

Enlightenment Thinkers on Marriage

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Abstract

Two centuries after Montaigne's reflective discussion of marriage in the sixteenth century, Enlightenment thinkers also expressed their views on the issue of marriage. In his *Letters to the Persians*, Montesquieu expressed his desire for a "marriage of the heart", a contract in which the marriage should be based on the unity of the couple's temperament, and therefore the marriage should be dissolved if the temperament is not compatible. In addition, marriage is a matter of social welfare and interest, so the secular and religious powers should reconcile their handling of marriage matters and avoid conflicts between civil and religious laws as much as possible. Voltaire, on the other hand, fully supported the secularization of marriage and demanded a strict distinction between the content and the form of marriage, contract and sacrament. He claimed that the Church's interference in marriage matters would threaten the secular authority and lead to the disruption of the laws of the state. Secular authority should prevail, and religious law should not undermine civil law. Rousseau, on the other hand, saw good marriage as a necessary condition for the formation of political citizens. Marriage is not a "natural" situation, but rather it is related to the obligations and nature of the state, and thus the marriage relationship is essentially political. Although each of the three Enlightenment thinkers had a distinctive view of marriage, they also showed a striking consensus, especially in linking marriage to society, which was different from the individualistic view of marriage in the Renaissance. The purpose of this paper is to explore the conceptions of marriage by Enlightenment thinkers to better understand the changes in the concept of marriage since the Renaissance and the issues of marriage before and after the French Revolution that underlie them.

Keywords: Enlightenment Thinkers, Marriage, Eighteenth Century, Poetic

1. Introduction

In his "Essays", Montaigne, the father of the 16th century Renaissance, devoted a considerable amount of time to his views on marriage, especially his attack on the prohibition of divorce. Montaigne's concept of divorce aims to stimulate French society's concern for the individual, as individual marriage is firstly a matter of balance and trade-off between individual reason and desire, and the prohibition of divorce is not conducive to the formation of good and lasting marital relationships and inhibits the individual's need for self-satisfaction (Zhao, 2023,p.5). Secondly, individual marriage is a matter of social moral welfare. The prohibition of divorce opened the way for celibacy and secret marriages to flourish. In the long run, a serious moral crisis would occur in early modern French society. Montaigne's thoughts on divorce enlightened the Enlightenment philosophers again in France two centuries later. Compared with Montaigne, the Enlightenment thinkers Montesquieu, Voltaire and Rousseau showed many inconsistencies in their views on marriage and divorce. In fact, a century after Montaigne, few thinkers revisited the issue of divorce. It was not until the Enlightenment that "family, marriage, and divorce" returned to the forefront

of people's minds and became a socially popular topic. The Enlightenment thinkers all expressed their views on marriage and divorce in their writings. Their ideas influenced the society on the eve of the Revolution, and both sides of the debate on divorce actively cited their views as arguments. During the Revolution, the revolutionaries were also influenced by the marital views of the Enlightenment thinkers, especially by Robespierre's transmission of Rousseau's views on marriage, which was fully reflected in the political thought of the Revolution. Thus, in this context, the study of the Enlightenment thinkers' views on marriage has the function of carrying on from the previous one to the next, on the one hand inheriting Montaigne's concern for marriage during the Renaissance and analyzing the social effects of divorce, but on the other hand breaking away from Montaigne's individualistic concept and placing the discussion of marriage on the level of social and political thought. This change reflects the fact that marriage was not only a private matter for individuals, but that it became a sign of political reform in a period of rapid change, a matter of social well-being, the interests of the French nation and the construction of a community. This paper discusses the concept of marriage and divorce of the Enlightenment thinkers, especially Montesquieu, Voltaire and Rousseau, in order to explore the concept of marriage in the 18th century French society, and on this basis, to further explain the concept of marriage of the revolutionaries and the social changes of family and marriage during the Revolution.

