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ROUSSEAU ON THE NATURE OF MAN

IN THE CONFESSIONS

by

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INTRODUCTION

Orientation and scope

In Part I of The Gulag Archipelago Solzhenitsyn tells the story of his first arrest. He was an officer in the Russian Army during World War II and was arrested by Soviet counterintelligence as an enemy of the people. On the day after his arrest, he and seven other prisoners - six Russians and one German - were forced to march from the army counterintelligence center to the counter-intelligence headquarters of the front. Among these eight prisoners, Solzhenitsyn was the only officer; the German was a civilian, well-dressed, well-fed, and over fifty years old. The memory of the march is an especially painful one for Solzhenitsyn; the story is difficult for him to tell. It is difficult and painful less because of what was done to him than because of what he did. He confesses to something of which he is deeply ashamed. He was the only one among the prisoners fortunate enough to have a suitcase and he forced the German to carry it: "I am an officer. Let the German carry it." And when the German was exhausted, the Russian prisoner who was his partner on the march took the suitcase and carried it for him.

This shameful story is, for Solzhenitsyn, a story of "the line dividing good and evil" which "cuts through the heart of every human being." And he says after making his confession: "One and the same human being is, at various ages, under various circumstances, a totally different human being." What Solzhenitsyn reveals in his understanding of himself in this story is precisely what is perhaps most deeply rooted in contemporary consciousness: the notion of an inner self, an inner core, other than and separable from everything which is not itself.[1] Contemporary man is conscious of himself, thinks of himself, as an individual center of self-consciousness to which even his own actions are somehow strange. When contemporary man speaks of "finding himself" he means that he must look within himself, get in touch with an inner self which he presumes to be there inside himself. Alienation, in its deepest sense, has come to mean the separation of the individual from his "true self."

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[1] I use this latter statement of Solzhenitsyn ("One and the same human being is, at various ages, under various circumstances, a totally different human being.") simply as an example of the underlying presupposition of the inner self in contemporary consciousness - a presupposition which Rousseau has uncovered. I do not mean to imply that what I proceed to attribute to common consciousness must also be attributed to Solzhenitsyn or that Solzhenitsyn would agree with Rousseau's views on the nature of man. Indeed, the notion of "the line dividing good and evil" which "cuts through the heart of every human being" is at odds with the notion of an essentially <u>good</u> inner self. But this implied disagreement over the essential goodness of the inner self does not argue against the givenness of the inner self for contemporary man. On the contrary, the disagreement serves itself to point up the persistence of the inner self as the presupposition of our thinking about ourselves.

Happiness, in such terms, is not thought to be constituted by a set of circumstances in which one would most like to find oneself; it is, rather, thought to be a state of mind or feeling, a "being oneself" which is only reflected (imperfectly and distortedly) in one's actions. The presumption is that the inner self is good, pure, but invisible to others: if one could only peel away everything that surrounds the "center," everything "superficial," what would remain would be something good and lovable.

It is not at all surprising that Solzhenitsyn's words are almost exactly those of Rousseau in his Confessions: "There are times when I am so little like myself that one would take me for another man of entirely opposite character." The possibility of being so little like oneself, of being "one and the same human being" and a "totally different human being," implies a self - a fixed, immobile self - which one can be like and not like in one's actions. Thus, in Rousseau's words: "There are moments of a kind of delirium when it is necessary not to judge men by their actions." The actions of which one is ashamed, then, are done during these moments of "delirium." Good actions are reflections of, come from, the "real" me. The point of reference, the measure, is the essentially good inner self in terms of which one can say of oneself under various circumstances: "This is really me" or "This is not really me."

The inner self which is a given for contemporary consciousness, a presupposition of our thinking about ourselves, is precisely what is at issue in Rousseau's Confessions. Our concern with The Confessions, then, goes beyond simple "historical" curiosity. It is the "history" of our understanding of ourselves which is at issue here. Through a consideration of Rousseau's revelation of the inner self as the presupposition of our thinking about ourselves we come to question what has become unquestioned.

To call the notion of the inner self into question is ultimately to ask whether we understand ourselves correctly, to ask whether or not this is what we are. It is also to raise the possibility that there are other ways of understanding ourselves. Now in the very process of uncovering the inner self as the given of modern man's thinking about himself, Rousseau reveals the alternatives over and against which he carries out his project. These alternatives are presented by Augustine and Plutarch.

Our study of Rousseau's Confessions will proceed along the lines of a comparison with Augustine's Confessions. That is, while our primary focus is on Rousseau's Confessions as a means of uncovering the given in contemporary consciousness, we do this uncovering against the background of Augustine's Confessions. This orientation is adopted because Rousseau himself calls our attention immediately and directly to Augustine: in addressing himself to Augustine, Rousseau indicates the manner in which we are to

proceed. After these "parallel lives" have been examined, we turn briefly to a consideration of Plutarch's role in Rousseau's project.

The relationship of Rousseau to the ancients and to Plutarch in particular is beyond the scope of this study. Rousseau, however, does call our attention to Plutarch both in his Confessions and by the parallelism with Augustine's Confessions. Our concern with Plutarch will be limited to the implications of the observation that the being of the men in Plutarch's Lives seems to be a clear case of "living in the opinions of others."[2] The men of Plutarch's Lives are no more and no other than what they show themselves to be in their public (visible) acts. They are "noble Greeks and Romans" because their cities have said they are noble: they are what those other than themselves say they are.

Augustine, on the other hand, is what he is for God. Only God can say what Augustine is. God sees in Augustine what even Augustine cannot see in himself. Augustine has his being from and through another: he is what God sees him to be.

Now Rousseau's enterprise in The Confessions is the revelation of himself precisely as he is. He claims to see himself as he is, and what he is is within, invisible to others. This inner self is experienced as the feeling

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[2]"Living in the opinions of others" is Rousseau's characterization of the being of civilized (sociable) man.

of one's own existence. In contrast to both Plutarch and Augustine, then, Rousseau presents himself as a clear case of "living within oneself." He is not what the others say he is, even if the other were God.

But Rousseau himself tells us, in the Fifth Reverie, that it would not be good for most men to live within themselves, to experience what he has experienced. The experience of the inner self is dangerous for society. Further, society does not need saints (Augustine) for whom God is the one thing necessary and sufficient; but it does need men who are totally absorbed in the pursuit of its goals, men who need other men (Plutarch's noble men).[3] And society does need its solitaries (Rousseau). It needs those who can stand apart from it and see it for what it is, having seen themselves as other than it.

The Confessions and Rousseau's "political" works

It is here that we begin to see the relationship between Rousseau's so-called "autobiographical" works and his "political" works. The division of Rousseau's works into the autobiographical and the political turns out to be, for most Rousseau scholars, a division between the

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[3]Rousseau invariably speaks of Plutarch with admiration and affection. He speaks of Augustine in terms which approach contempt. This apparent contempt and the fact that Rousseau takes the trouble to respond to Augustine indicate both that Rousseau takes Augustine very seriously and that we should expect some serious disagreement with Augustine.

autobiographical and the philosophical. This understanding will be argued against; The Confessions will be treated as philosophically significant in itself. The fact remains, however, that philosophical concern has centered around the Discourses, the Social Contract, the Emile and not The Confessions, Dialogues, and Reveries. In particular, attention has focused on two areas of difficulty: the problem of the individual and society and the problem of nature and history. These two problems are not unrelated.

The problem of the individual and society is generated out of the claim that man is by nature a-social and the fact that he lives in society: he must live as if he is what he is not. The coming into being of society is an historical development which entails numerous other changes, e.g., the development of the arts and sciences. Man himself is radically changed in and by history. The question we are faced with, then, is the question concerning the relevance of the state of nature to men who are so far removed from the state of nature. It is to this question that The Confessions addresses itself.

Against Rousseau's apparent preference for the savage over the civilized we must place the passage from Book 1, Chapter 8 of the Social Contract in which he writes: "Although in civil society man surrenders some of the advantages that belong to the state of nature, he gains in return far greater ones; his faculties are so exercised

and developed, his mind is so enlarged, his sentiments so ennobled, and his whole spirit so elevated that, if the abuse of his new condition did not in many cases lower him to something worse than what he had left, he should constantly bless the happy hour that lifted him forever from the state of nature and from a narrow, stupid animal made a creature of intelligence and a man." If man has been so radically changed, if he has in fact become man, then why is Rousseau so concerned with doing what he claims his predecessors have failed to do - reaching the state of nature?

The Confessions is not a call to return to the condition of the narrow, stupid animal. Rousseau claims to be a man "according to nature"; he finds within himself something which the savage enjoys and which civilized (sociable) man has lost, "surrendered." This primitive (first) thing is the feeling of his own existence which has been lost in the manyness of the moments of time and in the manyness of the opinions of others. Rousseau's "return" to the state of nature is a turning within to the isolated self-sufficiency of the essentially private self. This experience is not thinking but the feeling of his own existence. As feeling it is essentially private and unshareable; as feeling of oneself it is whole for itself, self-sufficient.

Now Rousseau, the highly civilized man, can do what

the savage cannot do. He can reflect on his experience, understand it, give expression to it. Through his reflection on this radically a-social experience, he comes to see society for what it is. He recognized the sources of man's miseries. Rousseau's political works represent his attempt to make it possible for man to "bless the happy hour that lifted him forever from the state of nature." It is not necessary or even good for most men to "return" to the state of nature. But it is necessary and good that some men do. And Rousseau claims to be the first and only man who has reached the state of nature. His portrait, in The Confessions, is "the only portrait of man painted exactly according to nature and in all her truth, [the only such portrait] which does exist and which will probably ever exist." The Confessions shows us the character of Rousseau's return to the state of nature and the conditions for the possibility of that return.

The thesis in relation to the secondary literature

It is precisely this kind of approach to The Confessions which distinguishes our account from those presented by others. That is, in approaching The Confessions as philosophically significant in itself, the division of Rousseau's works into the philosophical and the autobiographical is rejected. The justification for rejecting this division as a starting-point is provided by Rousseau himself in his statements about The Confessions; the correctness of the philosophical approach

is confirmed by the account it permits one to give.

The general and the more specific areas of agreement and disagreement with individual authors will be noted within the context of our discussion of the appropriate issues. It is the basis for disagreement which concerns us here. For the most part, both those who have dealt with The Confessions itself and those who have cited passages from it in support of interpretations of Rousseau's other works have approached it from a psychological standpoint. This psychological orientation is to be expected once the assumption is made that the work is Rousseau's autobiography and personal apology. On this understanding, The Confessions itself becomes merely a source of data for the psychologist, the psychiatrist, and the interpreter in general. For those interested in Rousseau's "philosophical" works, The Confessions becomes a means for getting at a presumed psychological basis for Rousseau's thought.

Inherent in the psychological approach to The Confessions is the notion that Rousseau was unaware, on the deepest level, of what he was doing in this work. This is not to say that those who adopt the psychological approach hold Rousseau's "autobiography" to be no more worthy of interest than most autobiographies; the author of The Confessions is also the author of the Discourses, the Social Contract, and the Emile. But to claim (even if only implicitly) both that Rousseau himself was unaware of what is most important about his Confessions and that the work itself is worthy of

philosophical concern is to maintain that the manner in which Rousseau reveals himself reveals something about man and about self-revelation, something that Rousseau himself was unaware of or, at best, only discovered in the process of writing The Confessions. The philosophical significance of The Confessions, then, would be only accidental, unintended by Rousseau himself.

The approach to Rousseau's Confessions to be taken and to be justified is fundamentally different from that which is most prevalent in the secondary literature. It will be shown that Rousseau intended to deal with the problems of human nature, self-knowledge, and self-revelation. The Confessions is not simply an occasion for raising these questions; Rousseau himself raises these questions and deals with them in his Confessions.

CHAPTER I

THE CONFESSIONS AS A PHILOSOPHICAL WORK OF ART

Rousseau's understanding of the philosophical character of his Confessions[1] is apparent from the very opening sentence of the work:

> Here is the only portrait of man, painted exactly according to nature and in all her truth, [the only such portrait] which does exist and which will probably ever exist.[2]

In this opening statement, Rousseau indicates the nature of his work (a "portrait of man"), the object of his concern (man as he is "according to nature"), and the historical position of his enterprise (novel and unique). Thus, Rousseau begins his Confessions with a statement about The Confessions itself: the object of Rousseau's concern is presented only within and through the claim that The Confessions is a portrait, a painting. But to say that a work about the nature of man is to be a portrait is to say something about man. The statement about The Confessions is, then, a statement

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[1] All references to Rousseau's Confessions are to Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Oeuvres complètes, ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond, vol. 1: Les Confessions: Autres textes autobiographiques, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1959). The first numbers within references will refer to Books of The Confessions; page numbers will refer to pages in the Pléiade edition.

[2] Rousseau, Confessions, Prefatory Note, p. 3: Voici le seul portrait d'homme, peint exactement d'après nature et dans toute sa vérité, qui existe et qui probablement existera jamais.

about man.[3]

The present chapter will deal with Rousseau's claim that his Confessions is a portrait, i.e. with the artistic character of the work, by way of preparation for an understanding of that of which the portrait is a portrait. If it is the case that the statement about The Confessions is a statement about man, then the artistic character of The Confessions will ultimately show itself to be crucial and integral to Rousseau's project. The "form" will be seen to be appropriate to the "matter"; the structure and the content of The Confessions will be shown to be at one.

Further, Rousseau's characterization of his work as a portrait is modified, and in a way clarified by his claim that it is "the only portrait" of its kind. The title which Rousseau chooses for his portrait calls attention immediately and directly to a work which precedes his own and which bears the same title, i.e. The Confessions of St. Augustine. The artistic character of Rousseau's Confessions and the relationship between Rousseau's Confessions and Augustine's Confessions are not unrelated problems: at the very least, the artful construction of Rousseau's Confessions is undeniable once the literary parallels between the two works are seen.

While the scope of the present chapter permits

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[3]The full purport of this will be developed later, in Chapter V, pp. 199-203.

the consideration of only these literary parallels which demonstrate Rousseau's artfulness, it must be noted here that Rousseau's construction of his Confessions over and against the model of Augustine's Confessions suggests a parallelism of philosophical concern. Rousseau's response to Augustine will ultimately show itself to be crucial and integral to his project. Finally, the artistic character of Rousseau's Confessions and the character of his Confessions as a response to Augustine will be shown to be at one; that is, Rousseau's characterization of his Confessions as a "portrait" is, in some sense, his response to Augustine concerning the nature of man.

It is, then, within the context of the question concerning the nature of man that the question about the nature of The Confessions is raised. Rousseau's project, his intention, is that of giving an account of man; his end - the character of the account he finally offers - determines what his means will be. Man as he is according to nature is such that he can be properly represented by means of a portrait. The Confessions, then, is a philosophical work of art.

1. The Confessions as artistic

The artful construction of The Confessions and the philosophical significance of the artistic endeavor are explicitly stated by Rousseau in the Outlines of The Confessions:

> The question here is of my portrait and not of a book . . . . Thus, I use style as I use things. . . .In giving myself up at the same time to the memory of the impression received and to the present sentiment, I will paint doubly the state of my soul, . . . my style. . . will itself be part of my history. Finally, whatever be the manner in which this work may be written, it will always be, by its object, a book precious for philosophers: it is, I repeat, a model for the study of the human heart, and it is the only one which exists.[4]

Here, Rousseau goes so far as to maintain that his project is not the writing of a book but the painting of a portrait. Rousseau's understanding of his project is to provide the starting point for our understanding The Confessions: "This is what I have to say on the spirit in which I wrote my life, on that in which it should be read, and on the use which can be made of it."[5] The Confessions is a portrait, but a portrait "doubly painted." The Confessions itself is part of Rousseau's "history."

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[4]Jean-Jacques Roussea, Ébauches des Confessions in Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Oeuvres complètes, ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond, vol. 1: Les Confessions: Autres textes autobiographiques, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1959), p. 1154: C'est ici de mon portrait qu'il s'agit et non pas d'un livre. . . . Je prends donc mon parti sur le style comme sur les choses. . . . En me livrant à la fois au souvenir de l'impression receue et au sentiment présent je peindrai doublement l'état de mon ame. . . . mon style. . . fera lui-même partie de mon histoire. Enfin quoiqu'il en soit de la maniere dont cet ouvrage peut être écrit, ce sera toujours par son objet un livre précieux pour les philosophes: c'est je le répette, une piéce de comparaison pour l'étude du coeur humain, et c'est la seule qui existe.

[5]Ibid.: Voila ce que j'avois à dire sur l'esprit dans lequel j'écris ma vie, sur celui dans lequel on la doit lire, et sur l'usage qu'on en peut tirer.

