true for moral beauty, nature provides a necessary albeit insufficient foundation for Archytas’s combination of wisdom and virtue.\(^{81}\) The narrator argues,

\[
\text{daß [...] es dennoch der Natur allein zukomme, diese glückliche Temperatur der Elemente der Menschheit hervorzubringen, welche, unter einem Zusammenfluß eben so glückliche Umstände, endlich zu dieser vollkomm-}
\]

\[
\text{nen Harmonie aller Kräfte und Bewegungen des Menschen, worin Weisheit und Tugend zusammen fließen, erhöht werden kann. Archytas hatte niemals weder eine glühende Einbildungskraft noch heftige Leidenschaften gehabt. (3:189, my emphasis)}
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The narrator describes Archytas, the ostensible embodiment of ultimate wisdom and virtue, as having predispositions which are the exact opposite of Agathon’s. He explains Archytas as possessing an unimaginative and passionless character. Agathon, by contrast, is characterized as having an overactive imagination and unruly passions. The juxtaposition of the narrator’s comments on the importance of “Anlagen” for character development and his description of Archytas’s natural asceticism is telling. If Archytas’s dearth of imagination and passion are what predisposes him to his particular combination of wisdom and virtue, then Agathon is certainly not suited for it. Remember that Wieland himself confesses that no amount of force could convert him to Archytas’s way of thinking (See section 4.1.).

In truth, the text alternately constructs and deconstructs the perfection of Archytas’s ostensibly universally binding moral philosophy. It is interesting to note, for example, that the narrator’s glorified description of Archytas contradicts Archytas’s own autobiographical account. The narrator claims that Archytas is a naturally born Stoic, i.e., that he never had any passions with which to contend (3:189). However, Archytas himself admits to having struggled with several passions; including,

\(^{81}\) See section 1.2 for a discussion of nature versus culture in the making of a beautiful soul.
ambition “Ruhmbegierde” (3:387), pride “Eigenliebe” (3:389), and anger “Verdruß” (3:387). Furthermore, although the narrator himself never overtly questions Archytas’s moral principles, he does relate several instances of prejudice and intolerance. First, Archytas is about to reject Psyche as a daughter-in-law until his son proves her noble birth (3:211). Second, when Agathon suggests that Danae is the most lovable of all creatures and that an endless number of Danaes would create heaven on earth, Danae counters that Archytas would consider one Danae to be too many, “würde finden, daß es an Einer Danae schon zu viel sey” (3:348). Third, after the narrator claims that Archytas, in his infinite wisdom, would forgive Danae all of her former indiscretions, he immediately remarks that Agathon nevertheless obscures parts of her story, what is more, the parts of her story “welche bedeckt zu werden nötig hatten” (3:416). The two statements stand in direct contradiction to one another. If Archytas would forgive all of Danae’s indiscretions, then there would be no grounds for covering up any details. The text creates several lacunae which open up the possibility of questioning Archytas’s superlative character. In general, Archytas has little tolerance for matters of the heart. He is willing to prevent both his son’s marriage to Psyche and Agathon’s marriage to Danae.

The coldness of Archytas’s rationality prompts the question of how he differs from Dion. Do they not represent the exact same intellectual attitude, i.e., a cold and uncompromising adherence to reason and duty? Furthermore, if the narrator claims that Dion’s virtue is not to be admired because it requires no effort, than why is Archytas admirable? Does he not possess the same natural stoicism which the narrator previously claimed was as deserving of respect as the natural elasticity of an athlete’s tendons? The truth is that Archytas is characterized by the same cold
rationality as Dion. The only difference is that Agathon views him differently. The philosophy has not changed, only Agathon’s perspective on it.

Unable to conquer his passion for Danae, Agathon leaves Tarentum on an extended journey. When he returns several years later, he insists, in accordance with Archytas’s philosophy, that he looks upon Danae as a sister. But the text offers several reasons for the reader to doubt the veracity of his transformation. First, Archytas conquered his physicality because he never loved in the first place: “Archytas hatte die Macht des Dämons der Liebe nie erfahren” (3:211). Furthermore, he is a seemingly divine man, a “göttlicher Mann” (3:360). The whole premise of Wieland’s novel is that Agathon is not divine, that he is human and thus subject to moral weakness. Second, the narrator draws a parallel between Agathon’s love for Danae and Saint Preux’s love for Julie in Rousseau’s Julie. The intertextual reference suggests that no amount of wilful suppression can transform Agathon’s passion into brotherly affection. St. Preux and Julie also claim to have transformed their sentimental love for each other into a benign, sexless attachment, but, in the end, they are only deceiving themselves. Yet we need not rely on intertextuality to drive this point home.

Immediately after Agathon renounces his passion for his former lover, Danae steals from the room, anxious to avoid a scene of physical intimacy, “die Gefahren solcher Aufwallungen” (3:356). She knows that she is far from the age at which her lover can view her as a disembodied soul, “eine bloße Seele” (3:357).