2. Montesquieu on Marriage

2.1. *Marriage of the Heart*

In the *Letters of the Persians* Montesquieu first spoke of his views on marriage in 1721 in his work *Letters to the Persians*. Like Montaigne, he traces the rules of Roman law on marriage, a religion that forbade polygamy; in this respect, it was better than Islam. But in his book, he examines the issue of marriage in the pagan world of Persia, where divorce is permitted, but Christians are not allowed to divorce. Thus, in Montesquieu's opinion,

This change, which at first seemed to be of very little consequence, took place, unconsciously, with such terrible consequences that it was almost unbelievable. Not only is all the warmth of marriage thus removed, but the outcome of marriage is also compromised. For, to tighten the knot of the marriage, the knot is loosened; and, although it is intended to unite the feelings of both parties, instead of uniting them, it is separated forever. In such a free action, where affection should have played a great role, people-imposed restraints, requirements, and inevitable fates. One does not feel the slightest repugnance, capriciousness, and incompatibility of temper; one wants to fix the affection, which is the most changeable thing in nature; one binds two people, who are almost never compatible, and who hate each other, together irrevocably and hopelessly; this method, like the ancient tyrants, binds the living to the dead. There is nothing more conducive to mutual attachment than the power of divorce: it is easy for couples to patiently endure all kinds of suffering in the family, because they know that they have the right to put an end to it, and they often hold the power of divorce in their hands all their lives, without using it, because they consider that they can use it freely. (Montesquieu, 1958, pp.199-200)

Montesquieu is clearly in favor of divorce in this passage, marriage as a contract should be a prerequisite for the compatibility of the couple's temperament, if the temperament is not the same, it means endless suffering, like the relationship between master and slave, without the slightest room for freedom. Divorce, on the other hand, can resolve a marriage that is on the verge of stagnation and allow it to continue. Montesquieu's ideal marriage was a marriage of compatible minds and temperaments. He himself was once in love with a woman, but eventually married a noblewoman of his own family. Unlike Montaigne, Montesquieu did not consider love as a necessary element of the ideal marriage, but rather the secret of the ideal marriage is the union of the heart and the unity of temperament. Love does not constitute the core of the ideal marriage, but rather the compatibility of temperament is the most important thing for the stability of marriage. Why did Montesquieu not consider love as the cornerstone and prerequisite of a good marriage, but rather a fusion of temperaments as an intrinsic element of the ideal marriage? In fact, Montesquieu believed that people almost never find true love because the social system deprives them of the ability to love. Not only can social conditions prevent love from being realized, but people's views of themselves and others are so decisively influenced by the habits they have developed in society that the emotion of love itself can be denied or transformed into an emotion. What, then, is Montesquieu's concept of true love? Its object is clearly sexual. In the life of passion, nothing is necessarily abominable. When Montesquieu tried to determine the quality of love in a society, he first focused on the relations between the sexes. He studied the emotions that accompany courtship and marriage (Kettler, 1964, pp.658-661). If Montaigne was an advocate of the "marriage of love" model, Montesquieu was a proponent of the "marriage of the heart," where love is more of a passionate involvement and spiritual union is more of a rational intervention. Montesquieu's emphasis on the need for unity of temperament in marriage is related to the Revolutionary notion that divorce is possible if one of the parties is not of the same temperament.

Montesquieu believed that unhappy marriages invite many problems, as for Christians, the situation is different; their immediate suffering makes the future also hopeless, because they do not see in the unhappiness of marriage when it ends, so to speak, but only eternity. This leads to loathing, disputes, and contempt; for future generations, this is all a loss. The main thing is already neglected after just three years of marriage, so that thirty years of life are spent in indifference; sometimes internal separation is formed, as rough as public separation, and perhaps even more harmful; men and women live separately, each doing his own work; and this, for future generations, is damaging. The man is disgusted with a woman who remains forever, and soon he indulges in a flirtation; that is a shameful business, very contrary to the interests of society, and such a relationship does not achieve the goal of marriage, but at most provides only the pleasure of marriage. Therefore, it should not be surprising to see

that among Christians, these many marriages have produced only a very small number of citizens. No divorce is allowed, and poorly coordinated marriages cannot be saved. The reasons that drive Christians to annul divorce are difficult to understand. In every country in the world, marriage is a contract that may have any agreement, and only agreements that may weaken the purpose of the contract should be discarded. Christians, however, do not see things from this point of view; so, it is difficult for them to say what marriage is. They do not think that the meaning of marriage lies in the pleasure of the faculties; on the contrary, as I have already said to you, they seem to try to discard it. But this is an image, an intention, a mystery that I do not understand in the slightest (Montesquieu, 1958, pp.199-200).