Now it is here that we are brought up against the problem of the nature of The Confessions: The Confessions is a portrait of man, a work "precious for philosophers" and, at the same time, The Confessions is Rousseau's history, the story of his life. Indeed, these two descriptions are not incompatible. The Confessions, even if characterized simply as Rousseau's autobiography, is certainly precious for philosophers. One can learn something about the Discourses, the Emile, the "philosophical" works from Rousseau's discussions of them in his "autobiographical" works.[6] And it is of course possible to learn something about Rousseau's views on the nature of man from the brief "philosophical" excursions he permits himself in his "autobiography." These would be reason enough to justify

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[6]It has been maintained that one can get at the origins of the "philosophical" works by examining the author's personal experiences and his own understanding of those experiences. Jean Starobinski, "Rousseau et la recherche des origines," in Jean-Jacques Rousseau: La transparence et l'obstacle, suivi de Sept essais sur Rousseau (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), pp. 322-3, claims that there is a fundamental connection between the discontinuity of Rousseau's theoretical work and his painting of himself. Rousseau's return to himself, his exploration of the past, his narrating in sequence his personal experience, has the value of shedding light on the philosophical works by revealing their origin (éclairement par l'origine). The self-portrait will reveal his loving and benevolent soul as the source of his writings, writings which his persecutors have described as the work of an enemy of mankind. Pierre Burgelin, La philosophie de l'existence de J.-J. Rousseau, Bibliothèque de Philosophie Contemporaine (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1952), p. 29, maintains that, if a philosopher sincerely wants to get at the foundation of his thought, he must undertake his own psychoanalysis; Rousseau's attempt at this is without example and almost without imitators.

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the philosopher's attention to The Confessions.

Neither is the characterization of The Confessions as an autobiography incompatible with the claim that it is a work of art. Autobiographies are supposed to be "portraits" and The Confessions is generally regarded as having great literary, artistic merit. The work is obviously not simply an old man's reminiscences strung together in an attempt at some kind of order, but rather a very carefully written, artfully constructed narrative. Rousseau's care in writing The Confessions, his art, is not only evident from the beauty of the prose; it is attested to by Rousseau himself in his description of his writing of the first part: "I turned back [to the memories] incessantly with a new pleasure, and I was able to revise my descriptions without boredom until I was content with them.[7] Surely, one reads The Confessions with pleasure; Rousseau's artistic abilities are never in question.[8]

2. The Confessions as truthful

What is in question is the characterization of The Confessions as autobiography, even as "philosophical"

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[7]Rousseau, Confessions, 7, p. 279: J'y revenois sans cesse avec un nouveau plaisir, et je pouvois tourner mes descriptions sans gène jusqu'à ce que j'en fusse content.

[8]Jacques Voisine, Introduction to Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Les Confessions (Paris: Éditions Garnier Freres, 1964), p. CIII, notes Rousseau's "pretended absence of art." This often comes to light in Rousseau's protestations of his sincerity, especially in his account of his manner of writing The Confessions presented in the Ébauches des Confessions. Voisine's observation is of significance for the subsequent discussion of the fictive character of The Confessions.

autobiography. Rousseau never refers to his Confessions as his autobiography although the term was in use at the time of his writing. But surely The Confessions is the story of his life, his own personal history, and isn't this what is meant by 'autobiography'? And Rousseau does refer to the work as his "memoirs." Perhaps The Confessions is an autobiography in which the author selected only those "parts" of his life which he remembers most clearly, for whatever reason. This would account for the discrepancies between Rousseau's own account of the details of his life and the accounts presented by his biographers: inaccuracies about events that occurred long ago are understandable and excusable, especially when one does not have access to or does not take the trouble to find records and documents which might help one's memory along. Further, would it not be unreasonable to expect the rememberer to be "objective" about precisely those things he remembers most "clearly"? Would not feelings distort, color his account; in spite of his attempts at objectivity, can we not expect only his own distorted point of view? Or perhaps Rousseau is deliberately lying, concealing what he knows to be true, in order to enhance or save his reputation. If The Confessions is merely an autobiography, if Rousseau's project is simply the writing of an autobiography, then the discrepancies between this autobiography and the biographies can be

accounted for in only one of two ways: either Rousseau is telling the truth as he sees it (distorted) or he is deliberately lying. In either case, only the biographers are telling the truth about Rousseau's life, and only those other than Rousseau can be or are "objective" about Rousseau's life.[9]

What, then, are we to make of Rousseau's claim that he is telling the truth? Are we to say that he only thinks he is telling the truth, that he really means he is telling the truth "as he sees it," or are we to say that he is lying about even his intention to tell the truth? The question of whether or not The Confessions is an autobiography

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[9]In his Preface to Volume One of his Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 2 vols., trans. John and Doreen Weightman (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966; New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), Guéhenno claims that there are three different images of Rousseau: the Rousseau of The Confessions and Reveries (the being he re-created from his memories), the Rousseau who wrote the Discours, La Nouvelle Heloise, Emile (the author, the man he wanted to be), and the Rousseau of the documents and correspondence. Guéhenno's biography is primarily a construction out of the documents and correspondence, a construction which stands over-against The Confessions. Guéhenno believes that Rousseau is sincere in what he says in The Confessions but "the problem is to determine how much truth a man can bear, and more especially how much truth he can bear about himself, that is, how much falsehood survives even in the most truthful man" (p. xv). As an example of this survival of falsehood, see vol. 1, p. 37: "From all these documents it is obvious that the admirable account [of Rousseau's youthful follies] is misleading, and misleading because of its sheer literary beauty. Not that Jean-Jacques was lying to the reader. But either he lied to himself, or his memories had become blurred." Also see Voisine, "Introduction," p. LXXIII, on the inevitable partiality of the observer (autobiographer) and the literary "deformation" of the writer due to the simple pleasure of writing.

and the question of whether or not Rousseau is truthful are in a sense, the same question. That is, the question of the nature of The Confessions is best answered through a consideration of the problem of Rousseau's truthfulness.

Rousseau assures us, promises, that he is being truthful, accurate, and frank in his Confessions. If he means this truthfulness, accurateness, and frankness to be about the facts, the events of his life, then these claims are either mistakes or lies. But it is clear that he does not mean this truthfulness, accurateness, and frankness to be about the "facts" (the biographical data) of his life. Truthfulness, accurateness, and frankness are not unrelated, but neither are they simply synonymous. Rousseau is not identifying the truth about himself with accuracy about the "objective"data of his life and/or with frankness concerning his own "subjective" feelings about particular pieces of data. On the level of biographical data ("objective" or "subjective") he is neither accurate nor frank. And he tells us so.

At the end of Book 4, Rousseau comments on the task he has set himself and on the means he must take in order to fulfill it. The reader must not fear deception: Rousseau is being truthful, accurate, and frank because he is "telling all":

> If I made myself responsible for the result and said to the reader, 'Such is my character,' he might think that, if I am not deceiving him, I am at least deceiving myself. But, in simply detailing to him

> everything that has happened to me, all that I did, thought, and felt, I cannot mislead him, except wilfully, and even if I wished to do so, I should not find it easy. . . . But it is not sufficient for this purpose that my narrative be faithful, it must also be exact. It is not for me to judge of the importance of the facts; I must tell them all . . . . I have only one thing to fear in this enterprise; I need not fear saying too much or telling lies, but not telling all and being silent about some truths.[10]

He interrupts his narrative in Book 2 in order to excuse the minute details into which he enters:

> In the enterprise I have undertaken of showing myself entirely to the public, it is necessary that nothing of me remain obscure or hidden; it is necessary that I hold myself incessantly under the public's eyes, that it follow me in all the wanderings of my heart, in all the secret corners of my life, that it may not lose me from sight for a single instant for fear that, finding in my narrative the least gap, the least void, and asking 'What was he doing at that time?' it may accuse me of not having wanted to tell all.[11]

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[10] Rousseau, Confessions, 4, p. 175: Si je me chargeois du résultat et que je lui disse; tel est mon caractère, il pourroit croire, sinon que, je le trompe, au moins que je me trompe. Mais en lui détaillant avec simplicité tout ce qui m'est arrivé, tout ce que j'ai fait, tout ce que j'ai pense, tout ce que j'ai senti, je ne puis l'induire en erreur à moins que je ne le veuille, encore même en le voulant n'y parviendrois-je pas aisément de cette facon. . . . Or il ne suffir pas pour cette fin que mes recits soient fidelles il faut aussi qu'ils soient exacts. Ce n'est pas à moi de juger de l'importance des faits, je les dois tous dire. . . . Je n'ai qu'une chose à craindre dans cette entreprise; ce n'est pas de trop dire ou de dire des monsonges; mais c'est de ne pas tout dire, et de taire des vérités.

[11] Ibid., 2, pp. 59-60: Dans l'entreprise que j'ai faite de me montrer tout entier au public, il faul que rien de moi ne lui reste obscur ou caché; il faut que je me tienne incessamment sous ses yeux, qu'il me suive dans tous les égaremens de mon coeur, dans tous les recoins de ma vie; qu'il ne me perde pas de vue un seul instant, de peur que, trouvant dans mon recit la moindre lacune, le moindre vide, et se demandant, qu'a-t-il fait durant ce tems-là, il ne m'accuse de n'avoir pas voulu tout dire.

It is, of course, impossible to "tell all." Detailing all that happened, all that one did, thought and felt about it would lead to an infinite regress of telling: one could never finish "telling all."[12] And, if telling all is necessary to his enterprise, then his enterprise is impossible to fulfill and futile to undertake. It is obvious that Rousseau has selected certain incidents and omitted others.

Besides, Rousseau must rely on his memory and even the best memory is liable to error. Indeed, Rousseau does not permit the reader to overlook the possibility of a faulty memory. He explicitly calls attention to his poor memory and to the errors attributable to it: "The first part of my [Confessions] was written entirely from memory and I must have made many mistakes in it. Forced to write the second part from memory also, I will probably make many more."[13] Not only does Rousseau lead us to expect inaccuracies, he takes the trouble to point to them. In Book 8, he credits d'Holbach with placing Therese's father in a home. Long after having written this, he learns from Therese that it was de Chenonceaux who had done this charitable work. Rousseau does not correct the text;

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[12]See Jean Starobinski, Jean-Jacques Rousseau: La transparence et l'obstacle, suivi de Sept essais sur Rousseau (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), p. 228.

[13]Rousseau, Confessions, 7, p. 277: Ma premiére partie a été toute écrite de mémoire et j'y ai dû faire beaucoup d'erreurs. Forcé d'écrire la seconde de mémoire aussi, j'y en ferai probablement beaucoup davantage.

instead, he adds a note: "Here is an example of the tricks my memory plays on me. . . . I had so completely lost the idea of (de Chenonceaux) and had that of M. d'Holbach so present that I could have sworn it was he."[14] If Rousseau could have sworn to the accuracy of his original version, then how many more errors are we to expect?

Many works on Rousseau make note of inaccuracies in the account he provides in his Confessions.[15] Some of these inaccuracies are readily understandable: dates, places, durations of journeys, sequences of events, even the identity of a benefactor. But others are not so easily dismissed. The account of the cause of the death of Claude Anet, for example, is apparently a fiction.[16] Nevertheless, let us assume that Rousseau's poor memory or misinformation do account for even this kind of inaccuracy. Let us even assume that the scholars are sometimes mistaken and that Rousseau is sometimes accurate where he is accused of being inaccurate. We are still left with the conclusion that,

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[14] Ibid., 8, p. 398: Voici un exemple des tours que me joue ma mémoire. . . . J'en avois si totalement perdu l'idée et j'avois celle de M. d'Holback si presente que j'aurois juré pour ce dernier.

[15] For example, see Guéhenno, Rousseau, 1:12, 25, 30, 44, 51, 71, 119, 387; and Charles W. Hendel, Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Moralist, 2 vols., (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1934), 1:1-2, 268-9 n. 4.

[16] Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond, "Notes et Varientes," in Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Oeuvres complètes, vol. 1, p. 1329; note 1 for p. 206.

according to Rousseau, "telling all" does not mean being precise about biographical data.[17] His poor memory does not diminish his accuracy.

Perhaps by "telling all" Rousseau means something like the truthfulness and frankness of the penitent who confesses his sins: the penitent must tell every grievous sin he can remember and be perfectly frank about his motives and feelings. He does not relate every detail of his life but only those incidents which are "important," for which he must seek forgiveness and, even if he were to forget something important, his desire to tell all, his sincerity, would suffice. Rousseau does make several such "confessions": he admits to actions and feelings and motives of which he seems to be deeply ashamed. But his case (and the problematic of The Confessions) is not simply that of the penitent, for most of his Confessions is not devoted to such shameful and humiliating revelations. Nevertheless, the parallel might shed light on the character of his "telling all"; perhaps he is frankly, candidly, telling all that now seems important to him about what he has done, thought, and felt.[18]

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[17]See Voisine, "Introduction," p. LXXXVII: Voisine notes inaccuracies in Rousseau's account but maintains that Rousseau's Confessions is not a curriculum vitae; Hermine de Saussure, Rousseau et les manuscrits des "Confessions" (Paris: Éditions E. de Boccard, 1958), pp. 156-9, discusses the "false problems" which result from mistaken interpretations of The Confessions. According to Saussure, it is a source of error to consider The Confessions as a chronicle: Rousseau wrote according to the thread of his memories and did not intend to treat the events chronologically.

[18]As an example of this view of The Confessions, see Starobinski, La transparence et l'obstacle, p. 217.

3. Truthfulness and candor

Certainly, Rousseau tries to create the impression of the penitent in the presence of his confessor. It is "embarassing" but "necessary" for him to reveal his pleasure in being spanked by Mlle Lambercier. After explaining the effect this early experience had on his sexual proclivities, he describes the effect this confession has on his determination to "tell all":

> I have taken the first and the most painful step in the obscure and miry labyrinth of my confession. It is not what is criminal which costs the most to say, it is what is ridiculous and shameful. From now on I am sure of myself; after what I have just dared to say, nothing can stop me. One can judge what such confessions have cost me from the fact that, during the whole course of my life, I have never dared to declare my folly to those whom I loved with the frenzy of a passion which deprived me of sight and hearing, which robbed me of my senses and caused me to tremble all over with a convulsive movement. I have never brought myself, even when on most intimate terms, to ask women to grant me the only favor all which was wanting.[19]

The impression of complete candor at any cost is strengthened by Rousseau's second painful confession. While employed in Mme de Vercellis' household, he steals a little ribbon. When the disappearance is discovered and the household

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[19]Rousseau, Confessions, 1, p. 18: J'ai fait le prémier pas et le plus pénible dans le labirinthe obscur et fangeux de mes confessions. Ce n'est pas ce qui est criminel qui coûte le plus à dire, c'est ce qui est ridicule et honteux. Dès à présent je suis sûr de moi, après ce que je viens d'oser dire, rien ne peut plus m'arrêter. On peut juger de ce qu'ont pu me coûter de semblables aveux, sur ce que dans tout le cours de ma vie, emporté quelquefois près de celles que j'aimois par les fureurs d'une passion qui m'ôtoit la faculté de voir, d'entendre, hors de sens, et saisi d'un tremblement convulsif dans tout mon corps, je mais je n'ai pu prendre sur moi de leur déclarer ma folie, et d'implorer d'elles dans la plus intime familiarité la seule faveur qui manquoit aux autres.

assembled, Rousseau accuses a sweet and innocent servant-girl of having stolen it. He is believed and she is dismissed, her reputation ruined. It is shame that prevents Rousseau from confessing the theft to the master of the house. Shame leads him to accuse the same girl to whom he had intended to give the ribbon. The weight of remorse is insupportable:

> However, I have never been able to bring myself to unburden my heart of this confession in the bosom of a friend. The closest intimacy has never led me so far with anyone, not even with Mme de Warens . . . . This weight has remained on my conscience without relief to this day, and I can say that the desire of delivering myself from it in some way has contributed much to the resolution I have taken of writing my confessions.[20]

Such devastating candor is surely a guarantee of the veracity of the penitent. Yet are we to believe that Rousseau's shame kept him from confessing for the sake of the innocent girl, kept him from unburdening himself even to 'Mama,' but does not keep him from confessing to anyone who can read? The seeds of doubt concerning his frankness and veracity on the level of biographical data are planted by Rousseau himself. He has only one thing to fear in the enterprise of writing his Confessions: he need not fear saying too

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[20] Ibid., 2, p. 86: Cependant je n'ai jamais pu prendre sur moi de décharger mon coeur de cet aveu dans le sein d'un ami. La plus étroite intimité ne me l'a jamais fait faire à personne, pas même à Made. de Warens . . . . Ce poids est donc resté jusue'à ce jour sans allégement sur ma conscience, et je puis dire que le desir de m'en délivrer en quelque sorte a beaucoup contribué à la résolution que j'ai prise d'écrire mes confessions.

much or telling lies, but only not saying all and keeping silent about some truths.

Rousseau's silences are frequent and obvious: "But I must stop myself here. Time may lift many a veil. If my memory descends to posterity, perhaps one day posterity will learn what I had to say; then it will be known why I am silent."[21] In spite of the "brutal honesty" of the painful confessions, there are frequent indications of Rousseau's hiding himself, stopping himself short of telling all. After his account of the abandonment of his children, he stops himself: "I have promised my confession, not my justification: therefore I stop myself here on this point."[22] He will not discuss his reasons for abandoning his children for fear of leading others astray.[23] The impression of total candor is destroyed.