Although Archytas insists that Agathon and Danae must maintain an asexual relationship, the text itself does not offer convincing arguments either for or against their marital union. Here, again, it raises more questions than it answers, which is

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82 Similarly, Buddecke argues that although Agathon confirms his adherence to Archytas’s philosophy, the narrator maintains his scepticism (237).
presumably why scholarship contains so many contradictory interpretations of why Agathon and Danae cannot resume their former intimacy. As with so many themes in *Agathon*, the theme of love is left open for debate. Would it be possible for Agathon to harmonize his love for Danae with his love of virtue? Or, would he revert to the epicureanism he practiced in Smyrna? Danae herself gives a curious and unconvincing explanation of why she and Agathon cannot marry. Indeed she argues that she would have been a suitable marriage partner for him had she reformed her way of life after Cyrus’s death (3:354). Yet this seems like a relatively arbitrary distinction. Why are her affairs with Alcibiades and Cyrus reconcilable with the demands of virtue while the others are not?

From the early days of his work on *Agathon*, Wieland struggled to dictate the terms under which Agathon and Danae would live out their lives together. In a letter to Zimmermann on 20 December 1762, he muses:

> [D]er Himmel weiß, was aus dem guten Enthusiasten Agathon noch werden kann, und ich stehe Ihnen nicht davor, daß er nicht in seinem vierzigsten Jahr in die Arme der schönen Danae zurückkehren wird, aus denen er sich im fünf und Zwanzigsten losgerissen. Freilich wird Danae alsdann ein sehr altes Mädchen seyn; allein hat nicht Ninon in ihrem achtzigsten Jahr noch die lebhaftesten Begierden erweckt? Und dann giebt es auch ein Alter für die Freundschaftliche Liebe? (*Briefwechsel* 3:141)

As early at 1762, four years prior to the publication of the novel’s first version, Wieland is already contemplating whether Agathon’s long-term relationship with Danae will be erotic or congenial in nature. By leaving this question open-ended, he forces the reader to reflect on the various factors which play a role in the decision. Is it Kantian morality (Reichert 12-14), bourgeois social norms (Auteri 112), gender inequalities (Glockhamer 373), or the desire to avoid clichés (Minden 80), which
prompts Wieland to choose the ending he does? As long as the answer to this question remains ambiguous, so too will Wieland’s conceptions of love and virtue. In light of the reigning ambiguities, we will just have to agree with Lessing, who in reference to the ending of Wieland’s novel is said to have joked, “Die Tugend ist, wenn wir die Weisen fragen, ich weiß nicht, was” (qtd. in Wölfel 246).

In conclusion, the morally rigid philosophies espoused in the autofictional intertexts of Rousseau’s *Emile* and Wieland’s *Agathon* stand in stark contrast to the conciliatory nature of the novels to which they belong. The Savoyard Vicar and Archytas both advocate a categorical imperative which anticipates Kantian ethics, while Emile and Agathon strive for moral beauty, a harmonious reconciliation of social duty and natural inclination. While juxtaposing the characters’ inner constitutions (sublimity with moral beauty), neither Rousseau nor Wieland opens the door to the possibility of synthesis. Both moral constitutions are inherently flawed. The morally dignified characters express a life-negating desire to be free of their bodies, and the ones who strive for moral beauty ultimately fail.

In the case of Wieland’s *Agathon*, one must of course question to what extent this is an aesthetic as opposed to, or as well as, a moral conclusion. *Geschichte des Agathon* ends exactly how it began, i.e., with an ironic tension produced by the existence of contradictory and irreconcilable perspectives. Given Wieland’s deliberate ambiguity regarding the text’s historical veracity, one should probably expect an ambiguous conclusion. In the final analysis, *Agathon* is or is not a novel which does or does not contain the truth about moral attitudes which are or are not virtuous. The only conclusion one can state with any certainty is that *Agathon* is a work of highly self-conscious fiction that poses many questions, formulates even more answers, but leaves
the reader in perpetual uncertainty.

4.7 Morality and Politics

For the entirety of the nineteenth and the better half of the twentieth century, Rousseau and Wieland were regarded as occupying opposite ends of the political spectrum. Rousseau was thought of as the philosophical father of the French Revolution and democracy, while Wieland was remembered as a co-founder of Weimar Classicism and a defender of monarchy.\footnote{Thimotheus Klein’s “Wieland und Rousseau” (1903/04) and Bernd Weyergraf’s \textit{Der skeptische Bürger} (1972) both contrast the conservative elements of Wieland’s political thought with the revolutionary atmosphere in France. Over the course of the last 40 years, Hannelore Schlaffer, Gonthier-Louis Fink, and Jan Philipp Reemtsma have made efforts to correct the one-sidedness of this interpretation (Reemtsma, “Wieland und die Politik” 95).} Sengle’s biography of Wieland from 1949 captures this opposition in a poetic image which places the fire of the revolution side by side with the beauty of Classical Greek architecture. Sengle writes, “Wieland baut, während in Frankreich die Jünger Rousseaus schon den Brand der großen Revolution zu entfachen beginnen, am zerbrechlich-schönen Tempel der letzten Klassik Alteuropas” (Wieland 233). The juxtaposition of the fiery dissemination of Rousseau’s political thought and the beautiful fragility of Wieland’s aesthetic programme feeds the popular notion that, while France mounted a revolution, Germany withdrew into a culture of
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But a closer look at Rousseau’s and Wieland’s political writings belies such a generalization. In truth, Rousseau and Wieland held many of the same political views.