It is evident that the prohibition of divorce is, first, an inevitable disaster for the offspring, who are forced to suffer violence and oppression in the family, and children who cannot grow up in a normal family environment and cannot become a competent citizen. Moreover, Montesquieu did not consider separation as a viable and effective system; it was harmful to the development of children, and separation gave men a reason to cheat on their spouses and did not allow them to reestablish their families. Like Montaigne, Montesquieu refers to the divorce proposed by the Romans, "which was only an incentive to keep the happy union of the two spouses. Nothing can promote mutual attachment more than the efficacy of divorce" (Dessertine, 2021, pp. 25-31).

Montesquieu pleaded for the restoration of joy in marriage, and the prohibition of divorce hindered the restoration of marital joy. The Persian Usbek, who was opposed to Christian marriage, made a very fine criticism of the nature of marriage, which was an androgynous institution, that is, a covenant and a sacrament, but a covenant was a very special order which, to be perfect, required Divine intervention. The ideal marriage should be a "marriage of the heart", and if the incompatibility is irreversible for the couple, divorce is the way to rebuild the family, rather than a separation that fosters potential immorality. A good marital relationship is essential to the development of a competent citizen, and the consistency of the marital couple's temperament contributes to the formation of good citizenship.

2.2. *The Political Utility of Divorce in "On the Spirit of the Law"*

If Montesquieu argued the basis of good marriage and its relevance to the individual in the Letters of the Persians, he further deepened his analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of divorce in terms of social well-being and political utility in the Spirit of the Laws. In The Spirit of the Law, Montesquieu explores the potential political utility of divorce. In contrast to the relatively clear advocacy of divorce in the Persian Letters, Montesquieu's Spirit of the Laws shows more ambiguity in that he points out the political utility of divorce but does not explicitly support the reinstatement or legitimization of divorce. Thus, Montesquieu's thought is always in a state of flux. However, his analysis of the political utility of divorce will help us to understand the social aspects of divorce at the practical level. One of the most important points is that Montesquieu considers the "secular-religious" power struggle behind marriage, which is one of the most important matters in human society and in which both secular and religious forces are involved. According to Montesquieu,

No matter what country, no matter what time of the year, religion always intervenes in marriage. Whenever certain things are considered unclean or unlawful, yet must be done, religion is invited out to make these practices lawful in some cases and condemned in others. (Montesquieu, 2007,p. 365)

But from another point of view, marriage is the one of all human actions that has the greatest relation to society, and therefore it should be regulated by civil law. How then is the division of power between the secular and the religious about the question of marriage to be regulated? Montesquieu continues,

Everything that has to do with the nature of marriage, such as the form of marriage, the manner in which it is contracted, and the reproduction of the offspring that it brings, falls within the jurisdiction of religion. The multiplication of children makes all peoples understand that marriage is the object of a special favor, but that this favor is not always available, so that marriage depends on the blessing of God. The consequences of the union of the sexes for the property, the benefits derived from it by both parties, everything related to the new family, everything related to the family from which the new family is derived, everything related to the other family from which the new family is to be derived, all these belong to the civil law. (Montesquieu, 2007,p. 365)

As can be seen, in Montesquieu's case, religion has a relatively large hold on the issue of marriage; religion dictates the nature of marriage and the issues that precede it, while civil law acts as a complement to, rather than in opposition to, the conditions of religion. The civil law, on the other hand, requires the consent of both fathers, and it is evident that the civil law is only one more requirement, not one that contradicts the religious law.

Montesquieu believed that the joint regulation of marriage affairs by religion and secularism would lead to a harmonious and stable state, "Since one of the great purposes of marriage is to eliminate the instability of improper unions, religion gives marriage a religious character, and civil law gives marriage a civil character, in order to give it all authenticity. Thus, in addition to the conditions required by religion for a marriage to be valid, there are other conditions that may be required by civil law. Thus, it is up to the religious law to decide whether a marriage can be dissolved or not, because if the religious law states that a marriage cannot be dissolved and the civil law states that it can be dissolved, then there would be a contradiction between the two. The various provisions of the civil law on marriage are sometimes not absolutely necessary; for example, it is not absolutely necessary to punish the person who enters into a marriage without dissolving it (Montesquieu, 2007,p. 365). It is evident that Montesquieu did not believe that there should be a division between religious and secular powers in matters of marriage, with one dominating the other, but rather that they should work together to coordinate all matters of marriage. Therefore, the issue of divorce should be considered in a secular-religious context. Montesquieu claimed:

Divorce is only in accordance with the natural nature of man if both parties agree and at least one wishes it. If both parties do not agree but want to divorce, it is no more than a demon. In short, only those who are troubled by their

marriage and find that the time has come when it would be to the advantage of both parties to end it should hold the right to decide to divorce. (Montesquieu, 2007, p. 365)