More striking than the obvious silences, than the failures to "tell all," are the implications of Rousseau's admissions to lies and deceits.[24] In the enterprise of

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[21] Ibid., 6. p. 272: Mais il faut m'arrêter ici. Le tems peut lever bien des voiles. Si ma mémoire parrvient à la postérité, peut être un jour elle appendra ce que j'avois à dire. Alors on saura pourquoi je me tais.

[22] Ibid., 8, p. 359: J'ai promis ma confession, non ma justification: ainsi je m'arrête ici sur ce point.

[23] Ibid., p. 357

[24] Ibid., e.g., 2, p. 85; 3, pp. 120, 128.

writing his Confessions, he need not fear telling lies! Is this simply because he does not intend to tell any lies? Again, Rousseau himself calls his veracity into question. On the one hand, the impression of total candor seems to be strengthened by these confessions: he even confesses to lies. The impression of total candor easily gives way to the assumption that a man who says such humiliating things about himself must be telling the truth, in some cases for the first time. On the other hand, why should we believe that now, here he is telling the truth? Isn't it possible that we are being deceived by the appearance of candor?[25]

The point to be made here is that, on the level of biographical data (both "objective" and "subjective"), it does not matter whether or not Rousseau is telling the truth. Rousseau's veracity, accuracy, and frankness, on this level, are a problem only if it is assumed that The Confessions is an autobiography.[26] And The Confessions begins and ends, is "bounded," by passages which clearly indicate at least that the work is closer to fiction than to autobiography.[27] In the very passage in which he promises

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[25]Compare Jean Starobinski, "La maladie de Rousseau," in Jean-Jacques Rousseau: La transparence et l'obstacle, suivi de Sept essais sur Rousseau (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), p. 439.

[26]Concerning the question of subjective data, see Starobinski, La transparence et l'obstacle, p. 234. According to Starobinski, non-resistance to sentiment and to memory guarantees the truth of autobiography. Also see Voisine, "Introduction," pp. LXVII - LXXIII, on the necessary distinction between the sincerity and the truth of The Confessions.

[27]Compare Voisine, "Introduction," p. XXXIII.

complete candor, Rousseau gives himself the license of the novelist: "I have told the good and the bad with the same frankness. I have been silent about nothing bad, added nothing good and, if I have happened to use some indifferent ornament, this has only been in order to fill a void occasioned by my lack of memory; I have been able to suppose true what I knew to have been possible, never what I knew to be false." (Emphasis added.)[28] The limit Rousseau sets for himself is that of the possible. The "false" here is not equivalent to the not-actual. After recounting his reading of The Confessions to friends, Rousseau makes the following declaration: "I have told the truth. If anyone knows things contrary to what I have just exposed, were they proved a thousand times, he knows lies and impostures." (Emphasis added.)[29] The truth that we are promised in The Confessions, then, is not the accuracy of the biographer or the frankness of the penitent. "Did these things really happen?" and "Did he really feel this way" are not proper questions for understanding Rousseau's enterprise.[30]

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[28]Rousseau, Confessions, 1, p. 5: J'ai dit le bien et le mal avec la même franchise. Je n'ai rien tu de mauvais, rien ajouté de bon, et s'il m'est arrivé d'employer quelque ornement indifférent, ce n'a jamais été que pour remplir un vide occasionné par mon défaut de mémoire; j'ai pu supposer vrai ce que je savois avoir pu l'être, jamais ce que je savois être faux.

[29]Ibid., 12, p. 656: J'ai dit la vérité. Si quelqu'un sait des choses contraires à ce que je viens d'exposer, fussent-alles mille fois prouvées, il sait des mensonges et des impostures.

[30]In this context, Aristotle's distinction between history and poetry is most suggestive. See Poetics, 9. 1451b1: "The distinction between historian and poet is

4. The Confessions as quasi-novel

Rousseau's comments on the first reactions to his Heloise are revealing in this context:

> Everyone was persuaded that it would not be possible to express so vividly sentiments that one had not experienced, nor to paint thus the transports of love unless from one's own heart. In this they were right and it is certain that I wrote this novel in the most burning ecstasies; but they deceived themselves in thinking that real objects were necessary to produce these ecstasies. They were far from understanding to what extent I am capable of being inflamed by imaginary beings. . . . It can be seen in the preface, how I left the public in suspense on that point. Rigorists may say that I should have declared the truth without reserve. For my own part, I do not see what could have obliged me to do so, and I believe that there would have been more stupidity than frankness in making that declaration without necessity.[31]

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not in the one writing prose and the other verse - you might put the work of Herodotus into verse, and it would still be a species of history; it consists really in this, that the one describes the thing that has been, and the other a kind of thing that might be. Hence poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singular."

[31] Rousseau, Confessions, 11, p. 548: Tout le monde étoit persuadé qu'on ne pouvoit exprimer si vivement des sentimens qu'on n'auroit point éprouves, ni peindre ainsi les transports de l'amour que d'apprès son propre coeur. En cela l'on avoit raison et il est certain que j'écrivis ce roman dans les plus brulantes extases; mais on se trompoit en pensant qu'il avoit fallu des objets réels pour les produire; on étoit loin de concevoir à quel point je puis m'enflammer pour des êtres imaginaires. . . . On peut voir dans la préface. . . . .comment je laissai là-dessus le public en suspens. Les rigoristes disent que j'aurois dû déclarer la vérité tout rondement. Pour moi je ne vois pas ce qui m'y pouvoit obliger, et je crois qu'il y auroit eu plus de bêtise que de franchise à cette déclaration faite sans necessité.

It will be argued that the Rousseau of The Confessions is, in some sense, an "imaginary being." (See below, Chapter IV, pp. 172-89.) The point here is that we are "left in suspense" about whether or not The Confessions recounts Rousseau's personal experiences, especially those about which only he can know.

Rousseau's understanding of his Confessions as a fiction comes closest to being explicitly stated in the Fourth Reverie. The Fourth Reverie or Fourth Promenade begins with a brief statement of Rousseau's attachment to Plutarch's Lives and proceeds directly to a consideration of The Confessions. The Confessions is the only one of his works that Rousseau mentions in this Reverie, and immediately after his first mention of it, Rousseau begins to meditate on lying. This is the first idea that comes to his mind.[32] During the course of the Reverie, Rousseau draws a distinction between lying and fiction: "To lie without profit or prejudice to oneself or others is not to lie: this is not falsehood, this is fiction . . . . There is the exact limit: all that is contrary to the truth but does not affect justice in any way is only fiction, and I confess that anyone who reproaches a pure fiction as a lie has a conscience more delicate than mine.[33] Rousseau's

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[32]Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire, ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond, vol. I: Les Confessions, Autres textes autobiographique, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1959), 4, p. 1024.

[33]Ibid., pp. 1029-30; Mentir sans profit ni préjudice de soi ni d'autrui n'est pas mentir: ce n'est pas mensonge,

conscience is most active in his writing of his Confessions: "I have never more strongly felt my natural aversion for falsehood than in writing my confessions. . . . and I have told all."[34] And "if it is a question of an imaginary being, one can say anything one wants without lying," provided one judges truly on the morality of the invented deeds. It would be a hundred times worse to tell the truth about the deeds and to lie against the moral truth for the moral truth is a hundred times more to be respected than the truth of the deeds.[35] Clearly, Rousseau is speaking about his Confessions: "Then, in pulling myself to pieces with more care, I was very surprised at the number of things of my invention that I recalled having said as true at the same time when, proud of my love for the truth, I sacrificed to it my safety, my interests, my person with an impartiality of which I know no other example among humans.[36]

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c'est fiction. . . Voila la limite exacte; mais tout ce qui contraire à la vérité n'interesse la justice en aucune sorte n'est que fiction, et j'avoue que quiconque se reproche une pure fiction comme un mensonge a la conscience plus délicate que moi.

[34] Ibid., p. 1035: Je n'ai jamais mieux senti mon aversion naturelle pour le mensonge qu'en écrivant mes confessions. . . . et j'ai tout dit.

[35] Ibid., p. 1031: s'il s'agit d'un être imaginaire il en peut dire tout ce qu'il veut sans mentir.

[36] Ibid., p. 1025: Alors en m'épluchant avec plus de soin je fus bien surpris du nombre de choses de mon invention que je me rappellois avoir dites comme vrayes dans le même tems où, fier en moi-même de mon amour pour la vérité, je lui sacrifiois ma sureté, mes interets, ma personne avec une impartialité dont je ne connois nul autre éxemple parmi les humains.

Rousseau has sacrificed himself for the "truth," for the fiction which is truly useful. Usefulness is the test, the real distinction between a fiction and a lie. The author of Le Temple de Gnide has invented a story about the origin of the manuscript: "If Le Temple de Gnide is a useful work, the history of the Greek manuscript is only a very innocent fiction; (but) it is a very punishable lie if the work is dangerous."[37] Rousseau's Confessions is "a work unique and useful."[38]

5. The function of fiction

But why must Rousseau sacrifice his safety, his interests, his person in order to write a useful work? The Confessions is the sacrifice of himself because it is essentially a fiction. The "personal," private Rousseau is sacrificed to the fictitious, public Rousseau and, as is borne out by those who have commented on The Confessions, the fictitious Rousseau is readily taken for the private Rousseau: "There is a Rousseau in the great world and another in his retreat who resembles him in nothing."[39]

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[37] Ibid., p. 1032: Si Le Temple de Gnide est un ouvrage utile l'histoire du manuscrit grec n'est qu'une fiction très innocente; elle est un mensonge trés punissable si l'ouvrage est dangereux.

[38] Rousseau, Confessions, Prefatory Note, p. 3.

[39] Rousseau, Ebauches des Confessions, p. 1151: Il y avoit un Rousseau dans le grand monde, et un autre dans la retraite qui ne lui ressembloit en rien.

Others may imagine him according to their own fancies, but he alone writes the true fiction, paints the true portrait. Thus, he can say of his Confessions: "The profession of truth that I made has its foundation more on the sentiments of right and of equity than on the reality of things. . . . I have often uttered fables, but I have very rarely lied."[40]

Rousseau's profession of veracity is not based primarily on the "reality of the things." This is not to say that none of the "things" recounted in The Confessions is real, actual: some, in fact many of them certainly are.[41] Rather it is to say that whether or not the things are actual does not matter. What is philosophically relevant is not the "private" Rousseau, but The Confessions.[42] Rousseau

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[40]Rousseau, Rêveries, 4, p. 1038: la profession de véracité que je me suis faite a plus son fondement sur des sentimens de droiture et d'équité que sur la realité des choses. . . .J'ai souvent débité bien des fables, mais j'ai très rarement menti.

[41]See Voisine, "Introduction," p. LXVII.

[42]Compare Guéhenno, Rousseau, 2:240-1. Guéhenno maintains that the question "Are The Confessions true?" is meaningless; although Rousseau is absolutely sincere, his attempt to be truthful is absolutely futile. Rousseau's mistakes in the narration of events is not what is most important here. Guéhenno's point is that Rousseau's account in The Confessions is proof that he did not know himself and that we do not know ourselves. Also compare Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond, Introduction to Les Confessions in Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Oeuvres complètes, ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond, vol. 1: Les Confessions; Autres textes autobiographiques, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1959), p. XXXVIII. According to Gagnebin and Raymond, the concern with a true version of events is legitimate and indispensable, but since The Confessions is also a work of art one must ask whether or not a work of art can lie.

does not tell us which parts of his Confessions are fables; most of the strictly biographical data is "true." But this leaves most of The Confessions "in suspense." We can, then, and should put aside the "private" Rousseau and deal with The Confessions itself. This is the case even if the Rousseau of The Confessions does in fact correspond exactly to the private Rousseau.

But why does Rousseau write a fiction about himself? Why not simply write a novel and call it a novel? Why write an "autobiography"? In the first place, as will be argued later (Chapter IV, pp. 172-89), any autobiography is, according to Rousseau, a fiction, a work of the imagination.[43] In the second place, Rousseau is imitating Augustine. And the fictitious character of autobiography is part of Rousseau's response to Augustine.

In his Prefatory Note Rousseau refers to his Confessions as a "unique and useful work, which can serve as the first model for the study of man, which is certainly yet to begin."

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[43] Compare Starobinski, La transparence et l'obstacle, p. 224. Starobinski notes the objection that the image a man gives of himself may be fictive, a construct, but claims that Rousseau does not address this objection to himself. Marcel Raymond, Jean-Jacques Rousseau: La Quête de soi et la rêverie (Paris: Librairie Jose Corti, 1962), p. 207, maintains that we know (Rousseau did not know) that representation of the self is necessarily a creation of the self by the self. I do not mean to imply here that Starobinski and Raymond find implicit and unintentional in Rousseau what I find explicit and deliberate. What I take to be Rousseau's understanding of the fictive character of autobiography does not have its reason in the subject/object distinction. Further, as will be argued in Chapter V, the created self of the autobiography has behind it something real. The point to be made here is that, if one takes The Confessions to be simply autobiography, one fails to see the problems that Rousseau is raising.

The very opening passage of Book 1 reaffirms the uniqueness of the work: "I am forming an enterprise which has no example and of which the execution will have no imitator."[44] The claim of absolute novelty is neither new nor uncommon in modern philosophy, but the very title of Rousseau's work, recalling as it does The Confessions of St. Augustine, places that claim in a definite historical context. Rousseau's enterprise may well be quite unprecedented, but he himself gave it the very same name as one of the most influential accounts of man in the history of Western thought. Not unexpectedly, there are parallels and contrasts between Rousseau's Confessions and Augustine's Confessions. They are striking and, it will be maintained, deliberate.

6. The two Confessions

What first strikes the reader of both Confessions and leads to the suspicion that Rousseau's choice of title is not accidental are the "stories" that each author tells. In Book 1, Augustine tells us that he was a thief, stealing things from his parents' larder, and in Book 2 he makes much of his stealing some pears. In Book 2 of his Confessions, Rousseau recounts his theft of an apple from his master's larder and his theft of some asparagus from a neighboring field. Surely, this similarity between the two works is not remarkable: many children steal little things which

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[44] Rousseau, Confessions, 1, p. 5: Je forme une entreprise qui n'eut jamais d'exemple, et dont l'exécution n'aura point d'imitateur.

strike their fancy. What is remarkable are the authors' reflections on these childhood thefts, the "principles" to which they trace their actions. Augustine steals the pears in the company of other children and steals from his parents' larder either out of sheer gluttony or to have something to give his friends; his sin is not only gluttony but also pride. He wants the admiration of his comrades. Rousseau steals the asparagus for the sake of his companions, but the theft of the apple is done in secret and is traceable to a less "praiseworthy" motive. Rousseau does not describe his thefts as "sins" and the desire for the approval of others is a mitigating factor.[45] For Augustine, the effects of original sin are manifest even in his childhood, even in his greediness at his mother's breast. His little thefts were very much "sins".

In light of the philosophical issues to be dealt with subsequently, the most striking and perhaps the most significant of these parallel stories occurs in Book 8 of each of these works. The event in question might be referred to in each case as the "conversion" of Augustine and Rousseau. Troubled by his conversation with Ponticianus who has described the lives of certain devout Christians who have dedicated themselves entirely to the service of God, Augustine goes into the garden and throws himself on the

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[45] See Burgelin, La philosophie de l'existence, p. 77: for Rousseau, socialization takes the place of sin.

ground under a fig tree. He hears a voice say "Take it and read it" and he interprets the words as a command to take up the Scriptures. When he opens the Bible at random, his eyes fall upon the passage which radically changes his life. In what is patently a parallel incident, Rousseau, during the course of one of his journeys to visit Diderot, happens to be reading the Mercure de France. He comes upon the question proposed by the Academy and, at the instant of this reading, he sees another universe and becomes another man. In a kind of delirium, he collapses under an oak tree and here the Discourse on the Moral Effects of the Arts and Sciences has its beginnings. After recounting this incident, Rousseau tells us that the rest of his life and his miseries are the inevitable effect of this moment of madness. The details of these incidents are strikingly similar: the chance readings, the trees, the radical changes which are brought about. The differences, however, are most revealing: the Mercure de France is hardly the Bible; for Augustine the incident marks the beginning of his happiness, for Rousseau the incident, in some sense, marks the source of his miseries; Augustine attributes the occurrence to the action of God, Rousseau calls it a "fortunate accident." The pictures in each case are similar but what is actually depicted may well be quite different.