The differences, I argue, are mainly of literary form and social context as opposed to strict political content. Both authors undertake a perspectival analysis of political themes, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the various forms of government. Rousseau, however, does not always present his perspectives as perspectives. He pursues each line of argumentation with such zeal that one can forget, if one chooses, that he pursues a contradictory line of argumentation elsewhere. As such, Rousseau’s political thought is easier to instrumentalize than Wieland’s.

Rousseau offers inflammatory statements, modern-day “sound bites,” in which he portrays democracy as the one and only form of legitimate government.

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84 Reemtsma blames the tendency to remove Wieland’s political writings from editions of his collected works for Sengle’s assessment of Wieland as apolitical: “Für Friedrich Sengle (1949) war Wieland politisch interessiert […] aber letztlich ein unpolitischer Humanist” (“Wieland und die Politik” 95). That said, Sengle’s Aufklärung und Rokoko in der deutschen Literatur does give a slightly more nuanced account of Wieland’s political thought (165-68).

85 James J. Sheehan, author of German History, 1770-1866, also warns against overemphasizing the differences between the political thought of the French and German Enlightenments. He claims that “by the 1770s, there were ample signs of vitality and variety, which certainly represent the beginning of a new political culture throughout German-speaking Europe. How this political culture might have developed without the twin traumas of war and revolution we will never know” (124).

86 Bäppler also argues that the political affinities between Rousseau and Wieland are obscured by the radical lengths to which Rousseau pushes his individual arguments: “Die geistige Nähe und Verwandtschaft zu dem Gedankengut Rousseaus ist allenthalben spürbar, wenn Wieland auch nicht gewillt ist, sich den radikaleren Folgerungen und Schlüssen des Schweizer Denkers anzuschließen” (54).

87 Take, for example, the following statements about the distribution of power: “If a slave, then, cannot alienate himself without reserve to his master, how can a people alienate itself without reserve to its chief?” (Emile 460). And: “We shall examine whether it is possible for the people to divest itself of its right of sovereignty in order to vest that right in one or more men. For, since the act of election is not a law, and in this act the people itself is not sovereign, it is hard to see how it can transfer a right it does not have” (Emile 462). Later we find out that Rousseau was considering merely “political right” which “is not bent by men’s passions,” i.e., he was considering ideals not realities (Emile 467).
democratic rule. In truth, Rousseau and Wieland both idealize democracy but regard it as incompatible with eighteenth-century society. Democracy, they argue, was possible in a simpler time when men were closer to nature, i.e., in ancient Greece and Rome. The development of luxury goods and the ensuing decline of moral virtues make monarchy the more suitable choice for eighteenth-century men (Fink 23).

In addition to questions of form, Rousseau's and Wieland's different political legacies must also be understood as a result of their differing social contexts. In the eighteenth century, France was a powerful, unified state with strong intellectual and political centres, in Paris and Versailles respectively. Germany, by contrast, did not even exist yet. Unlike France, the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, consisting of approximately 300 individual states, had no formal capital and no single source of sovereign authority (Sheehan 119). Mirroring the state of its union, political culture in Germany was weaker than in France. Although he cautions against overemphasizing the differences, James J. Sheehan concludes that “in comparison to its counterparts west of the Rhine, the German political public seems weaker, less secure, more hesitant” (124).

The differing political atmospheres of France and Germany are visible in the reception history of Wieland’s Agathon. As mentioned above, German scholarship portrays Wieland as a conservative monarchist or an apolitical humanist, but the same cannot be said of Wieland’s contemporaries in France. According to his own account, Wieland was branded as a supporter of the French Revolution by a correspondent from La Gazette nationale, ou le Moniteur universel (1789-1901) aka Le Moniteur. When discussing the failures of the French Revolution in “Sendschreiben an Herrn P.E. in K.” (1792), Wieland points to the human propensity to idealize their own nature: “Was uns so irre führt, ist, daß wir so gern eine Art von idealischen Menschen, Menschen wie sie seyn sollten, oder wie wir sie zu unserm Plane, zu unsern Absichten nötig haben, an den Platz der wirklichen Menschen setzen” (SW 29:316).
4.7. MORALITY AND POLITICS

In an essay on the French Revolution entitled “Sendschreiben an Herrn P.E. in K” (1792), Wieland refutes the notion that his authorship of Agathon classifies him as a democrat. To the correspondent from Le Moniteur who ostensibly made such a claim, he responds:

[er] hätte wissen können, daß der Verfasser des Agathon schon vor fünf und zwanzig Jahren im ersten und zweyten Kapitel des achten Buches Schilderungen, wie es in demokratischen Staaten zugeht, aufgestellt hat, die nicht wohl von ihm vermuthen lassen, daß die Umbildung der Französischen Monarchie in eine Demokratie, wie noch keine gewesen ist, eine sehr glückliche Begebenheit für die Nazion in seinen Augen seyn könne. (SW 29:305)