Although Montesquieu did not attack the ecclesiastical decree prohibiting divorce, he did not intend to overturn it, nor did he intend to restore it. Rather, he believed that even if divorce was forbidden by decree, whether secular or religious, there should be avenues open to those in special circumstances, and that when a marriage is in a quagmire until it breaks down completely, forbidding divorce would only lead to disaster. There is no overall theory of divorce in *The Spirit of the Laws*, but Montesquieu argues for the political utility of divorce, "Divorce is usually of great political utility, and as to its civil effects, it is determined for the husband and wife, and does not always benefit the children" (Dessertine, 2021, pp. 25-31).

Montesquieu recognized that dissolution of marriage could improve social morals, promote population growth, and reduce the number of singles (Dessertine, 2021, pp. 25-31). A family is like a small country, and a larger population makes the country more secure (Montesquieu, 2007, P. 538). Remarriage could reorganize marriages and reduce illegitimacy and singleness. In a republic, he argued, citizenship is extremely important because it implies supreme power. Therefore, republics often made laws related to illegitimacy, which had nothing to do with the matter itself and the legitimacy of the marriage, but rather with the political system of the republic. The danger of celibacy for spouses who cannot cohabit is avoided as much as possible, while repopulation is encouraged (Montesquieu, 2007, P. 323). In fact, Montesquieu viewed divorce only in a limited way, without considering the legality of divorce or the opportunity to resume it.

3. Voltaire on the Secularization of Marriage

Voltaire first intervened about divorce in 1764 with his "Philosophical Dictionary". In his essay "Marriage", which first distinguishes between contract and sacrament, Voltaire is hostile to the ecclesiastical law of marriage, but equally determined to defend the equality of the sexes and to protest the unequal penalties imposed on spouses in case of separation, arguing that in matters of justice things must be equal (Dessertine, 2021, pp.25-31).

Voltaire was very dissatisfied with the prohibition of divorce under ecclesiastical law, which he considered to be a series of problems, and that the breakdown of the relationship between husband and wife was immoral and useless if it could not be solved by legal means, and the ensuing separation. Voltaire therefore objected more to the fact that divorce was forbidden by canon law. This is in line with Montesquieu, who believed that the law should provide a reasonable solution to social matters, not be a rope of bondage. As a devout Catholic, Voltaire recognized that marriage was essentially religious in nature. Divorce was forbidden, not for social reasons, but because of a fundamental principle of Roman Catholicism. Voltaire wrote:

Marriage is the legal contract of men, of which the Roman Catholic Church consecrates it. But the sacrament and the civil contract are two different things: one is attached to the civil validity, the other to the grace of the Church. (Damas, 1897,p.35)

Therefore, when a contract is in accordance with the rights of man, it should have civil validity, and the absence of the sacrament of marriage only leads to the deprivation of spiritual graces. Here, Voltaire emphasizes the difference between contract and sacrament. Marriage under the civil order is the legal union of a man and a woman to have children, to raise them, and to secure their property rights under the authority of the law. To justify this union, it is accompanied by a religious rite, which some consider a sacrament and others consider a practice of public worship. Thus, marriage must be divided into two parts: a civil contract (natural commitment) or a sacrament (divine rite). Marriage can continue to exist with all its natural and independent civil implications. Voltaire was not opposed to the Church's involvement in marriage but was dissatisfied with the ambiguous treatment of ecclesiastical law:

When the family is ashamed, when the proceedings separate the spouses, there is another disadvantage in one-half of Europe. This second half: Europe is still governed by so-called canon law. This strange case law, which for a long time had been the only law, saw marriage only as a visible sign of something invisible. (Damas, 1897,p.36)

Thus, when a couple is separated by the law of the land, the invisible remains, i.e., it is the visible sign that is destroyed (i.e., divorce). The two were divorced, but by law they could not appeal elsewhere; incomprehensible language prevented a man who was legally separated from his wife from legally having another wife, even though it was necessary for him. He is both married and unmarried. This exaggerated contradiction was not the only one left in these countries, where the ancient ecclesiastical jurists were intertwined with the laws of the state. The kings themselves were bound by these absurd and terrible chains; they were forced to lie before God to obtain a divorce from another strange priest under another name of their own. This priest declared the marriage null and void when he wished, instead of declaring it broken (Damas, 1897,p.37).