More subtle but not less revealing are the structural

parallels between both Confessions. In addition to the fact that parallel stories are told in corresponding Books, the design of each of the "wholes" is comparable. Augustine's Confessions consists of thirteen books; Rousseau's Confessions consists of twelve books. Augustine's thirteenth book is essentially a commentary on the creation story in Genesis. (Book 12 is also concerned with interpretation of Genesis, but within the context of a discussion of the problem of the interpretation of Scripture.) There is no parallel "creation" book in Rousseau's work.[46] Augustine devotes Books 1 through 6 to a consideration of his youth. In Books 7, 8, and 9 he recounts certain incidents which took place during his early manhood and which he sees as especially significant in terms of his salvation. Then, at the very beginning of Book 10 a second division occurs. Augustine wishes to show us a contrast between what he was and what he is, what he was in the past and what he is as he writes his Confessions. In light of this distinction, the work may be divided into two parts: Books 1 through 9 and Books 10 through 13. Rousseau divides his Confessions into Parts One and Two. Part One consists of Books 1 through 6 and, like the corresponding books in Augustine, it deals with his youth. However, a second division occurs at the very end of Book 9, for here he describes the catastrophe

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[46] As will become clear, Augustine's "creation" book is, in some sense, the foundation of his Confessions: Augustine's being is entirely from God. Rousseau's failure to parallel Book XIII is, then, most significant in terms of his response to Augustine.

which marks the division of his life into two very different "parts": his past, which he sees quite clearly, and the present which is in darkness.[47] Thus, the structures of the works could be outlined as follows:

Augustine		Rousseau	
Books 1 - 6	past	Part One Books 1 - 6	past
Books 7 - 9		Part Two Books 7 - 9	
Books 10 - 13	present	Part Two Books 10 - 12	present

or:

Augustine		Rousseau	
Books 1 - 7		Books 1 - 7	
Book 8	conversion	Book 8	conversion
Books 9 - 13		Books 9 - 12	

The only difference within the structures (apart from Augustine's "extra" book) appears in the first diagram: Rousseau's division of his Confessions into Parts One and Two. What this division marks seems to be a division in The Confessions itself rather than a division in the life of which The Confessions tells the story. At the very beginning of Book 7, Rousseau comments on the differences between the two parts. His memories of the events of Part One are sweet, those of the events of Part Two are bitter. He wrote the first part at his ease and with pleasure, the second part is written in a state of agitation and distraction

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[47] See Voisine, "Introduction," p. LXXXVI. Voisine notes that, logically, it is at the end of Book 9 that the break between the two parts of Rousseau's Confessions should be situated.

and with a broken heart. The division into Parts One and Two, therefore, has to do more with the history of The Confessions than with the history of the Rousseau of The Confessions.[48]

Of course, each of the two Confessions has a history of its own and the history of the work is part of the author's history. And, while Augustine often comments on the nature and purpose of his enterprise, he calls little if any attention to the history of the work. Rousseau, on the other hand, devotes considerable attention to the history of his writing. But the history of the Rousseau of The Confessions never gets as far as the time of the actual writing of The Confessions: Part One is written in 1767 but takes us only through the events of 1741 and Part Two, written in 1769, takes us only as far as the events of 1765.[49]

7. The Confessions as life-event

It is, then, the history of The Confessions as recounted in The Confessions which is of significance.

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[48] Ibid., p. LXXV. According to Voisine, the preamble of Book 7, where Rousseau announces a contrast with what has gone before, makes more sense at the end of Book 8 when he really begins to record his terrible misfortunes. Compare Voisine's conclusions with those presented here.

[49] These dates are approximate. Scholars differ over the precise dates of Rousseau's writing. Hermine de Saussure, Rousseau et les manuscrits des "Confessions," is generally regarded as the most definitive treatment of the subject. In any case, I have not come upon any chronology which would challenge the claim that there is a temporal distance between the content and the writing of The Confessions.

Just as the discrepancies between the "actual" life of Rousseau and the life of the Rousseau of The Confessions serve to point up the importance of concern with The Confessions itself, so the time-differences (distances) between the history of the actual writing of The Confessions (as part of the actual life of Rousseau) and the "content" of The Confessions point up the importance for us of concern with the history of The Confessions as part of The Confessions. That is, we are brought to the present (the time of the writing of The Confessions) only through Rousseau's reflections on the writing of The Confessions: he speaks of himself as he is now only in so far as he is speaking of himself as the author of The Confessions. Books 10 through 12 of Rousseau's Confessions, then, have to do with the present only insofar as the "present darkness" covers over that part of his past.

But still there is a distance, a gap of four (important) years, between the end of Book 12 and the actual writing of The Confessions--the distance between the private Rousseau and the Rousseau of The Confessions[50]-- a distance which is not paralleled in Augustine. The philosophical significance of this contrast has to do with Rousseau's understanding of his Confessions as essentially a work of

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[50]With reference to the question of distance, compare this account of the deliberateness of Rousseau's distance with the accounts of Starobinski, La transparence et l'obstacle, chap. 7 (especially section entitled "Tout Dire"); Jacques Derrida, De la grammatologie (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1967), pt. 2, chap. 2; Paul de Man, Blindness and Insight (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), chap. 7. Also see below, Chapter V. pp. 193-226.

art and with Augustine's understanding of his Confessions as essentially a work of providence. What is painted in Rousseau's Confessions is a work of nature; The Confessions, the painting, is a work of art. What is "painted" in Augustine's Confessions is a work of providence; Augustine's Confessions, the "painting," is also a work of providence (albeit once removed), for everything that Augustine is and does is somehow God's work.

Rousseau's Confessions, then, is to be properly understood only over and against the background of Augustine's earlier work. That is, by claiming on the one hand that his enterprise is "without example" and on the other hand by pointing so plainly to Augustine's Confessions, Rousseau indicates that his own work is at least in part a response to Augustine.[51] The subject of this response is the nature of man and the nature of

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[51] See Guéhenno, Rousseau, 2 : 141. Guéhenno does not doubt that Rousseau had Augustine's Confessions in mind when he chose his title. Guéhenno accounts for Rousseau's failure to mention Augustine's Confessions by claiming that Rousseau is "shrewd enough to leave us the initiative of comparing him to a saint, at the same time as his title forces us to think of the comparison." Voisine, "Introduction," pp. IX, XVI, XIX-XX, also suggests the possibility of Rousseau's having had Augustine in mind. See also Ernest Legouvé, "Confessions de Jean-Jacques et de Saint Augustin," France Litteraire 4 (1832): 241-68; Dessalles-Régis, "Les Confessions de Saint Augustin et de Jean-Jacques Rousseau," Revue de Paris 2 (1842): 27-44. While neither claims that Rousseau's Confessions is a deliberate parallel to Augustine's Confessions nor deals with philosophical issues as such, both cite interesting similarities and differences between the two lives.

The Confessions says something about the nature of man. That this is the case is also clear from Rousseau's account of the purpose of The Confessions. The form of The Confessions is the proper vehicle for the fulfillment of that purpose.

8. The function of The Confessions

The purpose of Rousseau's Confessions has generally been regarded as the defense of his character and conduct against the attacks of his enemies. From this point of view, The Confessions is Rousseau's personal apology.[52] Certainly, the apparent paranoia (especially obvious in Part Two) lends credence to this understanding of the work. Rousseau seems to see enemies all around him ready to attack him with slanders and calumnies. In his Prefatory Note, he begs those who will decide the fate of his Confessions not to destroy the only sure monument to his character which has not been disfigured by his enemies. The reader easily has the impression that Rousseau is telling "his side of the story." On the other hand, Rousseau insists that his purpose is not personal in this sense. After his account of the abandonment of his children he writes: "I have promised my confession, not my justification; thus I stop myself here on this point. I must be true, the reader must be just.

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[52]See Starobinski, La transparence et l'obstacle, p. 219; Guéhenno, Rousseau, 2 : 67; Raymond, La quête de soi, p. 122; Hendel, Moralist, 2 : 313; Gagnebin and Raymond, "Introduction," p. xxv.

I will never ask more from him than that."[53] And in describing his break with Mme d'Epinay he includes a transcription of some letters which passed between them. These letters are included whether they be to his advantage or to his disadvantage "for I have no fear that the reader ever forgets that I am making my confessions and believes that I am making my apology."[54] But it is easy to forget that Rousseau is not writing his apology, for so much of The Confessions seems apologetic. And this in spite of the fact that he promises great care in neither excusing nor blaming himself for the abandonment of his children [55] and that he tries to add neither praise nor blame to his account of the manner in which he conducted himself when his opera was performed before the king.[56]

Surely, confession is not the same thing as justification. Justification, "making just," entails the claim that the deed in question was right and good even though it may appear to have been wrong and bad. Confession entails the admission that the deed in question was wrong or bad. Nor is justification the same thing as excuse. An excuse is offered in order to convince the hearer that the blameworthy deed was unavoidable, or avoidable only through

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[53] Rousseau, Confessions, 8, p. 359: J'ai promis ma confession, non ma justification: ainsi je m'arrête ici sur ce point. C'est a moi d'être vrai, c'est au lecteur d'être juste. Je ne lui demanderai jamais rien de plus.

[54] Ibid., 7, p. 279: car je n'ai pas peur que le lecteur oublie jamais que je fais mes confessions pour croire que je fais mon apologie.

[55] Ibid., p. 343.

[56] Ibid., 8, p. 377.

extraordinary means. Now Rousseau does do a great deal of excusing. He excuses the accusation of the servant-girl by reference to his youth and to his extreme feelings of shame. He excuses the abandonment of his children by citing those factors which influenced him at the time: the unsavory atmosphere which would have been created for them by Therese's family, his desire to be "a good citizen of Plato's Republic." It is noteworthy that many of those deeds which Rousseau excuses are those for which he tells us he feels remorse.

Now, if The Confessions is Rousseau's side of the story, his defense of himself against his enemies, then it seems he has done a poor job. His "excuses" are rather weak and easily anticipated. After all, who has not found it difficult to admit to something he is ashamed of? And who has not been tempted to lie in order to get out of an embarassing situation? But accusing an innocent girl and thereby, as he admits, probably ruining her life is another matter. And how can he excuse the abandonment of his children by claiming that Therese's family would have been a bad influence on them and that the children would have had to share the sad fate he anticipated for their parents? To what fate and to what influence was he abandoning them? Further, he was not living in Plato's republic nor was he abandoning his children to Plato's care. These are the kinds of responses one would expect from any reader of these "confessions." His "excusing"is part of the portrait and

and Rousseau intends that there be such responses. This is the way we are: excusing (ourselves) and judging (others).

Clearly, one of the effects that the reading of The Confessions is intended to have is the reader's making of judgments, moral judgments. Rousseau's friendship with Mme de Luxembourg enables him to unburden his heart to her and to confess all his faults to her "having as an inviolable maxim to show [himself] to [his] friends' eyes exactly as [he] is, neither better nor worse." He confesses to her the abandonment of his children and then tells the reader: "She received my confessions very well, even too well, in sparing me the censure I deserved." (Emphasis added.)[57] The hearer of Rousseau's confessions should not receive them "too well"; he is to praise and blame. But he is to do so justly: it is for Rousseau to be truthful and for the reader to be just.

9. Beyond apologia

Rousseau, however, does not leave the outcome of the reader's judging entirely open. The Confessions is the sure monument to his character which will do honor to his memory.[58] And he believes himself to be "the best of men."[59] At the very beginning of Book 1 he comments

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[57] Ibid., 11, p. 557: ayant pour maxime inviolable avec mes amis de me montrer à leurs yeux exactement tel que je suis, ni meilleur ni pire. . . . Elle avoit receu mes confessions très bien, trop bien même, en m'epargnant les censures que je méritois.

[58] Ibid., Prefatory Note, p. 3.

[59] Ibid., 10, p. 517.

on the uniqueness of his enterprise and on the uniqueness of himself. "If I am not better, at least I am other. Whether nature has done good or bad in breaking the mold in which she has cast me can be judged only after having read me."[60] But this call upon the reader to judge is immediately followed by his prediction of the favorable outcome of that judgment: he dares anyone to say that he is better than Jean-Jacques. On the one hand, the reader is left to judge; on the other hand, the judgment is already given, dictated. The implication is that anyone who understands The Confessions as Rousseau intends it to be understood will judge him favorably.

But, the problem of correct judgment is far more complex. The reader is asked not only to judge Rousseau but also to judge himself. A just judgment of Rousseau is possible only on condition that the reader judge himself honestly, that the reader be perfectly frank with himself about himself. Given this condition, Rousseau can challenge any man to say "I was better than that man [Rousseau]."[61]

What is perhaps most significant in Rousseau's call for the reader's judgment is that ultimately that judgment is to be about nature: "Whether nature has done good or bad in breaking the mold in which she has cast me can only be judged after having read me." The judgment about Rousseau is ultimately a judgment about nature.

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[60] Ibid., 1, p. 5: Si je ne vaux pas mieux, au moins je suis autre. Si la nature a bien ou mal fail de briser le moule dans lequel elle m'a jetté, c'est ce dont on ne peut juger qu'après m'avoir lu.

[61] Ibid.: Je fus meilleur que cet homme-là.

Before a judgment can be made, one must have "read him." One must see human nature revealed in The Confessions; the portrait of man as he is according to nature is the portrait of Rousseau: "I want to show to those like me a man in all the truth of nature; and this man, this man will be me. Me alone."[62]

If Rousseau's judgment of himself is that he is the best of men, then the judgment about human nature is that it is in some sense good. The parallel with Augustine's Confessions would seem to be this: Augustine's Confessions is a "portrait" of Augustine and a "portrait" of providence. What is revealed in Augustine's Confessions is God's providence and surely God's providence is good. God provides, takes care of man. The believer believes this even though he may not understand how the permitted "bad" things are finally for some good. But man does not have "faith" in nature; whether nature is good or bad to him is a question for him.

The purpose of Rousseau's Confessions, then, is the raising and the answering of the question about nature -- what man is by nature. This is the condition for the making of the judgment about the goodness or badness of nature's work, what nature has brought about or permitted. Somehow, nature is visible in Rousseau: Rousseau makes nature visible in his portrait of himself. But, as argued above

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[62] Ibid.: Je veux montrer à mes semblables un homme dans toute la vérité de la nature: et cet homme, ce sera moi. Moi seul.

(Sections 4 and 5, pp. 35-41), The Confessions is essentially a fiction. It is not an autobiography, not the detailing of the events of Rousseau's life. How, then, is nature revealed if not in the events which are "visible"?

Rousseau begins Book 1 of his Confessions with the motto "Intus, et in Cute." What is important, the object of concern, is what is under the skin. This is precisely what is not visible and, therefore, what is precisely in need of being revealed, being made visible. Thus what is inside and under the skin is not immediately visible but must be shown. The object of Rousseau's Confessions is the revelation of his interior: "The proper object of my confessions is to make known exactly my interior in all the situations of my life. It is the history of my soul that I have promised and in order to write it faithfully I do not need other memories: it is sufficient for me, as I have done until now, to re-enter inside myself."[63] He states this purpose within the context of a discussion of the mistakes attributable to his poor memory. The inexactness, the fictive character of his account of the events, does not prevent him from knowing and revealing the history of his soul. He makes known his interior by telling the story of his soul. And the telling of this story does not require a good memory.

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[63] Ibid., 7, p. 278: L'objet propre de mes confessions est de faire connoitre exactement mon interieur dans toutes les situations de ma vie. C'est l'histoire de mon ame que j'ai promise et pour l'écrire fidellement je n'ai pas besoin d'autres mémoires: il me suffit, comme j'ai fait jusqu'ici, de rentrer au dedans de moi.

Rousseau's "life," then, is not a collection of deeds. What he is by nature is not revealed in a chronicle of the events of his life. On the day of judgment, he will come before the Sovereign Judge with this book in his hand: this is what he has done and thought and felt, this is what he was.[64] His enterprise is that of showing himself entirely to the public;[65] what he is, then, is not public. The Confessions is unique, unprecedented because here, for the first and perhaps only time, one can see "a man such as he is inside."[66]

10. The Confessions as revelation of nature

Rousseau's revelation of man as he is according to nature takes the form of the history of Rousseau's soul. In his second letter to Malesherbes (and Rousseau regards his Four Letters to Malesherbes as a kind of summary of his Confessions[67]), Rousseau remarks upon an "opposition" which is fundamental to his character and the manner in which he will resolve this opposition: "Although I cannot resolve this opposition by means of principles, . . . I can at least give, by means of deeds, a kind of history which can serve to make it understood."[68] Nature is hidden in

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[64] Ibid., 1, p. 5.

[65] Ibid., 2, p. 59.

[66] Ibid., 10, p. 516

[67] Ibid., 11, p. 569

[68] Jeans-Jacques Rousseau, Quatre lettres à M. le Président de Malesherbes, in Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Ceuvres complètes, ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond, vol. 1: Les Confessions: Autres textes autobiographiques, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1959), p. 1134: Quoique je ne puisse resoudre cette opposition par des principes. . . J'en puis du moins donner par les faits une espece d'historique qui peut servir à la concevoir.

the history, in The Confessions: the principles must be searched out. Just as Rousseau has undertaken the enormous task of penetrating to what it is that man is by nature, so the reader must undertake the task of penetrating to the "principles" hidden under the movements of Rousseau's soul:

> I would want to be able, in some manner, to make my soul transparent to the eyes of the reader; and, for this, I try to show my soul to him from all points of view, to throw light on it through every opening, to work to insure that no movement takes place that he does not notice, so that he may be able to judge by himself of the principle which produces the movements.[69]

The uncovering of this principle is the task ahead. However, in light of Rousseau's claims about the purpose of his enterprise it is to be expected that the principle to be uncovered is "nature." What nature is for him is to be revealed in the process of uncovering, of penetrating the "history," the movements of his soul. The "generous" reader will seek the "first causes," the "first movers," which combine to work the strange events of his life.[70] For Augustine, the first mover is God; the events of his life are the work of providence. But Rousseau sometimes

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[69]Rousseau, Confessions, 4, p. 175: Je voudrois pouvoir en quelque facon rendre mon ame transparente aux yeux du lecteur, et pour cela je cherche à la lui montrer sous tous les points de vue, à l'eclairer par tous les jours, à faire en sorte qu'il ne s'y passe pas un mouvement qu'il n'appercoive, afin qu'il puisse juger par lui-meme du principe qui les produit.