Although scholars in Germany did not initially recognize the democratic stain in Wieland’s thought, this French journalist did. Wieland’s response is characteristically subtle. He refers the journalist to his description of Athens in Agathon where he highlights the problems of a culturally developed republic, like France, which vacillates between democracy and aristocracy: a “zwischen Demokratie und Aristokratie hin und her treibenden Republik” (SW 2:140). Yet he does not mention his depiction of Tarentum, the more primitive republic which garners his esteem. Like Rousseau, Wieland both criticizes and idealizes the concept of popular sovereignty. That a journalist from Le Moniteur attempted to co-opt Wieland’s thought for the revolutionary cause proves that the democratic element is there if one is intent on finding it and if one is willing to gloss over all evidence to the contrary.

At the root of both Rousseau’s and Wieland’s thought lies a belief in an inextricable link between politics and morality. In Emile, Rousseau posits that “those who want to treat politics and morals separately will never understand anything of
either of the two” (Emile 235). Just as Rousseau reads Plato’s Republic as a treatise on education masquerading as a book about politics (Emile 40), so Peter Gay reads Emile “as a great book on politics masquerading as a treatise on education” (535). Perhaps, in the end, it is more accurate to say that both Plato’s Republic and Rousseau’s Emile are hybrid texts in which the moral is political and the political is moral. Wieland’s Agathon also attests to the author’s conviction that the moral is always already political. The text’s questions concerning the potential for balance between natural inclinations and moral duties, between sensuality and reason, serve as gateways to broader questions about the claims of the individual versus the claims of society (Bäppler 29).

Neither Rousseau nor Wieland argues for a “one-size-fits-all” approach to political governance. As perspectival thinkers, they explore the strengths and weaknesses of the various moral dispositions as well as those of the various forms of government. In fact, they both posit a connection between the moral and the political such that a people’s stage of moral development becomes the decisive factor in the establishment

89 In Shaftesbury, Rousseau, and Kant: An Introduction to the Conflict between Aesthetic and Moral Values in Modern Thought, John Andrew Bernstein describes the eighteenth-century debate on aesthetic morality as “far closer to the most basic sociopolitical realities of life than its academic and frequently abstract nature might lead one to believe” (10). Indeed, from the very beginning, discussions of moral beauty bear heavy political implications. Shaftesbury initiates the eighteenth-century debate surrounding moral beauty as a direct response to Hobbes’s rationalism. In Leviathan (1651), Hobbes argues that man’s nature is predominantly selfish. He then uses his theories of egoism to promote an absolutistic form of government (Rogers 429). Shaftesbury, by contrast, believes it is dangerous to place absolute power in the hands of a single ruler. Unlike Hobbes, Shaftesbury views humans as naturally good and just: he believes them capable of accepting, and acting in accordance with, a transcendental moral code (Engbers 11). He thus rejects Hobbes’s justification of absolutistic government. Shaftesbury’s rejection of absolutism does not mean, however, that he advocates democracy. On the contrary, Shaftesbury has “an elitist, and specifically aristocratic, conception of moral duty” (Norton 37). Far from democratic, Shaftesbury’s political ideal involves educating the noble classes so as to justify their privilege and make them fit for leadership (Engbers 18). Shaftesbury’s beautiful soul is perforce a well-educated and aristocratic soul. From Shaftesbury to Schiller, from the beginning of eighteenth century to the end, the theory of moral beauty remains closely tied to developments in political thought.
of its political regime. For instance, Rousseau and Wieland both view the attainment of virtue as a necessary prerequisite for democracy, “die Tugend als conditio sine qua non jeder Demokratie” (Buddecke 151). In “Sendschreiben an Herrn P.E. in K,” Wieland stresses the “Einfalt und Reinheit der Sitten, ohne welche sich keine glückliche Demokratie denken läßt” (SW 29:302).

Agathon both promotes democracy as an ideal and criticizes it as potentially unstable and unjust. In his youthful Schwärmerei, Agathon draws analogies between his Platonic idealism and democratic rule. In Athens, he hopes to transpose his ideals of morality onto the political stage. He explains, “daß ich mit nichts geringerm umging, als mit Entwürfen, wie die erhabenen Lehrsätze meiner idealischen Sittenlehre auf die Einrichtung und Verwaltung eines gemeinen Wesens angewandt werden können?” (SW 2:84). As Thomé points out, democracy is the logical conclusion to Agathon’s ideals of virtue; if one’s ideals centre around the taming of passions, as is true for Agathon’s concepts of Platonic love and altruism, class distinctions disappear (“Menschliche Natur” 213). Individuals are ranked according to their “passion for virtue” or “Tugenddrang” rather than their wealth or superiority of birth. Wieland, Thomé argues, keenly exposes the claims to political power inherent in bourgeois morality (“Menschliche Natur” 113).