Voltaire did not demand anywhere a special form of civil marriage, but rather a secularization of marriage, a very clear distinction between contract and sacrament. Religious marriages seemed to him too harsh, and he asked us not to confuse the sacraments, the Church being able to make regulations only in the context of natural and civil law, which, at any given time, were independent of all religious beliefs and constituted the foundation of society. In this last point, marriage was a matter for the sovereign; it was up to him to raise objections, assess its validity, and declare it null and void. The result of this system was that the restoration of divorce highlighted its political efficacy, the old system of divorce was replaced and disappeared when new regulations were made, and the institution of marriage would be re-established from religious law to civil law, when civil law reasserted its rights. Voltaire embodied the violent reaction to the control of the clergy at the end of the 18th century when the royal power succeeded in establishing religious unity in France in favor of Romanism almost through bloody persecution in 1685. The royal power was powerless to extinguish the voices of those who, despite the Bastille for the treatment of the

people, lit the torch with their books and kept appealing to the freedom of conscience and to the principle of neutrality of the state religion (Damas, 1897, p.38).

Voltaire's principle of the secularization of marriage essentially implied his support for the secularization of power, and he was confused by the confusion between the church and the rule of the king. The demand for a distinction between religious and royal rule became necessary. It was known that the clergy of the Church had always controlled the marriage ceremony and the civil registration of parishes, but this situation was reversed after the outbreak of the Revolution. The Constituent Assembly took over the right to marry and transferred the right to register births, marriages, and deaths to the secular regime (Traer 1980, p.90). Voltaire's secularization of marriage made the greatest contribution to the restoration of divorce in France. One of the most ingenious devices used by the secular power in the struggle of the Crown against the Church was the distinction between covenant and sacrament. Thus, it is understandable why Voltaire talks about the distinction between covenant and sacrament, which is essentially a struggle for discursive power, by discussing the connection between form and substance in marriage, thus allowing for a distinction between the two.

4. Rousseau on Marriage

4.1. Rousseau and the Political Marriage of Virtue

For Rousseau, marriage, or the family, is the cradle of citizenship, and a good marriage is a prerequisite for the formation of good citizens. The family is inevitably involved in Rousseau's political thought. Rousseau believed that man becomes a citizen not because of commanding laws but based on a common love for the whole: a feeling that is not natural to man, but artificial. Rousseau believed and wanted to educate/indoctrinate us to believe that civic love was indeed taken from the mother's breast, which he claimed was the original source of social emotions and the necessary connection and state between the institution of the family (the first and only natural institution). The family is the cause of social reform, and it is only in the family that socio-political ambitions can be realized (Fermon, 1994, pp.431-442). For Rousseau, the end of love should be marriage, and any true love should have the duty to establish a family, not just a private matter of two people in love, but the essence of love lies in the social and political duty to establish and maintain a family. Marriage is not a "natural" state, but on the contrary, it is linked to the obligations and nature of the state. The education of men and women begins in the family sphere, and the education of women prepares them for their future marriage. Women are obliged to do everything possible to make men happy and to lighten the burden of their husbands in marriage. They should use their unique moral strength to play a role in the family, as good wives, and mothers, rather than to appear in public and participate in politics (Rousseau, 1993, p.145). By the same token, the man is the equivalent of the head of the family and should conquer and dominate his wife with his great power. For Rousseau, marriage is essentially a political relationship, and love is the pursuit of the perfect whole of the lover. Therefore, in Rousseau's view, the element of love in marriage is not very important, love is more fictional than real, it exists only in our imagination, it is fantasy, lies and illusions. Love makes people behave foolishly, full of sensuality and vulgarity. In *Émile*, *Émile* and *Sophie*'s relationship goes against Rousseau's own concept of a healthy relationship between the sexes, and Rousseau's goal is to fuse them into a single organic community, not two individuals full of unique characteristics, and their relationship is more friendship than love.