[70]Ibid., 12, p. 589.

speaks of one principle and sometimes of first causes. This ambiguity remains to be accounted for. Suffice it to say here that the movements of his soul are traceable to one principle and that the events of his life are worked by more than one cause. The movements of his soul are the events of his "true life," of his interior.

The movement of The Confessions, then, is on two levels or rather in two directions. The Confessions moves along horizontally from birth through childhood through youth through middle age; but it also moves vertically down through the movements to a principle, to an "unmoved" prime mover. To be sure, the philosophical grounds for this claim are yet to be fully established and the philosophical implications are yet to be drawn out. But we can make a beginning at establishing these grounds by returning to Rousseau's own beginning: "Here is the only portrait of man painted exactly according to nature and in all her truth." The horizontal movement of The Confessions is closer to music.[71] The characterization of The Confessions as a portrait points to the vertical movement of The Confessions. The portrait is brought about through a succession of movements, but the portrait itself is "unmoved."

In addition to calling his Confessions a "portrait," Rousseau constantly employs visual metaphors to describe what he is doing and the manner in which he is to be understood:

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[71] See Burgelin, La philosophie de l'existence, p. 120.

he will show himself as he is; for the first time, one can see a man as he is inside; he wishes to make his soul somehow transparent to the eyes of the reader. Certainly the visual metaphor for understanding is quite common, but Rousseau's use of it seems to imply something more; it hints at the manner in which his Confessions is to be understood. In the Outlines of the Confessions, he writes: "It would be necessary, for what I have to say, to invent a language as new as my project. . .for, if I am silent about something, nothing about me will be known, so much everything holds together, so much everything is one in my character."[72] Perhaps his "new language" is the language of "showing," the language of the portrait. This is like the language of the Levite of Ephraim who cuts up the body of his dead wife into twelve pieces and sends them to the twelve tribes of Israel,[73] "the language of genius" of George Keith who sends the king a bag of peas as a recommendation for a young man seeking to enter the king's service.[74] This is speaking to the eyes, which never fails "to produce a more sure effect than all the discourse that one would be able to put in its place."[75] The contrast with Augustine is revealing: "So,

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[72]Rousseau, Ébauches des Confession, p. 1153: Il faudroit pour ce que j'ai à dire inventer un langage aussi nouveau que mon projet. . . car si je tais quelque chose on ne me connoitra sur rien, tant tout se tient, tant tout est un dans mon caractére.

[73]Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Essai sur l'origine des langues (A. Belin, 1817; reprint ed., Paris: Copedith, 1970), chap. 1, p. 502.

[74]Rousseau, Confessions, 12, p. 598.

[75]Rousseau, Essai sur l'origine des langues, chap. 1, p. 502: produire un effet plus assuré que tous les discours qu'on aurait pu mettre à la place.

my God, my confession in your sight is made to you both silently and not silently; there is no sound of words, but there is a clamor of feeling." Augustine does not make his confession by means of the words and sounds of the flesh "but with the words of the soul and the crying out of my thought which your ear knows."[76]

It has been suggested that Rousseau's characterization of his Confessions as a portrait tells us something about man as he is according to nature. The very form of the work is intended to serve the purpose of the work and the form is appropriate to the matter, the structure to the content. The portrait, perhaps like man, is a subject for the maker of riddles:

> Child of Art, Child of Nature,
> Without prolonging the days, I prevent death:
> The more I am true, the more I deceive,
> And I become too young by dint of growing old.[77]

The portrait is truthful in its deceptiveness; it makes "stand still" what is in movement. The riddle points back to the "truth" of The Confessions and leads us immediately to the problem of death.

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[76]Augustine, Confessions 10. 2. Quotations from Augustine's Confessions are from the translation by Rex Warner (New York and Toronto: The New American Library, 1963), with emendations.

[77]Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Enigme," in Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Oeuvres complètes, ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond, vol. 2: La Nouvelle Héloise ; Théatre ; Poésies; Essais Littéraires, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), p. 1133:

> Enfant de l'Art, Enfant de la Nature
> Sans prolonger les jours j'émpêche de mourir:
> Plus je suis vrai, plus je fais d'imposture,
> Et je deviens trop jeune à force de vieiller.

CHAPTER II

DEATH AND IMMORTALITY

The very form of Rousseau's Confessions calls into question, leads us to raise the question of the completeness of the work. As the story of his life, as an autobiography, The Confessions is incomplete and necessarily incomplete. This incompleteness shows itself in several ways. In the first place, Rousseau's account of his past is incomplete. As indicated above, it is simply impossible to "tell all" in the sense of detailing everything that happened, everything one did, thought, and felt and everything one thinks and feels about everything one did, thought, and felt. This is not what Rousseau can mean when he claims that he is telling all and that he paints himself "doubly." Further, by his own admission, Rousseau's memory is not only imperfect but even "poor." As a chronicle of his past, then, Rousseau's Confessions is incomplete. And surely one does not expect this kind of completeness from any autobiography. In a second and more important sense, The Confessions and any autobiography is incomplete even as a chronicle of the "important" events of the author's life. It is necessarily incomplete, for a complete chronicle of a man's life could be written only after his death. The most one could hope

for from an autobiographer is that he take us as far as the moment of his death. The autobiographer cannot do what the biographer can do. The autobiographer cannot give us his perspective on his whole life, for at the point at which his whole life is past, his thinking and telling about his past is no longer possible.

1. The finitude of the endeavor

As a chronicle of the details of his life, then, Rousseau's Confessions is necessarily incomplete. But Rousseau never even attempts anything approaching this kind of completeness. At the end of Part Two he mentions the possibility of his writing a third part "if ever [he] has the strength to write it."[1] He does not write this third part and The Confessions is not his last work. The last events which he records took place in 1765; he began writing his Confessions in 1766 and completed the work in 1769. There is not even an attempt to take us as far as the "present," the writing of The Confessions. Indeed, at the end of Part One, and at the beginning of Part Two, he indicates that there might not even have been a Part Two: "But I must stop myself here. Time may lift many a veil. If my memory descends to posterity, perhaps one day posterity will learn what I had to say; then it will be known why I am silent."[2]

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[1] Rousseau, Confessions, 12, p. 656: si jamais j'ai la force de l'écrire.

[2] Ibid., 6, p. 272: Mais il faut m'arrêter ici. Le tems peut lever bien des voiles. Si ma mémoire parvient à la posterite, peut être un jour elle apprendra ce que j'avois à dire. Alors on saura pourquoi je me tais.

He is resolved to write no more but "after two years of silence and of patience, in spite of my resolutions, I take up my pen again."[3] Part One is written in 1767; the events of Part One take us as far as 1741. Again, we are not even taken as far as the "present."

Rousseau, then, is not attempting what his biographers attempt. In spite of its incompleteness, Rousseau can say: "If I am silent about something, nothing about me will be known, so much everything holds together, so much everything is one in my character, and so much this bizarre and singular combination needs all the circumstances of my life in order to be uncovered."[4] Somehow, <u>everything</u> is there; the enormous gaps do not affect the completeness of the history, everything "holds together." There are no gaps in the "portrait." Rousseau cannot do what his biographers can do, but his biographers cannot do what only Rousseau can do: "No one is able to write the life of a man except that man himself. His manner of interior being, his true life is known only to him."[5] A man's <u>true</u> life is not the sum of the events of his life, the sum of all that he did and all that happened to him. We can "finish knowing a man"

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[3] <u>Ibid</u>., 7, p. 277: après deux ans de silence et de patience, malgré mes resolutions, je reprends la plume.

[4] Rousseau, <u>Ébauches des Confessions</u>, p. 1153: si je tais quelque chose on ne me connoitra sur rien, tant tout se tient, tant tout est un dans mon caractére, et tant ce bisarre et singulier assemblage a besoin de toutes les circonstances de ma vie pour être bien dévoilé.

[5] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 1149: Nul ne peut écrire la vie d'un homme que lui-même. Sa maniére d'être intérieure, sa véritable vie n'est connue que de lui.

by finishing Rousseau's Confessions[6] even though his Confessions "finishes" (as a chronicle) almost thirteen years before his death and even though the writing of The Confessions is finished nine years before his death.

Although Rousseau seems quite unconcerned with the finishing of his Confessions as a chronicle, he does, in some sense, give us his life from one end to the other.[7] At the beginning of Book 1, immediately before mentioning the details of his birth, he takes us to the Day of Judgement, the Last Judgement which is to take place after his death and after the deaths of all men. His book, his Confessions, will tell what he was. He somehow writes his Confessions from the perspective of a dead man.

2. The presence of death

Rousseau, of course, does not have access to the details of his death, but his death is somehow present from the very first page of the work. In his Prefatory Note, he looks ahead to the time when he will no longer be alive to watch over the fate of his Confessions; he asks his implacable enemies not to be also the enemies of his "ashes." He begins his Confessions, the story of his life, with a reference to his death. Throughout The Confessions he recalls times when he thought himself to be dying. He shows us himself as he is in the face of death. Death is

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[6]Rousseau, Confessions, 7, p. 279.

[7]Ibid., 12, p. 639.

that future event which is certain, that future event on which he can count. Rousseau can show us his life from one end to the other because he knows he will die: his death is as certain as his birth. The Confessions begins with explicit reference to his death and ends with the unspoken expectation of death. The apparently open "end" of The Confessions is implicitly closed by the knowledge of the certainty of death.

Before examining the significance of the knowledge of the certainty of death, it is necessary to take up the question of the immortality of the soul. This question bears directly on the question of the nature of death, what death is. For the Christian believer, i.e., Augustine, "life is not ended but merely changed": the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body are articles of faith. And the belief in immortality is intimately connected with the belief in a "personal" providence, a providence which extends beyond death. Rousseau's views on the immortality of the soul are expressed in statements which seem to be contradictory and it is necessary to examine these apparent contradictions in order to understand Rousseau's attitude in the face of death.

On the one hand, Rousseau's affirmations of his belief in the immortality of the soul seem unequivocal. He concludes his Letter to Voltaire with the following declaration:

> I have suffered too much in this life in order not to expect another. All the subtleties of metaphysics will not make me doubt for one moment the immortality of the soul and a benevolent Providence. I feel it, I believe it, I wish it, I hope it, I will defend it until my last breath; and this will be, of all the disputes I will have endured, the only one where my interest will not be forgotten.[8]

Rousseau's "belief" in immortality is grounded not in "metaphysical subtleties" but in the notion of fittingness: it is fitting that his suffering be compensated for. It is appropriate, just, that virtue be rewarded and vice punished, and God is just. But when he traces out the roots of his disagreement with Voltaire (Voltaire finds only bad on earth, Rousseau finds that all is good), Rousseau calls this disagreement an <u>apparent</u> contradiction which is due to the fact that Voltaire "enjoys" while Rousseau "hopes": "and hope embellishes all."[9]

3. The uses of immortality

The notion of fittingness extends to the punishment of the wicked: "I do not know whether this just Being will not punish one day all tyranny exercised in his name: I am very sure, at least, that he. . . will not refuse eternal

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[8]Jean-Jacques Rousseau, <u>Lettre à Voltaire</u>, in <u>Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Oeuvres complètes</u>, ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond, vol. 4: <u>Émile; Education; Morale; Botanique</u>, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), p. 1075: J'ai trop souffert en cette vie pour n'en pas attendre une autre. Toutes les subtilités de la Métaphysique ne me feront pas douter un moment de l'immortalité de l'ame, et d'une Providence bienfaisante. Je la sens, je la crois, je la veux, je l'espere, je la défendrai jusqu'à mon dernier soupir; et ce sera, de toutes les disputes que j'aurai soutenues, la seule où mon intérêt ne sera pas oublie.

[9]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 1074: et l'espérance embellit tout.

happiness to any non-believer who is virtuous and of good faith."[10] The just Being will not refuse eternal happiness to the virtuous non-believer. Perhaps he will refuse it to those who exercise tyranny in his name. That is, he will certainly reward some and perhaps he will punish others. The notion of fittingness seems to imply both a heaven and a hell. In addressing himself to Beaumont on the question of original sin, Rousseau writes:

> First, it is certainly lacking, according to me, that this doctrine of original sin, subject to such terrible difficulties, be contained in Scripture either so clearly or so severely as it has pleased our rhetorician Augustine and our Theologians to construct it; and what are the means of conceiving that God created so many innocent and pure souls, expressly in order to join them to blameable bodies in order to make them contract moral corruption and to condemn them all to hell without other crime than this union which is his work?[11]

The doctrines of original sin and of hell are incompatible. But Rousseau, in "refuting" Augustine and the theologians,

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[10] Ibid., p. 1072: J'ignore si cet Etre juste ne punira point un jour toute tyrannie exercée en son nom; je suis bien sûr, au moins, qu'il . . . ne refusera le bonheur éternel à nul incrédule vertueux et de bonne-foi.

[11] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Lettre à Christophe de Beaumont in Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Oeuvres complètes, ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond, vol. 4: Émile; Education; Morale; Botanique, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), pp. 937-8: D'abord il s'en faut bien, selon moi, que cette doctrine du péché originel, sujette à des difficultiés si terribles, ne soit contenue dans l'écriture ni si clairement ni si durement qu'il a plu au Rhéteur Augustin et à nos Theologians de la bâtir; et le moyen de concevoir que Dieu créee tant d'ames innocentes et pures, tout exprès pour les joindre à des corps coupables, pour leur y faire contracter la corruption morale, et pour les condanner toutes à l'enfer, sans autre crime que cette union qui est son ouvrage?

has not accurately expressed their views. It is not their teaching that God joined blameable bodies to innocent souls, and Adam's sin is not a sin of the flesh but the sin of deliberate disobedience, rebellion. Rousseau is concerned with denying the doctrine of original sin.[12] The doctrine of hell stands in spite of, indeed stands better because of the denial of original sin. In fact it seems that Rousseau's argument against original sin is based on the premise that God is just in condemning men to hell. But in the Letter to Voltaire, Rousseau seems to deny the existence of hell, the possibility of "the eternity of pains which . . . no man who thinks well of God would ever believe."[13]

It becomes clear that Rousseau intends his discussions of the "life to come" to be useful. He refers to the belief in the immortality of the soul as a "palliative"[14] and he criticizes the philosophers who would deny men this palliative. His "reason" for this criticism is "the inhumanity of troubling peaceful souls and of desolating men for nothing,

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[12]See Ernst Cassirer, The Question of Jean Jacques Rousseau, trans. and ed. Peter Gay (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1963), p. 75. Cassirer notes Rousseau's rejection of the doctrine of original sin and maintains that this rejection separates Rousseau irrevocably from all traditional forms of faith.

[13]Rousseau, Lettre à Voltaire, p. 1070: l'éternité des peines que . . . jamais homme pensant bien de Dieu, ne croiront jamais.

[14]Ibid., p. 1075.

when what one wishes to teach them is neither certain nor useful." The philosophers should attack the superstition which troubles society and respect the religion which sustains it.[15] The doctrine of the religion which sustains society is constituted by doctrines on which Jews, Christians and Turks agree, "on divine providence, on the economy of the life to come, and on all questions essential to the good order of mankind."[16] But not every man is either a Jew, Christian, or Turk; some men are philosophers.

Rousseau insists to Beaumont that he is a Christian but a Christian according to the Gospels. His Master, Jesus Christ, prescribes not so much articles of faith as good works.[17] Here Rousseau is clearly at odds with Augustine's and with Christianity's understanding of what it means to be a Christian.[18] Christianity understands itself to be a revealed truth and not a revealed moral code. And Rousseau plays loose with "the Law": Jesus himself has told Rousseau (apparently in the Gospels) and has told him through

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[15] Ibid., p. 1072: l'inhumanité à troubler les ames paisibles, et à désoler les hommes à pure perte, quand ce qu'on veut leur apprendre n'est ni certain ni utile.

[16] Rousseau, Lettre à Beaumont, p. 976: sur la providence divine, sur l'économie de la vie-à-venir, et sur toutes les questions essencielles au bon ordre du genre humain.

[17] Ibid., p. 960.

