

*“To the Relief of Those Who Are in Distress.”*

*On the Phenomenon of Pity in the Philosophy of J.-J. Rousseau*

Kateřina Sváčková

The thesis attempts to thematise the philosophical composition of the phenomenon of pity (fr. *pitié, compassion*) as it was elaborated by J.-J. Rousseau, and on this basis, to present an “ornament of pity” as a phenomenon that is both integral and changeable.

First of all, we compose this ornament from three groups of principles: firstly, affection, passion, emotion and the so-called *moral sense*; secondly, reason and reasoning; and thirdly, two forms of self-love (fr. *amour de soi-même, amour propre*). In the first part of the thesis, Rousseau's pity comes to be seen as combining these three sets of principles.

The individual phenomenon thus constructed is to be applied in the moral, social and public spheres. In Rousseau's idealised theory, pity is generalised through the rational faculties and extended self-love, and extended to the level of cosmopolitan love of humanity (fr. *amour de l'humanité*) and (thus) love of justice (fr. *amour de la justice*). We reflect on pity as defined by Rousseau as the “source of moral virtues” or the “source of social relations”, tracing the transformation of its original form and strength, of its “quantity” as well as its “quality”. Thus, by placing Rousseau's texts in the context of both the writings of his predecessors and the subsequent “second life” of Rousseauian pity, we can gradually identify three different forms of this phenomenon: *natural pity, transformed pity, and perverted pity*.

Our thesis attempts to show that *transformed pity*, which embraces aspects of self-love and reason in addition to emotion, may be the only one that could fulfil the potential of being the cornerstone of morality in society; but that ultimately it *cannot* function in this way for this reason either; at least not sufficiently and not alone.