For Rousseau, marriage is not a place where individual love, or "private love," is practiced, but rather a laboratory for the construction of communal virtue. Rousseau saw marriage as more about the realization of virtue than about love in marriage, as Montaigne emphasized. One of the practical intentions of *Émile* is to lead the fallen reader to virtue and away from what Rousseau sees as morally destructive egoism. A good marriage should domesticate the love of virtue from the love of passion, a true virtue, a trait that allows the construction of political citizenship, the emotional foundation on which the human community is built. Rousseau was skeptical and critical of marriages based on romantic love, and he believed that families based on love were inherently unstable (Warner, 2016, p.116). In Rousseau's view of marriage, we can find a different concept from Montesquieu and Voltaire, that is, the introduction of politics itself into the family, Rousseau tried to rebuild the basis of a new and "modern" form of citizenship in the field of family marriage, which reflects Rousseau's more classical spirituality. As in ancient Greece, the only place where political citizenship could be found was in the family. In other words, what makes the politics of the city-state typical is the full involvement of the political element in the family. *Émile*'s attachment to the state was built mainly through his private family, but when this attachment was eroded his attachment to the polis also disappeared. Rousseau explicitly advocates a complementary relationship between the family and the polis, and true public education requires the same comprehensive identification of self and other that *Emile*'s education demands; it simply replaces "Sufism" with "the fatherland" and nationalistic illusions with the illusion of love --Patriotism replaces devotion. But even the beautiful marriage template constructed in the book could not be implemented in the real world. Rousseau understands that self-love is always an insurmountable hurdle that tests the politicized marriage (Warner, 2016, p.120).

In reference to divorce, Rousseau expresses his hatred of indissoluble marriages, although he does not fully approve of it. "If you tie a knot too tightly, it will break. So it is with marriage; the closer the union, the more likely it is to backfire. It requires that both parties remain faithful, and fidelity is the most sacred of all rights; yet, once fidelity is required, it inevitably binds the other. Tyranny and love cannot be reconciled, and it is not possible to order one partner to give pleasure. *Sophie*! Please do not be shy and do not run away. I swear in the name of God that I will never hurt your pride! However, this matter concerns your lifelong happiness. For its sake, you must stand in front of your husband and elders to hear this, because on another occasion, you might not be able to stand it. The use of possession or control does not bind the heart of a person. A man may have a deeper

love for his lover than for his wife. How can tender care become an obligation and sweet love become a right? To turn it into a right, it needs to be shared by both spouses, there is no other way. The law can restrict this right, but it cannot extend it. The pleasure of the flesh is naturally sweet! But can the pleasure of the flesh be made to feel good by force? Of course not, my children, after marriage the two hearts are joined together, but the bodies are not bound. You are to be faithful to each other, not to please each other. You can no longer commit yourselves to another person, but this is voluntary and spontaneous and cannot be forced" (Rousseau, 1978, p.181). For Rousseau, he believed that marriage was sublime and sacred, and that its purity must never be compromised because it was not only a matter of interest to both spouses, but a matter of common concern to all people. Whenever a couple is united by a solemn vow, all people must observe this invisible vow and respect this conjugal relationship between them. The purity of marriage does not change, not only for the benefit of the spouses, but also for the common cause of all men: each time two spouses are united by a solemn knot, it is the tacit commitment of all mankind to honor this sacred bond and to respect the marital union between them. Therefore, out of his desire to preserve the purity and sanctity of marriage, Rousseau believed that a marriage in which the couple had broken up was no longer pure and perfect in the true sense of the word, but was flawed, and therefore such a corrupted marriage was immoral and therefore needed to be dissolved. In the Confessions, he would consider divorce, but still felt guilty for abandoning his offspring, and he was forced to write that children are always an invincible reason against divorce.

4.2 Revolutionaries' Use of Virtue-Politics Style Marriage

Although virtue-political marriage was more a picture of Rousseau's political thought, it was also this idea of Rousseau's that was most influential in the Revolutionary view of marriage. In the various pro- and anti-divorce propaganda pamphlets that preceded the divorce laws, Rousseau's views were cited by polemicists as an important basis. In fact, Rousseau himself did not make pro-divorce statements. But his concept of marriage had a greater influence on the Revolutionary legislators, especially the Jacobins. Rude qualified the basic principles of Robespierre's thought as follows: "The end of politics must be the materialization of morality in government; morality, or goodness, or 'virtue,' comes from the people and from the people alone; morality is therefore the will of the people and not the will of an unreliable and corrupt ruler, and the people The will of the people is necessarily supreme and overwhelming" (Blum, 2015, p.154). For Robespierre, in essence, virtues are those things that serve the public good, love for the state, and the subordination of individual interests to the public good. To promote the public good... The right to rule must be complete and must be exercised by the people. He believed, however, that certain men were more trustworthy as custodians of virtue, and thus better suited than others to exercise the right to rule. More than that, as Robespierre believed, the main purpose of the Revolution must be to create a republic of independent and autonomous citizens. These citizens would exercise the common right to rule and to recover their natural and inalienable rights to individual liberty, political equality, and the pursuit of happiness through a good government. Robespierre had a distinctly "Rousseauian" quality to him. In Robespierre's Dedication to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, he says to Rousseau: "Holy man, you have taught me about myself. When I was young, you made me appreciate the dignity of my nature and contemplate the great principles of the social order. The old edifice is crumbling. On the ruins of the old edifice, the porch of a new edifice is rising. Thanks to you, I have added bricks to the new edifice. Please accept my tribute, though it is so meager, but it will surely please you, for I have never yet paid a compliment to a living person" (Blum, 2015, pp.174-175).