[18] At the very least, Rousseau is most unorthodox. Even those commentators who attribute religious beliefs to Rousseau admit his unorthodoxy on the most fundamental issues. See, for example, Burgelin, La philosophie de l'existence, pp. 428-34; Guéhenno, Rousseau, 2 : 104; B. Groethuysen, J.-J. Rousseau, 8th ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), p. 292.

his Apostles that "whoever loves his brother has accomplished the Law." In giving us his reference for this claim, Rousseau cites Galatians 5 : 14, where Paul says "the whole of the Law is summarized in a single command: Love your neighbor as yourself." Now, in the first place, Rousseau has considerably toned down the command: he omits the "as yourself." In the second place, he does not mention or even cite the words of Jesus, his "Master," to the Pharisees in the Gospels. The Pharisees, to disconcert Jesus, put a question to him: "Master, which is the greatest commandment of the Law?" Jesus answered "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second resembles it: You must love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hand the whole Law, and the Prophets also."[19]

It is strange that Rousseau prefers Paul's rendering to Jesus', since the Epistles are not the Gospels and especially since Paul is responsible for much of the tradition which Rousseau sees as being in conflict with the simple religion of the Gospels. And it is interesting that Rousseau fails to mention the context in which Paul is speaking: the Christian is not bound by the Law of Moses and in particular he need not be circumcised. To his brothers in Christ he says: "Tell those who are disturbing you [about the necessity for circumcision] I would like to see the knife slip."[20]

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[19]Matthew 23 : 3.

[20]Galatians 5 : 12

Rousseau is using the Bible. He is detoxifying religion for the sake of sustaining society. Those who exercise tyranny in God's name (e.g., by threatening men with an eternity of pain for failure to assent to certain propositions) must be opposed if civil conflict is to be avoided.[21]

In his Letter to Beaumont, Rousseau defends himself against the charge that his published teaching on religious doctrine has attacked the Laws and troubled public order. He has been accused of atheism and irreligion in spite of his protestations to the contrary. His defense is most revealing:

> I do not have, it seems to me, too much of the air of a man who disguises himself, and it is not easy to see what interest I would have in so disguising myself. One should presume that he who expresses himself so freely on what he does not believe is sincere in what he says he believes, and when his discourse, his conduct and his writings are always in accord on this point, anyone who dares to affirm that he lies, and is not a God, lies infallibly himself.[22]

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[21]See also Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Du Contract social ou, Principles du droit Politique, in Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Oeuvres complètes, ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond, vol. 3: Du Contrat social; Écrits politiques, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), bk. 4, chap. 8, especially p. 464: Of "Roman Christianity" Rousseau writes that "everything that destroys social unity is worthless and all institutions which put man in contradiction with himself are worth nothing."

[22]Rousseau, Lettre à Beaumont, p. 962: Je n'ai pas trop, ce me semble, l'air d'un homme qui se déguise, et il n'est pas aisé de voir quel intérêt j'aurois a me déguiser ainsi. L'on doit présumer que celui qui s'exprime si librement sur ce qu'il ne croit pas, est sincere en ce qu'il dit croire, et quand ses discours, sa conduite et ses écrits sont toujours d'accord sur ce point, quiconque ose affirmer qu'il ment, et n'est pas un Dieu, ment infailliblement lui-même.

The fiction-lie distinction is worth recalling here. And the presumption Rousseau counts on - the presumption that whoever expresses himself so freely on what he does not believe is sincere in what he says he does believe - is highly questionable: it is precisely a presumption.

4. The ground of immortality

Rousseau has the immortality of the soul rest on the existence of God. The questions (providence, immortality of the soul) are traced back to their "common principle," the existence of God:

> If God exists, he is perfect; if he is perfect, he is wise, powerful, and just; if he is wise and powerful everything is good; if he is just and powerful, my soul is immortal; if my sould is immortal, thirty years of life are nothing for me and are perhaps necessary to the maintenance of the universe. If I am accorded the first proposition, those that follow will not be disturbed; if it is denied, it is not necessary to dispute the consequences.[23]

Rousseau's first "proposition" is not "God exists" but "if God exists, he is perfect." Rousseau does not assert the proposition "God exists." An "argument" of sorts is presented for the immortality of the soul but none for the existence of God upon which the argument for the immortality of the soul depends. In fact, Rousseau maintains

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[23]Rousseau, Lettre à Voltaire, p. 1070: Si Dieu existe, il est parfait; s'il est parfait, il est sage, puissant et juste; s'il est sage et puissant, tout est bien; s'il est juste et puissant, mon ame est immortelle; si mon ame est immortelle, trent ans de vie ne sont rien pour moi, et sont peut-être nécessaires au maintien de l'univers. Si l'on m'accorde la premiere proposition, jamais on n'ébranlera les suivantes; si on la nie, il ne faut point disputer sur ses conséquences.

that reason has not demonstrated either that God exists or does not exist and that to believe or not to believe is not in our power. Rousseau believes in God as strongly as he believes any other truth.[24] But one does not believe, have faith in a demonstrated truth; one knows it. God is not a proposition.

At the very least, then, it becomes clear that the belief in the immortality of the soul is, for Rousseau, open to question. But he does not destroy the palliative of peaceful souls. He cannot identify himself with Christians, Jews, or Turks, but he will not place himself among the inhumane philosophers.

For Augustine, for the Christian believer, the belief in the immortality of the soul is clearly tied to the belief in providence. This providence is not simply equivalent to the order one finds in the workings of nature; it is a "personal" providence operative in every aspect of every man's life. Not only is the soul immortal but the body will be resurrected: immortality is personal immortality. Rousseau also claims that the question of providence is tied to the question of the immortality of the soul. It is equally tied to the question of the eternity of pain in which he does not believe.[25] But Rousseau denies any "personal"

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[24] Rousseau, Lettre à Voltaire, p. 1070.

[25] Ibid.

providence. After criticizing the philosophers who cry that all is lost because they have a toothache and the "Devots" who find "good" reasons for everything that happens, Rousseau writes:

> Perhaps in the order of human things there is neither wrong nor right, because everything keeps to the common law and there is no exception for anyone. This is to believe that particular events here below are nothing to the eyes of the Master of the universe, that his Providence is only universal, that he contents himself with conserving genres and species and with presiding over the whole, without troubling himself over the manner in which each individual passes this short life.[26]

If God does not concern himself with the manner in which each individual passes his life, then how can the notion of fittingness suddenly be brought in to justify the hope in an eternal reward for that individual? The "providence" which Rousseau describes seems very much like a kind of universal order, very much like "nature."

5. Rousseau's providence

In his Confessions Rousseau rarely attributes anything that happens to him to providence. When he does trace events or characteristics to their "causes," he usually cites either nature, destiny, or chance. Providence is generally mentioned in terms of what might have happened, only in hypothetical "imagined" situations: providence had offered

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[26] Ibid., p. 1069: Peut-être dans l'ordre des choses humaines, n'a-t-elle ni tort ni raison, parce que tout tient à loi commune, et qu'il n'y a d'exception pour personne. Il est à croire que les évenemens particuliers ne sont rien ici-bas aux yeux du Maitre de l'univers, que sa Providence est seulement universelle, qu'il se contente de conserver les genres et les especes, et de presider au tout, sans s'inquieter de la maniere dont chaque individu passe cette courte vie.

him, in a life with Merceret, precisely what was necessary for him to spend his days happily.[27] But Rousseau does not spend his life with Merceret. Either he refused the offering of providence or he did not recognize it as such. Now ultimately one does not refuse the offerings of providence for ultimately everything is the work of providence.[28] And, if this is the case, one does not have to recognize the workings of providence in order for providence to do its work. In discussing the haste in which he must write Part Two of his Confessions, Rousseau notes his intention to "refound" the work if providence, casting its eyes upon him, gives him calmer days.[29] Whether or not he will have calmer days is open to question, what providence will provide is open to question, but for the believer it is not open to question that providence always has its eyes on everyone: providence does not have to "move" its eyes.

Rousseau intends in some sense to "replace" providence by nature: this is part of his response to Augustine. It is not God, not providence, but nature which has made him unique. In his Confessions, he comments on his Letter to Voltaire. The occasion for this letter is Rousseau's reading of Voltaire's Poeme sur la ruine de Lisbonne. He says of his letter: "I proved to him that, of all these evils, there was

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[27]Rousseau, Confessions, 4, p. 145.

[28]What is spoken of here is the traditional understanding of the term 'providence,' abstracting, of course, from any question of the reality of the thing.

[29]Ibid., 7, p. 325.

not one of which providence was not exonerated and which did not have its source in the abuse that man had made of his faculties more than in nature itself." (Emphasis added.)[30] Nature, unlike providence, is not infallible, not all-powerful, not perfect. Nature tolerates interference, permits itself to be frustrated by man. The things that happen are not traceable to a single cause (providence) but to several causes (nature, man).[31] Even the good, the remarkable things that happen are not due to providence. Rousseau's exemption from pain after his "accident" at Charmettes is "a singular favor of nature."[32]

Now one might object that nature is the work of God and that Rousseau's "destiny" is simply another name for "providence": "I was destined to become by degrees an example of human misery. It could be said that providence, which called me to these great tests, pushed aside by its hand everything that would have prevented me from arriving there."[33]

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[30] Ibid., 9, p. 429. "Je lui prouvai que tous ces maux il n'y en avoit pas un dont la providence ne fut disculpée, et qui n'eut sa source dans l'abus que l'homme a fait de ses facultés plus que dans la nature elle-même.

[31] See, for example, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Discours sur les sciences et les arts, in Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Oeuvres complètes, ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond, vol. 3: Du Contrat social; Écrits politiques, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), pt. 1, p. 15: Rousseau speaks of "the happy ignorance in which eternal wisdom has placed us" and of the fact that nature wanted to keep us from being harmed by knowledge.

[32] Rousseau, Confessions, 6, p. 228.

[33] Ibid., 5, p. 205: J'étois destiné à devenir par degrès un exemple des miséres humaines. On diroit que la providence qui m'appelloit à ces grandes épreuves écartoit de la main tout ce qui m'eut empêché d'y arriver.

This could be said but Rousseau does not say it.[34] It is possible to look at all that happens as destined, or as the work of providence. Why, then, does Rousseau refer to the event which radically changed his life, his "conversion," as a "fortunate accident"? Why does he claim that "chance arranged things"[35] to bring about his separation from Mme de Warens for whom "nature had made (him)"? Nature can be "frustrated" by chance, providence cannot. And from the "natural" standpoint, destiny and chance are in some sense indistinguishable. Destiny is the pagan counterpart for providence. What Augustine attributes to Providence, Rousseau attributes to nature, man, chance. Rousseau's notion of the absurdity of seeing everything as the work of providence will be discussed in later chapters. (See below, Chapter III, pp. 116-24 and Chapter IV, pp. 183-9.) The point to be made here is that Rousseau states the intimate connection between the question of providence and the question of personal immortality and then proceeds to deny the existence of a personal providence. It is necessary to apply the rule of providence to "the total duration of each sensible being [genres and species] and not to some particular instance of its duration, such as the human life."[36]

6. Salvation

Rousseau's views on the question of the immortality of the soul are perhaps most strikingly put forth in his

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[34]See Voisine, "Introduction," p. XXXVIII.

[35]Rousseau, Confessions, 3, p. 123.

[36]Rousseau, Lettre à Voltaire, p. 1070.

Confessions for here he shows us himself as he is in the face of death. He recalls several times when he believed himself about to die. In his account of the first of these instances, Rousseau tells us that he consoled himself with the thought that he would have survived himself in Mme de Warens. Dying would have been like falling asleep.[37] Surviving in the memory and in the affections of another mortal is not what is meant by personal immortality and certainly not what is implied in the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. Rousseau's account of his attack of illness at Charmettes provides us with his fullest and most detailed picture of himself in the face of death. We are presented with the image of a man who feels no concern about the future and who, freed from this care, is able to enjoy the present. It might be said that Rousseau is unconcerned about the future because he is perfectly confident of his salvation. Confident that he is good, confident in God's justice, he is confident of receiving his eternal reward. But this does not explain his enjoyment of the present. If one's death were imminent and one were totally confident of enjoying an eternity of perfect happiness, one's present would surely be spent in the joyful anticipation of the future. One would be like a man approaching the end of a journey to a place of perfect happiness and freedom from pain, not like a man taking a leisurely walk who loves the journey itself and has no destination.

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[37]Rousseau, Confessions, 5, p. 221.

Further, Rousseau's account of the manner in which he overcame his anxiety about his salvation is, by his own admission, laughable. Fearful of being eternally damned and tortured by this cruel incertitude, Rousseau decides to settle the matter for himself by the simple expedient of throwing a rock at a tree. He concludes in advance that if the rock strikes the tree his salvation is assured, if the rock misses the tree he will be damned. Fortunately, the rock did hit the tree and since then Rousseau has never doubted his salvation. Of course, he admits, he chose a tree which was very near and very big.[38] A man who takes the salvation of his soul seriously could hardly abandon this concern so easily.

In Book 11, Rousseau recalls another time when he believed himself to be dying. He had never before experienced so great a fear of dying and had he died at that point he would have died in despair because he suspected a Jesuit plot to alter the Emile after his death. What frightens him almost to the point of killing him is the idea of his memory's being dishonored through the alteration of his book. This is hardly the chief concern of a dying man for whom the salvation of his soul is "the one thing necessary." When faced with the certainty of judgment by an all-knowing and all-powerful God, one ceases to care at all about one's memory, about the opinions of other men; one cares desperately

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[38] Ibid., 6, p. 243.

about God's "opinion." Rousseau's concern for his memory seems to be the closest he approaches any serious concern for immortality. His Confessions is to be published only after his death. This implies that there will still be interest in him after his death. He begs his enemies not to destroy his Confessions after his death: Rousseau's name will live, will survive him.

7. Rousseau's good name

Now it might be said that men achieve a kind of immortality through their children. A man's name lives on if he has children who bear his name. Somehow life is passed on from parents to children; parents are in some sense the cause of their children. But Rousseau has abandoned his children. They do not bear his name and he cannot know whether his children have died or have lived to have children of their own. Rousseau tells us that M. de Luxembourg's son has died and that the name will be extinguished after M. de Luxembourg's death.[39] But has not the Luxembourg name been immortalized? It lives in Rousseau's Confessions. Rousseau can make the names of others immortal because his works will be immortal. He achieves immortality not through his children but through his writings. Rousseau is not a man of his century: "One must not write for [the witty and the fashionable] when one wants to live beyond one's century."[40] The public opinion of his own time is surely against him but "time will lift many a veil."

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[39] Ibid., 11, p. 550.

[40] Rousseau, Discours sur les arts, Preface, p. 3: Il ne faut point écrire pour de tels Lecteurs, quand on veut vivre au-dela de son siécle.

It is noteworthy that Rousseau speaks about the death and resurrection and immortality of books. Some books, he tells us, are "worthy of immortality."[41] Some books seem to have a life of their own: his Julie is "dead" but it will, he believes, "resurrect" itself.[42] Rousseau, Grimm and a number of others had each written pamphlets on the dispute over French and Italian music. Those of Rousseau and Grimm have survived the quarrel, all the others are already dead.[43] When Rousseau is employed as Mme Dupin's secretary, he is given the task of "resuscitating" the "dead-born works" of the Abbe de St. Pierre.[44] It seems, then, that these works must be given life by someone else, someone of the calibre of a Rousseau; they cannot live on their own.

The immortality of his writings is the immortality with which Rousseau is most concerned. The "Jesuit plot" to alter the Emile distresses him almost to the point of killing him and his only source of anxiety is over the fate of his papers: "From then on, the only thing that afflicted me, from the point of view of my approaching death, was not having any literate man of trust in whose hands I would be able to deposit my papers in order to do the sorting after my death."[45] Rousseau's works are worthy of immortality;

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[41] Rousseau, Confessions, 8, p. 374.
[42] Ibid., 11, p. 547.
[43] Ibid., 8, p. 384.
[44] Ibid., 9, p. 407.
[45] Ibid., 11, p. 569: La seule chose qui m'affligeoit desormais dans l'opinion de ma mort prochaine étoit de n'avoir aucun homme lettré de confiance entre les mains duquel je pusse déposer mes papiers pour en faire après moi le triage.

neither misfortune nor the hatred of his enemies are to be permitted to destroy them. The Confessions which bears his name will not give Rousseau the immortality for which Augustine hoped, but it will insure that he live beyond his century. This is the immortality of the "few wise."[46]

In presenting himself to us as he is in the face of death, Rousseau shows us his beliefs concerning the immortality of the soul. In turn, his views on the immortality of the soul point up more clearly the character of the death he faces. For the Rousseau of The Confessions, death is the end of one's existence. He does not share Augustine's belief in the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body. This difference in the understanding of what death is reveals certain very significant differences in the understanding of what man is and in what his happiness consists.

8. The knowledge of death

In the First Part of his Second Discourse, Rousseau writes: ". . . an animal will never know what it is to die; and knowledge of death and its terrors is one of the first acquisitions that man has made in moving away from the animal condition."[47] The knowledge of death and its terrors

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[46]Rousseau, Discours sur les arts, Preface, p. 3.

[47]Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité, in Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Oeuvres complètes, ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond, vol. 3: Du contrat social; Ecrits politiques, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), pt. 1, p. 143: jamais l'animal ne saura ce que c'est que mourir, et la

is distinctive of man as different from the other animals. Rousseau often shows us himself as he is in the face of death yet he does not himself manifest any fear of death. This distinction will ultimately be accounted for in terms of Rousseau's claim that he is a man according to nature.