But democracy, as Agathon conceives it, requires all individuals to adhere to the same ideals of virtue, which proves unrealistic. Agathon expects the Athenians to think and act like he and Psyche. In the absence of the passions, the particular will of the individual would equal the general will of the collective: “Freiwillige, vernunftgeleitete Tugendhaftigkeit aller konstituiert die Gesellschaft. Der selbstlose Dienst

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90In the context of eighteenth-century Europe, the idea that democracy depends on the virtue of the people may be traced back to Montesquieu’s De l’esprit des lois (1748) (Fink 23).
wahrt zugleich das wohlverstandene Interesse jedes Einzelnen” (Thomé, “Menschliche Natur” 223). It is a beautiful theory, but it is quickly overturned in practice. Not everyone is willing to subject his particular interests to the interests of the collective. A group of greedy and power-hungry Athenians intrigue to have Agathon removed from power.

Despite Agathon’s disillusionment with the instability and injustice of Athenian democracy, the text does not undermine political equality and self-governance as an ideal. The problem, it seems, has more to do with the reformer than with the reforms. The narrator defends democracies as “ehrwürdige Freystätte und Zufluchtsplätze der Tugend, der gesunden Denkungsart, der öffentlichen Glückseligkeit und einer politischen Gleichheit, welche sich der natürlichen möglichst nähert” (SW 3:36, my emphasis).91 Despite his criticism of Rousseau’s hypotheses on the state of nature in the Beyträger, Wieland ultimately shares Rousseau’s belief in nature as the source of political legitimacy. Because human beings are born free and equal, it would be ideal if they could remain that way. The problem thus becomes how to achieve natural freedom and equality in a morally corrupt social environment. Under the wise guidance of Archytas, Tarentum succeeds where Athens failed. Human equality and self-governance are still an ideal, just not one that can be realized by naive, idealistic

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91 Wieland’s analysis of the various political systems is not as explicit as Rousseau’s. Rousseau clearly differentiates between the sovereign and the government. The sovereign is “a moral and collective body composed of as many members as the assembly has voices” (Emile 460). The government is “in charge of public administration, the execution of the laws, and the maintenance of civil and political liberty” (Emile 463). For Rousseau, the sovereign is source of the general will, which is carried out by the government. No government is legitimate (democracy, aristocracy, or monarchy) if it fails to carry out the general will. Wieland does not develop the same terminology, but he holds the same belief. In “Das Geheimniss des Kosmopolitischen-Ordens,” he writes: “Die Kosmopoliten behaupten, es gebe nur Eine Regierungsform, gegen welche gar nichts einzuwenden sey, und dieß ist, sagen sie, die Regierungsform der Vernunft” (SW 30:186). Because Wieland equates reason and the general will, the arguments can be understood as similar (Fink 26).
youths.92

Tarentum is described as a *de jure* democracy and a *de facto* monarchy, but in fact it is neither. It has popular sovereignty, which suggests that it is a democracy. But Archytas rules like a king, which suggests that it is a monarchy: “In der That fehlte ihm zu Könige nichts als die äußerlichen Zeichen dieser Würde. Niehmals hat ein Despot unumschränkter über die Leiber seiner Sklaven geherrschet als dieser ehrwürdige Greis über die Herzen eines freyen Volkes” (3:193). Neither a democracy nor a monarchy, Tarentum seems more like an educational institute than a political state. Indeed the people appear to be ruled by internal conviction rather than external law: “Archytas hatte sie […] an die weisen Gesetze, die er ihnen gegeben, so gut angewöhnt, daß sie mehr durch die Macht der Sitten als durch das Ansehen der Gesetze regiert zu werden schienen” (3:183). Wieland’s description of Tarentum recalls Rousseau’s assertion that “the wise man does not need laws” (*Emile* 91).

With regard to obviating the need for laws, Archytas is for Tarentum what the

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92 Sengle elaborates on the necessity of experience and wisdom in political reforms: “Wieland erkennt mit großer Deutlichkeit, daß Ideale nur von reifen, nüchternen Menschen realisiert werden können, nicht von jungen Schwärern, daß jeder Platonismus in der Liebe wie auch im politischen Leben schädlich ist, weil er den Hippiassen, d.h. also den Materialisten, gestattet, die Schwärmer an die Wand zu drücken” (*Aufklärung und Rokoko* 164).
tutor is for Emile. Archytas teaches the Tarentine people to internalize the laws of morality so that they view them as an integral part of themselves rather than an external source of oppression. Archytas’s perfect morality makes law superfluous: education replaces politics. The narrator does not describe the process by which this takes place, but he does characterize some of the results.