Robespierre's inheritance of Rousseau's concept of virtue is pervasive in his political thought. He believed that to create a virtuous state, people must be virtuous. Virtue is the purpose and function of politics, and the task of the ruler is to help citizens to become virtuous, virtuous people who can put the collective interest above the individual interest. Virtue here is not an individual virtue, not a rule of individual conscience as framed by early modern moral philosophers, but a product of the collective good that transcends private virtue. It is only when the collective good takes precedence over the individual good that true virtue is established among men. Saint-Just held a similar view, believing that virtue stands only when man's own intrinsic values are externalized into the laws of the world. Rousseau's concept of romantic love was politically important because of its ability to change the status quo. It enabled men and women to transcend the original family unit and thus ensure the complete socialization of all human beings. For Rousseau, marriage is the most basic unit that unites individuals, and thus it becomes the first and best place to build virtue. In this society, strong men, as heads of families, would conduct the affairs of state with dignity, and their relations with women would be strictly domestic, after the more important relations between men. For Robespierre, virtue meant a political order, a stable social order, and the family should assume the responsibility of cultivating civic virtue. Women should be subordinate to the male head and take on the role of educating children, and women should demonstrate their virtues in the family, namely, humility, generosity, responsibility, and obedience. Men are expected to be responsible for the family and to be able to take on major family matters, especially political matters. The fruit of virtue is produced when men and women work together in marriage.

However, there was a stronger religious dimension to the revolutionaries' conception of marriage. The virtue of marriage became a civil religion that transcended Rousseau's political conceptions. Especially after Robespierre's rise to power, in the period 1793-1794, the Republic and public political discourse were expressed directly in religious terms. The idea of virtue politics gave a sacred social status to the family, and the Revolution established the "Day of the Spouses" to encourage the recognition of exemplary couples and good marriages. In fact, the practice of virtue in the family was intended to better serve revolutionary France by fostering a sense of obedience in the citizens of the Republic from a spirit of obedience in the family. This obedience was given the name of virtue, and thus became a social moral obligation. Virtue was indispensable to the rule, and a religious spirit was needed to achieve an obedience of all in the name of republican virtue. In contrast to Rousseau, Robespierre went a step further and introduced a religious element into the family. Unlike the traditional family, the

revolutionary family is a politicized family, like the family in the ancient Greek city-states, but the revolutionary family has a strong religious meaning. "Rebirth" was the religious banner of the revolutionaries, and every family had to undergo the transformation of rebirth to be reborn and free from the corrupting qualities of the family during the old regime. Only when the family undergoes rebirth can the citizen be reborn, and a reborn France be constructed. Thus, the revolutionaries went beyond the rhetoric of the collective good and gave the Republic the religious spirit of the "rebirth" of the family.

5. Reflecting on the Enlightenment Thinkers' View of Divorce

Montesquieu, Voltaire and Rousseau all gave their answers to the question of divorce on the eve of the Revolution, and the three Enlightenment thinkers showed a striking consensus on the issue of divorce. In terms of commonalities in their thinking, firstly, they all see marriage as a subject that cannot be ignored in social change and emphasize the relevance of the marriage issue to social development. In contrast to Montaigne's realization of individualism in marriage, their discussion of marriage extends from the individual to the social dimension, placing it in the context of social thought and understanding of marriage. Although Montesquieu also valued the "spiritual union" in marriage, this unity of nature did not coincide with Montaigne's love marriage and did not pay attention to the emotional factor in marriage and family. Montesquieu saw the family as a social institution where two individuals lived together, not as a cave where two lovers lived, and therefore marriage should have a functional role in society, and a stable social order came from the family. Montesquieu was aware of the direct influence of marriage on social morality and population, and he was more concerned about the connection between marriage and population than Montaigne, and that France needed a large population if it was to be strong. Thus, the prohibition of divorce was not conducive to the reproduction of France's population in the long run, which in turn caused a series of problems. Voltaire also placed the issue of marriage in a social context, expressing his strong dissatisfaction with the separation system considering the social problems caused by the prohibition of divorce. Rousseau, on the other hand, was more direct and regarded the formation of a good marriage as the basis for the realization of his political ideals, as he believed that the family was the cradle and the basis for the birth of social citizens and that only a good marriage could produce good citizens to serve society and the state. Marriage is not only a natural state but is also closely related to society after its formation. The prerequisite for the construction of a competent civil society is the formation of a good marriage and family.