The knowledge that one is going to die, the certainty that life will end, calls up the question about the quality of one's life. That is, once the certainty of death is realized, one can no longer live in the illusion that all the parameters of one's life are self-imposed. The limits on what one can do are not simply the limits of finite power and finite ambition: death, over which one has no power, is the most radical limitation of all. The fact that one does not have infinite time to do all that one wants to do and is capable of doing makes choices, irreversible choices, necessary. One does not merely postpone, one excludes.

The shadow of death extends backwards over the whole of life whether or not one knows one is living in its shadow. And the shadow becomes darker and wider, less easy to ignore, the closer one approaches or sees oneself approaching the source. The young hardly think about death: they see it, if at all, only as a distant and therefore vague possibility.

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connoissance de la mort, et de ses terreurs, est une des premieres acquisition que l'homme ait faites, en s'éloignant de la condition animale.

The young are daring, foolhardy, possibly courageous; death is so remote. Between youth and death there is, usually, a vast distance. This distance is called "the future" and is seemingly infinite, filled with limitless possibilities of which death is merely one. And since death is a "possibility" that one would hardly choose, the young can afford the illusion that if one does not choose to die one will not die.

As one grows old, as the future becomes less limitless, the area of the possible is severely circumscribed. One's choices are progressively fewer; and death, about which one has no choice, "becomes" more and more certain. The old are notorious for reminiscing. There is little future to be planned for, little to anticipate. The nearness of the sourse of the shadow of death puts the past in sharp relief; the immediate future and therefore the present are in darkness. The old can "see" their mistakes, can see their good and bad fortune, can see things for what they really were. Death gives them a perspective on their lives which is a perspective on the past: the old are full of good advice.

Now, Rousseau writes his Confessions from the perspective of a dead man, from the perspective of a man who can see his whole life and see it for what it is (was). What he says about his life now is what he would say about it on the Day of Judgment. From the perspective which death gives, one can talk about one's true life. The imminence

of death puts life in its proper perspective, for in the face of death one cannot avoid the distinction between the important and the unimportant, the more important and the less important. When one can no longer do anything, one is confronted with what one has or has not done: the things one has done and should not have done, the things one has not done and should have done. When there is no more time, one is faced with one's use and misuse of time. It is only in looking back that one can wish one had done differently and in the face of death there is nowhere to look but back. In looking back, one sees the possibilities which are no longer possible.

9. The perspective of mortality

Rousseau has the "advantage" of almost dying. His whole life is punctuated by near encounters with death. He is born almost dying and carries within him the seed of his death.[48] He sees and knows of the deaths of others both old and young. But what is decisive for him is the facing of his own death: he is made "to see death near enough to familiarize [himself] with its image."[49] Mortal illness gives him in his youth the advantage, the perspective of the old. He is deprived of the illusion of the young, the illusion of immortality.

As already indicated, Rousseau's fullest and most detailed representation of himself as he is in the face of

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[48] Rousseau, Confessions, 1, p. 7.

[49] Ibid., 7, p. 293.

death occurs in Book 6 of his Confessions. The scene of the beginning of Book 6 is Charmettes, a country region, where the young Rousseau retires with Mme de Warens. Rousseau says at the start of his account of this period of his life: "Here begins the brief happiness of my life; here came the peaceful but rapid moments which have given me the right to say that I have lived."[50]

It is difficult for him to describe his happiness for his happiness does not consist of events, deeds, actions, or words but in the feelings which he experienced in doing all that he did. Yet "in this same time an accident happened to me, an accident as strange by itself as by its consequences which will end only with me."[51]

One morning Rousseau suddenly experiences a "revolution" in his whole body, a revolution which he can only compare to a tempest. He is surprised and frightened: he believes himself dead. The doctor does his work but to no avail. Rousseau is persuaded that he has little time to live:

> This persuasion quieted me for a time on the care of being cured. Not being able to prolong my life, I resolved to extract from the little that was left to me all that was possible, and this could be done because of a unique favor of nature which, in so fatal a state, exempted me from the pain which it seemed should be brought down upon me. . . .
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> This accident, which should have killed my body,

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[50] Ibid., 6, p. 225: Ici commence le court bonheur de ma vie; ici viennent les paisibles mais rapides momens qui m'ont donné le droit de dire que j'ai vécu.

[51] Ibid., p. 227: dans ce meme tems il m'arrive un accident aussi singulier par lui-meme que par ses suites, qui ne finiront qu'avec moi.

killed only my passions, and I thank heaven each day for the fortunate effect it produced in my soul. I am able to say that I began to live only when I looked upon myself as a dead man. Giving their true value to the things I was going to leave, I began to occupy myself with more noble cares as if in anticipation of those that I would soon have to fulfill and which I had greatly neglected until then . . . .

From the persuasion that there remained to me little time to live, from my profound security on my future fate, there resulted an habitual state, very calm and even sensual, which, in deadening all the passions which carry our hopes and fears to a distance, let me enjoy, without anxiety or trouble, the few days which were left to me . . . .

. . . At last, I felt myself, in spite of or rather because of my condition, gradually and with irresistable force attracted to study, and while looking upon each day as my last, I studied with as much ardor as if I had been destined to live forever . . . .

. . . I have never been so near to wisdom as during this happy epoch. Without great remorse about the past, delivered from cares about the future, the feeling which constantly dominated my soul was that of enjoying the present.[52]

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[52] Ibid., pp. 228-44: Cette persuasion me tranquillisa pour un tems sur le soin de guérir. Ne pouvant prolonger ma vie, je résolus de tirer du peu qu'il m'en restoit tout le parti qu'il étoit possible, et cela se pouvoit par une singuliére faveur de la nature, qui dans un état si funeste me'exemptoit des douleurs qu'il sembloit devoir m'attirer . . . . Cet accident qui devoit tuer mon corps ne tua que mes passions, et j'en benis le ciel chaque jour par l'heureux effet qu'il produisit sur mon ame. Je puis bien dire que je ne commençai de vivre que quand je me regardai comme un homme mort. Donnant leur véritable prix aux choses que j'allois quitter je commencai de m'occuper de soins plus nobles, comme par anticipation sur ceux que j'aurois bientot à remplir et que j'avois fort negligés jusqu'alors . . . .

. . . De la persuasion qu'il me restoit peu de tems à vivre, de ma profonde sécurité sur mon sort avenir, resultoit un état habituel très calme, et sensuel même, en ce qu'amortissant toutes les passions qui portent au loin nos craintes et nos espérances il me laissoit jouir sans inquiétude et sans trouble du peu de jours qui m'étoient laissés . . . .

. . . Enfin je me sentis entraîné peu-à-peu malgré mon état, ou plustot par mon état vers l'étude avec une force irrésistible, et tout en regardant chaque jour comme le

The discussion of the significance of the imminence of death will consist of a commentary on these major aspects of Rousseau's account.

In the first place, Rousseau's attitude toward his fast-approaching death is made possible by the fact that, due to a singular favor of nature, he is exempt from great pain.[53] He can get as much as possible out of his few remaining days because he does not long for the death which would bring him relief. He is not simply enduring the present, hoping for it to be over quickly. Indeed, one can imagine situations in which one would long for death (one's own or another's), situations in which death would be the only remedy for pain. Surely there are sufferings to which death is preferable and physical pain is not the only suffering of this kind. Rousseau is keenly aware of this: when the theft of the ribbon is discovered he fears shame more than death, he prefers death to embarassment before the king, he fears separation from Mama more than he fears death. Death, then, is not the greatest harm, not that which is to be feared most. In fact, when

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dernier des mes jours j'étudiois avec autant d'ardeur, que si j'avois dû toujours vivre. . . .
. . . Je n'ai jamais été si près de la sagesse que durant cette heureuse époque. Sans grands remords sur le passé; délivré des soucis de l'avenie, le sentiment qui dominoit constamment dans mon ame étoit de jouir du présent.

[53]See Rousseau, Discours sur l'inégalité, pt. 1, p. 143. The savage does fear pain.

faced with unbearable alternatives, death would be welcome.

There are several places in his Confessions where Rousseau speaks of death as a welcome relief. Mme de Warens has left this Valley of Tears and his own sufferings, too, will soon be at an end.[54] After his arrival at Montmorency he feels himself detached from all that had made him love life. He looks forward to death with a kind of "empressement": he longs for the moment when he will be free, the moment of escape from his enemies.[55] Having suffered greatly, having had so many reasons to hate life, he looks back to a time when he thought himself dying: "Sweet death, if only you had come then!"[56]

But at Charmettes, during one of the few peaceful and happy epochs of his life, death can hardly be welcome. This is the time which gives him the right to say he has lived. Surely, if there is any time when he should have "resented" death, it is this time. Yet the time of his peace and happiness is the same time as that of the tempest, the extraordinary accident. The time of the imminence of death and this peaceful, happy epoch are somehow the same. But that they could be the same is not known in advance.

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[54]Rousseau, Confessions, 12, p. 620.

[55]Ibid., 10, p. 489.

[56]Ibid., 5, p. 221: Quelle douce mort, si alors elle fut venue.

It is because there is no hope that Rousseau can make the most of the few days left to him. He is persuaded that he cannot be cured, that he cannot prolong his life; he would prolong it if he could. Rousseau is not happy because he is going to die: he does not welcome death and would prefer life to death. He is happy because of the change which occurs in his life when he thinks he is going to die. Imminent death brought about by the revolution in his body brings about a revolution, a radical change, in his life.

Thus, Rousseau can say: "I began to live only when I looked upon myself as a dead man." Looking upon oneself as a dead man means looking upon oneself as a man with no future. There is no more planning, no more care to be taken for what is to come. The profound security about the future which results from the certainty of imminent death brings about a state of great calm and even sensuality. Rousseau is able to say that he began to live only when he looked upon himself as a dead man because the "accident" killed his passions. The state in which he finds himself is calm and sensual but his passions are dead: indeed, this state is possible <u>because</u> his passions are dead. The death of his passions has a most fortunate effect upon his soul.

Rousseau, then, distinguishes between passion and sensuality and this distinction is significant for his understanding of what it is that constitutes happiness. The passions which are killed by the awareness of imminent death are "all the passions which carry our hopes and

fears to a distance." Now hope and fear are precisely those passions which we experience in our concern for the future. What we hope for and what we fear are distant, removed from us by a stretch of time called "the future." What is here and now is either enjoyed or repulsed. What, then, are those passions which remove our hopes and fears, the passions of hope and fear, to a distance?

Hope and fear are present, immediate, because the objects of hope and fear are distant. Rousseau does not seem to be saying, at least at first, that hope and fear are killed but that the passions that separate us from our hopes and fears are killed. Hope and fear, in themselves, might be characterized as passive. That is, they are felt with regard to distant objects but they do not entail of themselves any movement toward or away from those objects. They can be experienced without any effort on our part to bring about or avoid that which is hoped for or feared. Rousseau neither hopes for nor fears death. He is profoundly secure about the future, but he does not long for, desire death. He believes a cure to be impossible. His death is unavoidable. But surely one can fear the unavoidable; one can fear what one is powerless to prevent. On the other hand, one cannot hope for what one thinks to be impossible. Fear and hope, then, are experienced with reference to what one thinks to be inevitable or possible. We can fear what is either possible or inevitable and we can hope for what is possible; we are "secure" about what is inevitable if we do not fear it.

Fear and hope are not experienced with reference to what one thinks to be impossible. We do not hope for or fear what is actual; we can fear or desire what we think is inevitable; we can hope for or fear what we think is possible; we cannot hope for or fear what we think is impossible.

It is in the area of the possible that our hopes and fears can be removed to a distance, can be separated from us. The area of the possible is the place in which we have room to move, to act. Here we can make decisions, weigh alternatives, make efforts to bring about or prevent. Fear and hope both disappear when what is feared or hoped for is present, actual. Fear and desire or security are felt when we are faced with the inevitable: we fear what is inevitable if we think that what is inevitable will harm us; we desire what is inevitable if we think that what is inevitable will give us pleasure; we are secure about what is inevitable if we neither fear nor desire it. Hope, then, is the passion of the possible - it is experienced only in relation to what one thinks to be possible. And hope is always possible in relation to the possible. Fear of the possible is always mixed with hope that what is feared can be avoided or prevented.

Now death cannot ultimately be avoided or prevented. It can, at best, be postponed. Death can be the work of man or it can be natural, the work of nature. Death at the hands of other men can be avoided or prevented; natural death can in some cases be postponed, delayed. Avoiding,

preventing, postponing, delaying are works of man, works of art, e.g., medicine, military strategy. But, ultimately, art is powerless against death. Man is by nature mortal. Rousseau does not fear death; he is profoundly secure in that respect. And he has no hope of being cured. The death which he faces is a natural death. He can do nothing to avoid, prevent, postpone: art is powerless and futile. He cannot "provide" for his future because there is no future to provide for. It is this impossibility of exercising any kind of providence for himself which makes possible his state of calm and sensuality. The happiness he experiences in this state shows him the unhappiness caused by those passions which remove our hopes and fears to a distance. Our experience of hope and fear depends upon what we think possible or inevitable and upon what we want and do not want. Hope for and fear of the possible bring into play those passions which remove our hopes and fears to a distance, those passions which have to do with getting what we want and avoiding what we do not want. Rousseau in the face of death has no hope and no fear because he has no future. But imminent death is the only situation of its kind, the only situation in which there is no future to be concerned about. Here in the face of death, Rousseau "gives their true value to the things [he] was going to leave." He sees what is worth wanting and what is not worth wanting, what is worthy to be hoped for and what is worthy to be feared.

11. "Passion" against death

Men want happiness but they can be and often are mistaken about the nature of happiness. Rousseau in the face of death is happy. His state is calm and sensual; he faces a natural death without pain. There is nothing to hope for or to fear and, therefore, nothing to get or avoid. Now what is "natural," the works of nature, are close to being inevitable. Art, technology, is the attempt to master nature and to prevent it from doing at least some of its work. Medicine is the attempt to master disease, to restore health. But, for Rousseau, disease is in the same class with the earthquake at Lisbon. In his letter to Voltaire, Rousseau claims that the disaster at Lisbon, the death of thousands, is due much more to man himself than to nature. Nature is to blame for the earthquake but not for the fact that thousands of people live literally on top of each other. Disease is the natural, almost inevitable result, of certain ways of living but these ways of living are man's own. The savage would most likely die of old age like the inhabitant of the "city of utmost necessity."[57] The imminent death of the young Rousseau is an accident. Nature, then, gives little occasion for hope or fear and requires little planning for getting and avoiding. Rousseau fears the destruction of his works by his enemies; he does not fear natural death.

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[57]See Rousseau, Discours sur l'inégalité, pt. 1, p. 137 and Plato, Republic, 372d.

The passions that remove our hopes and fears to a distance are mostly occasioned by our relationships with other men. Every man hopes for and fears things from other men. What we can get from other men is not entirely out of our power; we are not powerless to affect human action. Thus, the essentially "passive" passions of hope and fear are "carried to a distance" by such "active" passions as vanity, ambition, greed, vengeance.

It is significant that these active passions make us plan, contrive. We seek to put ourselves in situations where we can bring about what we hope for. We "provide" occasions for getting what we want. Vanity, for example, is always directed toward some future satisfaction, always foreseeing, because it is never satisfied. It cannot be content with past triumphs because one's worthiness of past recognition is ratified only by future recognition. One must have one's worthiness constantly reaffirmed. The passions which remove our hopes and fears to a distance are marked by agitation, turmoil, a straining toward what is not yet and may not ever be, desire for distant objects. Between desire and satisfaction lies the future.

Rousseau describes himself as a man almost without vanity, vindictiveness, ambition, hatred. In showing us the absence of these passions, he shows us the conditions in which they do exist. In Book 8 of his Confessions, he tells us of a time when he thought he had only six months to live: "I renounced forever all projects of fortune and

advancement."[58] Ambition has a place only within the context of an indeterminate future. Believing that he has no more need of "prevoyance," he silences vanity and becomes a copyist. In Book 11, Rousseau recounts the story of his flight from Montmorency. It is due to his fortunate disposition that he has

> . . . never known that spiteful disposition which ferments in a vindictive heart because of the continual memory of offences received, and which torments itself with all the evil it would like to do to its enemy. Naturally quick-tempered, I have felt anger, even rage in its first movements, but never has a desire for vengeance taken root inside me. I occupy myself too much with the offense in order to occupy myself much with the offender. I think about the evil I have received only as the cause of the evil I can still receive and, if I were sure that the offender would do no more to me, what he has done to me would be forgotten at once.[59]

It is only because there is a future to be concerned about that he even thinks of his enemies. He is not tormented by the desire for vengeance.

Vengeance requires reflection, thinking over the injury, planning, however simple, of an appropriate form of revenge. Anger, even rage, are of a different character.

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[58] Rousseau, Confessions, 8, p. 362: Je renoncai pour jamais à tout projet de fortune et d'avancement.