Similar to Emile, the inhabitants of Tarentum are free of all desire to distinguish themselves from their peers. Whereas the Athenians want to be feted for their philosophy and rhetoric, the Tarentine people have no special attachment to the arts. They are utterly practical, with no love of luxury or ostentation: “Liebhaber des Natürlichen und Gründlichen, die bey allem mehr auf die Materie als auf die Form sahen” (3:184). As has been mentioned previously, Plato and Rousseau both locate the source of injustice between the origins of civilization and the development of luxury goods (Plato, Republic 55; Rousseau, Discourses 151-60). Wieland’s description of Tarentine virtue suggests a similar diagnosis. Tarentum maintains peace and stability because its people are moderate in their needs and humble in their self-assessment. In the absence of inflamed *amour-propre*, they cannot understand why one would prefer a luxury item to its practical counterpart, “daß eine zierliche gearbeitete Schlüssel aus Korinthischen Erz besser seyn könne als eine schlechte aus Silber, oder daß ein Narr liebenswürdig seyn könne, weil er artig sey” (3:184). The Tarentine people care what things are, not how things appear. They exist in the stage of development comparable to Rousseau’s “juste milieu.”

The most compelling argument against a comparison of Wieland’s and Rousseau’s politics is that Wieland is a liberal, who believes in the value of human progress, whereas Rousseau is a conservative, who believes “all the efforts we make to improve
ourselves through social cooperation are doomed to fail” (Wolfe 33). If we compare Rousseau’s Discourses and Wieland’s Beyträge, this objection does actually hold sway. But if we compare Rousseau’s ideal of morality in Emile and Wieland’s description of Tarentum in Agathon, the objection can be overturned. Emile and Agathon are both concerned with opening the reader’s eyes to the interconnectedness of human vices and virtues, “das Janusgesicht der Kultur” (Buddecke 138). The juxtaposition of Athenian and Tarentine democracy suggests that equality and self-governance are only possible in the absence of luxury goods and the vanity which people derive from their possession. Wieland, like Rousseau, looks to nature to identify the moral virtues necessary for democracy.

As was the case in Emile, it is impossible to derive an unequivocal portrait of the author’s political convictions from Agathon (Jacobs, Prosa der Aufklärung 177). The general consensus is that for the majority of his life Wieland favoured the constitutional monarchy over the democratic republic for its combination of stability,

93 Alan Wolfe actually argues that Rousseau is neither liberal nor conservative but transcends contemporary political categories (33). That said, he acknowledges neither Emile nor the social optimism it represents.

94 Agathon summarizes the interconnectedness of human vice and virtue in his final reflections. As the narrator relates, “Er sah, daß allenthalben Künste, Fleiß und gute Wirthschaft den Reichthum, der Reichthum den Luxus, der Luxus verdorbene Sitten, verdorbene Sitten den Untergang des Staats, zur Folge haben: aber er sah auch daß die Künste, wenn sie ihre Richtung von der Weisheit erhalten, die Menschheit verschönern, entwickeln, veredeln; daß Kunst die Hälfte unserer Natur, und der Mensch ohne Kunst das elendeste unter allen Thieren ist” (SW 3:422).
order, and freedom. However, *Agathon* speaks more to Wieland’s interest in political education than political advocacy. It serves as a good illustration of Reemtsma’s thesis that the aim of Wieland’s political writings is not the dissemination of a political ideology but the development of skills in political thinking: “Nicht Gedachtes zu vermitteln, sondern denken zu lehren ist Wielands Programme als politischer Schriftsteller” (“Der politische Schriftsteller” 105).

Indeed *Agathon* does not attest to the author’s preference for monarchical rule. The Syracusan monarchy, the only real monarchy in the text, proves as unstable and unjust as the Athenian democracy. In Athens, Agathon falls victim to the winds of popular favour, the so-called “*aura popularis*” (*SW* 2:88), and in Syracuse to the arbitrary will of a monarch, “einen zwischen Tugend und Laster hin und her wankenden Prinzen” (*SW* 3:14). The source of instability and injustice is the same. In both cases, it is the discrepancy between the passions, which give rise to a desire to dominate over others, and reason, which advocates human equality, between the particular will of the individual and the general will of the people.

Absolutist monarchy is to Hippias’s worldview what democracy is to Agathon’s (Thomé, “Menschliche Natur” 209-10). It is the logical conclusion to his materialistic philosophy, which may be summarized with the following mantra: “Befriedige deine Bedürfnisse; vergnüge alle deine Sinnen; erspare dir so viel du kannst alle schmerzhafte

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95 For examples, see Bäppler (101), Buddecke (150), Fink (19), Sengle (*Aufklärung und Rokoko* 168), and Reemtsma (“Wieland und die Politik” 103). Wieland’s partiality for the constitutional monarchy stems from the source as his reservations about democracy, namely the question of stability: “Wenn er der Monarchie den Vorzug gibt, so weil sie ihm größere Stabilität zu gewährleisten scheint” (Fink 19). It is important to note that Wieland expressed preference for republican ideals during his Swiss years (1752-1759), i.e., in the years directly before he began work on *Agathon*. According to Fink, he distances himself from republicanism after his arrival in Biberach because his position there as a senator and the director of the chancery exposed him to the negative facets of the republican system (Fink 17). Furthermore, he, like many German men of letters, initially praised the French Revolution, but retracted his support during the Terror of 1792-1794 (Sheehan 124).
Whereas Agathon’s Platonic idealism demands the subjection of the senses to the hegemony of the mind, Hippias’s materialism demands the subjection of the mind to the hegemony of the senses. Far from recognizing the basic tenets of human equality, Hippias believes that he can purchase his own happiness with the happiness of others. He differs from Dionysius, the Syracusan tyrant, only insofar as Dionysius is raised with the belief in his “right” to exploit others, whereas Hippias develops that same belief through with the aid of materialistic philosophy.