Second, Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Rousseau all addressed the question of where the power in marriage lies, i.e., whether secular or religious power has jurisdiction. Montesquieu was known for his generosity of thought. He believed that both civil and religious law had the legitimacy to intervene in marriage matters, but that religion had relatively greater control over marriage issues, and that religion defined the nature of marriage and pre-marriage issues, while civil law complemented religious law. Only the joint intervention of the two can contribute to the real stability of marriage. Voltaire, on the other hand, supported the secularization of marriage and the predominance of the secular power (the king's power) in marriage matters. Marriage should be essentially a civil contract, and the secular power should have the right to make and promulgate laws on marriage without the interference of religious powers. Voltaire did not believe that the joint administration of the two could lead to a stable state as Montesquieu had suggested, but rather he was very suspicious that the lack of coordination between the two powers had led to a series of social disasters. This also reflects Voltaire's aversion to the power of the clergy and his opposition to the interference of religious forces in secular affairs. Although Rousseau did not oppose religious interference in marriage matters, he considered marriage matters to be under the jurisdiction of secular power from the perspective of state construction. Rousseau does not explore much the division of power between religion and secularism but deals positively with the connection between marriage and the state. Rousseau sees marriage as the best place for the formation of good citizens, that all education begins in the family, that a stable marriage contributes to the formation of good citizenship, and that parents should foster a spirit of obedience in their children within the family. The spirit of obedience is not obedience to authority, but a virtue that arises out of love for the family community of interest, which is externalized in obedience to the will of the state. Robespierre extends Rousseau's idea of the politics of virtue to a religious level, demanding that the individual should be transformed by "rebirth", which begins in the family. The virtues of the family should be linked to the virtues of the republic, and the order of the family implies the order of the state. Marriage is no longer a matter of sacred religion, but an insurmountable subject in the construction of civil society.

Thirdly, the three thinkers' exploration of the issue of marriage also benefited from the Enlightenment's interest in divorce. From the 18th century onward, the subject of marriage was a thriving area of thought, leading people to consider the problems of marriage and to explore the nature of marriage. In this context, many Enlightenment thinkers presented their views on marriage. By 1789, women's manuals, press, moral commentaries, theology, and pamphlets promoting divorce were in abundance. Many marriage pamphlets promoted the social ideas of freedom and equality brought by the Enlightenment thinkers, leading to a growing trend toward free marriage. "Every member of a new type of family has the right to pursue happiness" was a common statement in the pamphlets of the time. These works promoted the idea that the free will of the individual to choose marriage and human emotions were the basic elements that made up marriage. Although the views of Enlightenment thinkers did not always coincide with those of these pamphlets, their wide dissemination and influence during the Enlightenment period indicate that the discussion of marriage was a social issue, a topic of concern to people from all walks of life, and not exclusively the province of Enlightenment thinkers.

6. Conclusion

In previous academic studies, the contribution of enlightenment thinkers to the political system, political thought and other aspects was emphasized. This paper attempts to take the theme of "marriage" as the starting point, and take Montesquieu, Voltaire and Rousseau as the research object to analyze the three enlightenment thinkers' concept of marriage, explore the uniqueness of the three marriage concepts, and understand the concept of marriage in French society in the 18th century on this basis. It further explains the revolutionary's view of marriage and the social changes of family and marriage during the Great Revolution. Montesquieu, Voltaire and Rousseau showed an amazing consensus on divorce. In particular, the issue of marriage is discussed in the dimension of sociality, and the issue of ownership of marriage affairs is discussed. Even today, the enlightening thinkers' discussion on marriage is still of great ideological value, which helps us understand the marriage and family situation before and after the French Revolution.

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