A comparison of Agathon’s political failures in Syracuse and Athens suggests that in order to achieve stability and justice, a monarchy would require the same virtue of its monarch as a democracy would require of its people. Hence, if the historical Wieland advocates monarchy over democracy, it is not because he has given up on his ideals of human equality and self-governance. It is rather that he, like Rousseau, juxtaposes the ideal of democracy with the pragmatic reality of constitutional monarchy.\footnote{Relatedly, Hippias argument for personal responsibility, i.e., “er [man] darf alles, was er kann, und ist keinem andern nichts schuldig” (SW 1:154), recalls the Objectivist mantra from Ayn Rand’s \textit{Atlas Shrugged} (1957). Although Rand claims to believe in a democratic government, Wieland shows that her type of ethical egoism ultimately results in absolutism.} After all, it is easier to educate one person for virtue, i.e., Emile or Agathon, than an entire people, i.e., revolutionary France or ancient Athens.

The education of an individual toward democratic virtues is, as I have attempted to demonstrate throughout this study, deeply intertwined with the formation of the imagination. Emile and Agathon are capable of self-governance because their imaginations provide them with a foundation for natural religion, cosmopolitan enthusiasm, \footnote{Compare with Bäppler’s conclusion: “Wenn Wieland sich von nun [the time of the French Revolution] an dem Gedanken der konstitutionellen Monarchie verschreibt, dann bedeutet dies keine Relativierung des höher zu bewertenden Vernunftprinzips, sondern um einen im Dienste dieses Prinzips opportunen Gedanken” (100).}
and sentimental love. It is at these points of tangency between their physicality and their spirituality that their individual natures are reconciled with human society.

The citizens of Athens and the tyrant of Syracuse achieve no such resolution between their individual natures and their moral duties. The citizens of Athens are carried away by the warmth of their imaginations, first in support of Agathon and then in persecution. Agathon attributes their fickleness to their penchant for heeding the fabrications of their imaginations over the voice of reason. He supports the nomination of a worthy and experienced commander to lead the Athenian military forces against an uprising in Euboea, but they are resolved that he himself should lead despite his youth and inexperience. He describes their resistance to rational argument to Danae: “Aber das alles half nichts gegen die warme Einbildungskraft des lebhaftesten und leichsinnigsten Volks in der Welt” (2:101). In the case of the Euboean uprising, the Athenians’ imagination leads them to support Agathon in his quest for peace and justice; however, the part they play in his later persecution proves that their overactive imaginations are just as likely to lead them to support political intriguers in their selfish quests for money and power. Having fallen out of line with reason, the Athenian imagination gives rise to the instability and injustice of their state.

For Dionysius, as for Hippias, the pleasures of the imagination remain sensual pleasures. His ostensible wavering between vice and virtue is actually just a wavering between the pleasures of the senses and the pleasures of the imagination, which he regards as being of equal value: “In der That war seine Bekehrung nichts andres, als daß er nummehr, anstatt irgend einer Wollust athmenden Nymfe, ein schönes Fantom der Tugend umarmte” (2:277). Dionysius’s false conversion to virtue demonstrates
the difference between valuing the imagination for its enhancement of our sensual pleasures and valuing the imagination for its own sake, i.e., for its ability to elevate the human experience above sensuality.

I am not the first one to recognize the connections in Wieland’s work between imagination and politics. In Literarische Phantasie: Theorie und Geschichte, Silvio Vietta summarizes Wieland’s contribution to political theory as follows:

In jedem Falle wird man festhalten müssen, daß Wieland mit der erzählerischen Darlegung des Zusammenhangs von politischem Fehlverhalten und Wahnbildern, von politischer Wirklichkeit und der Wirkmacht der auf kollektive Fehlsteuerung der Einbildungskraft zurückgeführten Ideologien, eines der zentralsten und wichtigsten Themen der modernen politischen Geschichte angeschnitten hat. (Vietta 208)

The malfunctioning of the imagination, or “Fehlsteuerung der Einbildungskraft,” has been the constant theme of this study. In Emile and Agathon, the correct development of the imagination is the key to the moral constitution of the individual as well as the political constitution of the state. For Rousseau and Wieland, the moral is the political. To finish with a quotation from Agathon’s narrator: “indem er solchergestalt an sich selbst arbeitet, arbeitet er zugleich für die Welt” (3:214).
Chapter 5

Conclusion

Rousseau’s First and Second Discourses offer a new interpretation of original sin. Man, Rousseau tells us, is not wicked because Adam and Eve ate from the tree of knowledge. Man is wicked because he lives with other men. In the state of nature, alone and self-sufficient, man is good. It is only when he enters society that he develops the vices which Christians attribute to the Fall: “Everything is good as it leaves the hands of the Author of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man” \textit{(Emile 37)}. Rousseau’s view of human society is admittedly pessimistic. It does, however, leave the door open for hope and regeneration. If the First and Second Discourses diagnose a debilitating disease, then \textit{Emile} offers a potential cure. It asks how man can reclaim his natural goodness within the context of modern society.

The answer, I argue, lies in the formation of Emile’s imagination. Rousseau writes: “sentiment must enchain imagination, and reason silence the opinion of men. The source of all the passions is sensibility; imagination determines their bent” \textit{(Emile 219)}. This passage, dense and enigmatic, contains a summary of Emile’s education. Human sensibility, Rousseau explains, gives rise to the passions, but it is the imagination that determines their form. Ideally, the passions should be ordered
by the imagination rather than suppressed by the will: “To order the human passions according to man’s constitution is all that we can do for his well-being” (Emile 80). For most people, the voice of reason is not strong enough to instill order on the passions. Passions are only curbed by other passions, which is where the imagination comes into play. The imagination can form the emerging passions into “passions of beneficence and commiseration or of envy and covetousness,” depending on how it develops (Emile 235). Rousseau outlines three instances in which the imagination can go astray, engendering vice instead of virtue: man’s engagement with the divine, the formation of his compassionate disposition, and the development of his sexuality. Rousseau guides all three of these processes in order to ensure that Emile becomes a spiritual, compassionate, and loving being. He believes he can save Emile from ever falling prey to the vices of society.

Wieland agrees with Rousseau that life in society engenders certain vices, but he, unlike Rousseau, does not consider them avoidable. Even in the ostensibly idyllic moral and social cordon sanitaire of Delphi, Agathon becomes subject to the vices of vanity and the follies of Schwärmerei. However, the fact that Wieland views vice as inescapable does not make him more pessimistic about the prospects of education. It merely leads him to pursue a different vision, a self-corrective rather than a preemptive approach to moral weakness. Whereas the tutor guides the development of Emile’s imagination, Agathon must first recognize the pathologies of his own Schwärmerei before taking the necessary steps to overcome them. In the process of reflecting on the failures of his Delphic education, Agathon gains insight into the imagination’s ability to distort but also elevate one’s understanding of nature:

So seltsam es klingt, so gewiß ist es doch, daß die Kräfte der Einbildung dasjenige weit übersteigen, was die Natur unsern Sinnen darstellt […]
kurz, sie erschafft eine neue Natur, und versetzt uns in der That in fremde Welten, welche nach ganz andern Gesetzen als die unsrige regiert werden. (SW 2:16-17)

Even after Agathon has overcome the Schwärmerei of his youth, his imagination continues to create a second nature, “eine neue Natur.” This second nature is grounded in the first, i.e., in the world of the senses, but it is not reducible to it.

In an attempt to distance himself from Hippias’s materialism, Agathon elevates the pleasures of the imagination above the pleasures of the senses. He concludes that the products of the imagination (i.e., man’s predisposition to the otherworldly, altruism, and love) are natural, because the imagination is natural. Moreover, rather than reduce the pleasures of the imagination to mere imitations of those found in the sensual world, Agathon insists on acknowledging their separate dignity. For him, the imagination’s role in the development of natural religion, cosmopolitan enthusiasm, and sentimental love provides human beings with a second nature, one whose existence even Hippias eventually accepts. When taking leave from Agathon for the last time, Hippias concedes the failure of his schemes to refashion Agathon in his own image and acknowledges the fundamental differences between himself and his would-be protege: “Wie wunderlich auch diese schwärmerische Vorstellungsart in meinen Augen ist, genug, sie scheint dir zur andern Natur geworden zu seyn” (3:171). According to Agathon, the imagination elevates human beings above Hippias’s base sensuality, but it also precludes them from accessing Platonic truths. Hence, Agathon ends his journey exactly where he began: halfway up the epistemological mountain. His is a worldview founded on the information derived from the senses but ennobled by the workings of reason and, most importantly, the imagination.
In summation, *Emile* and *Agathon* constitute an important contribution to the eighteenth century’s project to reevaluate the role of the imagination in human cognition and behaviour. As novels, they offer increased access to empirical reality as compared with the philosophical and poetic texts upon which James Engell bases his seminal work *The Creative Imagination*. According to Engell, the eighteenth century views the imagination as “a power that could bridge the gulf between man and nature and knit the two together again” (7). My analysis of *Emile* and *Agathon* supports and expands Engell’s argument. It shows that Rousseau and Wieland not only see the imagination as providing the means to reconcile human nature and civil society. They also offer two similar yet distinct visions about how that might come to pass. They demonstrate that the imagination, depending on how it develops, can either cause a deeper rift between the body and the spirit or mend the divide that separates them. In *Emile* and *Agathon*, a malformed imagination results in materialism, fanaticism, egoism, libertinism, and ultimately despotism, but a well-formed imagination provides the foundation for natural theology, cosmopolitan enthusiasm, sentimental love, and, by extension, a just political constitution. For Rousseau and Wieland, the imagination is both the cause of man’s depravity and the key to his beautiful soul – his original sin and his saviour.
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