[59] Ibid., 11, pp. 585-6:. . . jamais connue cette humeur rancuniére qui fermente dans un coeur vindicatif, par le souvenir continuel des offenses receues, et qui le tourmente lui-même de tout le mal qu'il voudroit faire à son ennemi. Naturellement emporté j'ai senti la colere, la fureur même dans les prémiers mouvemens, mais jamais un desir de vengeance ne prit racine au dedans de moi. Je m'occupe trop peu de l'offense pour m'occuper beaucoup de l'offenseur. Je ne pense au mal que j'en ai receu qu'à cause de celui que j'en peux recevoir encore, et si j'étois sûr qu'il ne m'en fit plus, celui qu'il m'a fait seroit à l'instant oublié.

They are natural; they are the first movements of passion. This "preference" for first movements, for immediate gratification over distance-creating passions is also apparent in Rousseau's description of his thefts. He steals little things which give him pleasure (drawing paper, cakes, wine) but he does not steal the money which would enable him to buy more and better than what he steals. The distance between the money and the thing is too great, too troublesome, requires too much planning.[60] By putting so much planning and caring between ourselves and what we hope for or fear, we feel our hopes and our fears less. We put "providence" beteen ourselves and our hopes and fears.

Hoping and fearing are perhaps unavoidable when there is a future to be faced. The calm and sensual state brought about by the imminence of death shows us that the desires which are satisfied through planning and contriving are troublesome, disruptive and destructive of sensuality which is only immediately satisfied. These troublesome desires are produced by "the passions which carry our hopes and fears to a distance." These passions have us always living in the future. The present cannot be savoured, enjoyed, for it is always a preparing for something to come, a painful anticipation. At Charmettes, in the face of death, Rousseau is happy: "Without great remorse about the past, delivered from cares about the future, the feeling

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[60] Ibid., 1, p. 38.

which constantly dominated my soul was the enjoyment of the present." The past is the completed; he cannot affect it and, since there is no future, the past cannot affect him. He can forget the past. The imminence of death has the effect of cutting him off from both past and future. And it is noteworthy that Charmettes is at the same time the scene of his imminent death and of his separation from society, from other men.

12. Death and understanding

This deadening of the passions which remove our hopes and fears to a distance is followed by and is perhaps the condition for Rousseau's turning to study. He feels himself drawn toward study with an irresistible force. This attraction is felt not in spite of his state. Rousseau comments on the apparent strangeness of the fact that a man who believes himself so near to death should begin the enormous task of seeking to understand: "While looking upon each day as my last, I studied with as much ardor as if I had been destined to live forever." Rousseau studies, carries on his investigations, as if he would live always. The study he undertakes is not the study of a God whom he is about to face: he is not anticipating a "beatific vision" which would soon satisfy his mind entirely (Augustine). In fact, the eternal reward he mentions in speaking about the death of Mama is "the memory of the good one has done here below."[61]

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[61] Ibid., 12, p. 620.

He does not study the Bible or even the theologians. In the mornings, Rousseau studies philosophy (the books of the philosophers), geometry, algebra, and Latin; in the afternoons he amuses himself with the study of history and geography. He finds the philosophers to be in contradiction and abandons "the chimerical project of according them."[62] The philosophers cannot satisfy him, cannot answer his questions.

Rousseau often tells us of the great difficulties he experiences in trying to learn from others: "My mind, impatient of any kind of constraint, cannot subject itself to the law of the moment. Even the fear of not learning prevents me from being attentive. For fear of making whoever is talking to me impatient, I pretend to understand; he goes ahead and I understand nothing. My mind wants to go at its own pace; it cannot submit itself to that of others."[63] At Charmettes, while looking upon each day as his last, Rousseau goes at his own pace. The fear of not learning does not trouble him. The philosophers are not his masters; he judges them. He does not seek out a teacher but works by himself. One is reminded of the conclusion of his First Discourse: "Those whom nature destined to be her disciples needed no teachers. . . . If a few men must be allowed to

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[62] Ibid., 6, p. 237.

[63] Ibid., 3, p. 119; Mon esprit impatient de toute

devote themselves to the study of the sciences and arts, it must be only those who feel the strength to walk alone. . . It is for those few to raise monuments to the glory of the human intellect.[64]

The studies which Rousseau undertakes while looking upon each day as his last are not essentially useful studies. In the first place, he does not decide to turn to study out of the need for some kind of therapy; he is not attempting to distract himself from his impending death. He is drawn by an "irresistible force." Also, there is no future to prepare himself for by study. And philosophy, geometry, algebra are essentially theoretical pursuits. He thinks for the sake of thinking, not for the sake of accomplishing something. In the afternoon, for his recreation and amusement, he studies "history." At first, he loses himself in "the darkness of chronology" but then turns, with so little time left to him, to "the exact measure of time and the movements of the heavenly bodies."

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espéce de joug ne peut s'asservir à la loi du moment. La crainte même de ne pas apprendre m'empêche d'être attentif. De peur d'impatienter celui qui me parle je feins d'entendre; il va en avant et je n'entends rien. Mon esprit veut marcher à son heure, il ne peut se soumettre à celle d'autrui.

[64]Rousseau, Discours sur les arts, pt. 2, p. 29: Il n'a point fallu de maîtres à ceux que la nature destinoit à faire des disciples . . . . S'il faut permettre à quelques hommes de se livres à l'étude des Sciences et des Arts, ce n'est qu' à ceux qui se sentiront la force de marcher seuls. . . : C'est à ce petit nombre qu'il appartient d'élever des monumens à la gloire de l'esprit humain.

In some sense, Rousseau as he is in the face of death reminds one of the Socrates of the Phaedo. With so little time left, Socrates enters into a leisurely conversation with his friends. It is as if they could talk forever. The differences between the two "death scenes" are, of course, striking (e.g., Rousseau, as it were, talking to himself and Socrates talking to his friends; the cause of Rousseau's impending death and the cause of Socrates' impending death). The point is that Rousseau says of his death scene: "I have never been so near to wisdom as during this happy epoch." (Emphasis added.) He is near to wisdom and this is the nearest he has ever come. He does not claim to have reached, attained, wisdom but only to have approached it. And knowing that he can never finish approaching it, he studies with "ardor."

The comparison with Socrates is not the only one which suggests itself. In Book 2 of his Confessions Rousseau describes the death scene of Mme de Vercellis, his employer. Her death was that of a "sage" although she herself did not realize it. The serenity of soul which was hers in the face of death made him admire the Catholic religion. Mme de Vercelli's gaiety was "the counterweight given by reason against the sadness of her state."[65] But her attitude toward death is like her attitude toward the unfortunate: she helps the unfortunate not because she commiserates with them but because helping the unfortunate

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[65]Rousseau, Confessions, 2, p. 83.

is good in itself, is the will of God. Her charity, then, is for the sake of God and not for the sake of the unfortunate. Mme de Vercellis is a good Catholic. She is serene and even gay in the face of death because reason consoles her. She is like "St. Augustine who would have consoled himself with being damned if that were the will of God."[66] Mme de Vercellis is cold and insensitive yet Rousseau often weeps for her.

13. The immediacy of thought

Rousseau's story of the death of this woman seems to be a parallel to Augustine's account of the death of his mother. Augustine recalls the day when he and his mother discussed the joys of eternal life; as they talked, they yearned toward the eternal wisdom, which is God. After returning to their conversation, his mother confides to him that she no longer has anything to hope for in this world. The only reason she had wanted to stay in "this life" was to see her son a Catholic Christian. Now that this is accomplished, she can only ask herself "So what am I doing here?"[67] A few days later his mother is dead and Augustine weeps for her during a "small portion of an hour." The reader, if he is a man of great charity, will not despise

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[66]Rousseau, Rêveries, 2, p. 1010: St. Augustin qui se fut consolé d'être danné si telle eut été la volonté de Dieu.

[67]Augustine, Confessions 9. 10.

him for his weeping.[68]

The Christian does not fear death. His whole life is lived in anticipation of the life to come. His thinking, the highest object of which is God, is somehow an anticipation of the life of the blessed, the enjoyment of the beatific vision. Now he sees only "through a glass darkly" but then he will see "face to face." In the face of death, Rousseau, like Augustine, is near to wisdom. The death of the Christian is like the death of the wise.

Yet Rousseau does not anticipate what Augustine anticipates. The cutting off of Rousseau's future precludes the anticipation of a wisdom to come, of the fulfillment of the yearnings of the mind. But does not all thinking about the highest things occur as a kind of anticipation, not of something to come but of what is already there? Augustine does not anticipate knowing God as God knows Himself but he does anticipate a radical change: he does anticipate the vision of God, the possession of Wisdom. Rousseau will always only be near to wisdom. Thinking is, in some sense, a being near to. Being near is still being at a distance but being in the presence of. Is not thinking always done as if the moment of thinking were one's last moment, the only moment, and as if one would always live, have an eternity of such moments? The moment of thinking is experienced both as not having a before and after and as being an approaching. The time of being near to wisdom is the time of happiness.

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[68] Ibid., 9. 12.

Reflecting on his stay on the island of St. Pierre, Rousseau writes: "The age of romantic projects being past and the fumes of glory having more dazzled than flattered me, there remained to me for a last hope only that of living without restraint in eternal leisure. This is the life of the blessed in the other world and, from then on, I made it my supreme happiness in this world."[69] He describes this "eternal leisure.":

> I love to busy myself with doing nothings, to begin a hundred things and finish none, to go and come as the fancy takes me, to change my project at each instant, to follow a fly in all its movements, to try to uproot a rock to see what is underneath, to undertake with ardor a work of ten years and to abandon it without regret in ten minutes - in a word, to dawdle all day without order and without sequence, and to follow in everything only the caprice of the moment.[70]

This is the place "where one does more, where one does nothing."[71]

The eternal leisure is at the same time motion and rest, arduous and peaceful. The awareness of the certainty of death intensifies the experience of the

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[69]Rousseau, Confessions, 12, p. 640: L'age des projets romanesques étant passé, et la fumée de la gloriole, m'ayant plus étourdi que flaté, il ne me restoit pour derniére espérance que celle de vivre sans gêne dans un loisir éternel. C'est la vie des bienheureux dans l'autre monde, et j'en faisois desormais mon bonheur suprême dans celui-ci.

[70]Ibid., p. 641: J'aime à m'occuper à faire des riens, à commencer cent choses et n'en achever aucune, à aller et venir comme la tête me chante, à changer à chaque instant de projet, à suivre une mouche dans toutes ses allures, à vouloir déraciner un rocher pour voir ce qui est dessous, à entreprendre avec ardeur un travail de dix ans, et à l'abandonner sans regret au bout de dix minutes, à muser enfin toute la journée sans ordre et sans suite, et à ne suivre en toute chose que le caprice du moment.

[71]Ibid., p. 640: Où l'on fait plus, où l'on fait nulle chose.

present moment as present. It is the nearness to death which makes the moment whole for itself.

Happiness is of the present moment: "I have never been so near to wisdom as during this happy epoch. Without great remorse about the past, delivered from cares about the future, the feeling which constantly dominated my soul was that of enjoying the present." In this Rousseau is like the savage of the Second Discourse whose "soul, agitated by nothing, is given solely to the feeling of its present existence without any idea of the future."[72]

Rousseau is happy not because he anticipates an eternity of happiness in heaven but because there is no future to be concerned about. This same view is manifested in his account of another attack of his near-fatal illness. Believing he has little time to live, he sells his watch and says to himself with unbelievable joy: "Thank heaven, I will no longer need to know what time it is."[73] Rousseau, then, associates happiness with the absence of care about the future. Indeed, the ecstasies which he describes in his Reveries are characterized by the absence of the consciousness of the past and the future.[74]

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[72]Rousseau, Discours sur l'inégalité, pt. 1, p. 144: Son ame, que rien n'agite, se livre au seul sentiment de son existence actuelle, sans aucune idée de l'avenir.

[73]Rousseau, Confessions, 8, p. 363: Grace au Ciel, je n'aurai plus besoin de savoir l'heure qu'il est.

[74]See Raymond, La quête de soi, p. 72; Georges Poulet, Studies in Human Time, trans. Elliott Coleman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1956), p. 163.

In showing himself as he is in the face of death, Rousseau reveals man as he is according to nature. What man is, the manner in which he understands himself, and the character of human happiness begin to come to light through a consideration of the nature of his awareness of his mortality.

CHAPTER III

TIME AND THE SELF

The discussion of the notion of death leads to a consideration of the question of time or at least of what might be characterized as "human time." Whether man is held to be mortal or immortal, his death marks the end of "his time," his birth marks the beginning of "his time." His life is over, his time is finished when he dies. At any moment between his birth and his death, he might be said to be "between" his past and his future: part of his life is past, part of his life is still to come. How is it possible, then, for man to speak about his life, about himself? It would seem to be possible for him to speak only about his past, about what he was. But even his past is constantly changing. At each instant his past "grows." In speaking about one's past, each syllable as it is spoken becomes past, becomes part of the past about which one is speaking. Yet we do speak about the past.

Perhaps, then, in speaking about the past we do not speak about what we are. But what else are we? Are we the sum of past and present? But the present is always becoming past and becoming past so quickly that it cannot be "held onto." The "holding onto" takes place after what one wants to hold onto is gone and is therefore not a holding onto. The present is experienced as a "between"

but as a between separating two moments that seem to touch each other. It seems that we do experience the present, have the experience of a present, but that we cannot speak about the present as present but only as past. We can only speak about the "now" when it is no longer now.

Speaking of what one <u>will be</u> presents further difficulties. The past and the present are somehow actual, "real." The events of the past are in some sense completed. What really happened can, at least in principle, be distinguished from what did not happen. In facing the future, we face numerous possibilities. Some of these possibilities are, of course, more probable than others but one does not know which of these possibilities will happen, will become actual, real. Yet we <u>do</u> speak about the future. We speak about the future in terms of what we hope for and what we fear, in terms of our <u>present</u> hopes and fears.

It seems, then, that it is possible to speak about our <u>real</u> selves, what we are, only when there is no more "will be" and no more "is." This is precisely the <u>problem</u> of time and self-knowledge. If what we <u>are</u> is always changing, then we can only say what we are when all changing is done. If we are the sum of all that happens to us, we can know ourselves only when all is past, only after death. But after death there may be no knowing.

1. Memory and self-awareness

Augustine gives expression to the problem of time and self-knowledge when he writes: "My life is a kind of distraction and dispersal. . . .[I am] wasted and scattered on things which are to come and things which will pass away. . .I am divided up in time whose order I do not know."[1] He compares the life of a man to the recitation of a psalm:

> Suppose I am about to recite a psalm which I know. Before I begin, my expectation (or "looking forward") is extended over the whole psalm. But once I have begun, whatever I pluck from it and let fall into the past enters the province of my memory (or "looking back at"). So the life of this action of mine is extended in two directions - toward my memory, as regards what I have recited, and toward my expectation, as regards what I am about to recite. But all the time my attention (my "looking at") is present and through it what was future passes on its way to become past. And as I proceed further and further with my recitation, so the expectation grows shorter and the memory grows longer, until all the expectation is finished at the point when the whole of this action is over and has passed into the memory. And what is true of the whole psalm is also true of every part. It is true also of the whole of a man's life, of which all of his actions are parts. And it is true of the whole history of humanity, of which the lives of all men are parts.[2]

Augustine is divided up in time just as the psalm is divided in the speaking. What is true of the psalm as a whole is true of every syllable. The moments, the instants, then, are infinitely divisible. One can never make an end of dividing. Where, then, can one locate the self? If it cannot be reached in the infinitely divisible moment can

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[1] Augustine, Confessions 11. 29.

[2] Ibid., 11. 28.

it not be summed up at the end of all the moments of one's life? Augustine believes in the immortality of the soul; he believes that at death life is not ended but merely changed. Perhaps it is the case that after death he will know what he is. Augustine's access to his true self will be discussed subsequently. At this point, what is at issue is a laying bare of the problem of time and self-knowledge. Suffice it to say here that while Augustine is "in time" his access to himself is through memory and his memory is "bottomless."[3] His attempts to grasp himself in time confront him with the infinite divisibility of the moment. His self is scattered, dispersed in moments that either are no longer or are not yet. He is divided up in time whose order he does not know: he cannot see the order, the structure of his temporal life although he can see a sequence of events, a succession of things that he did or that happened to him.

Rousseau, too, points to a kind of "disorder" in his attempts to narrate accurately. He tells us that he has studied man and believes himself to be a good observer. But while he is "seeing"he knows nothing of what he sees: "I see clearly only what I recall and I have intelligence only in my memories."[4] Rousseau needs time, temporal

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[3] Ibid., 10. 8

[4] Rousseau, Confessions, 3, pp. 114-5: Je ne vois bien que ce que je me rappelle, et je n'ai de l'esprit que dans mes souvenirs.

distance between his seeing and his understanding. But in Book 3, where he is recalling the days of his youth, he indicates the likelihood of his having made some "transpositions" of time.[5] As The Confessions progresses his references to such temporal disorders become more and more frequent: he is approaching the present. In Book 10, he tells us a little story about Coindet who, through his association with Rousseau, insinuates himself into the Luxembourg house: "but the consequence of this story . . . has made me anticipate the events. Let us take them up again in their order, so far as my memory will permit."[6] Later in Book 10 he no longer has assurance that he will be accurate and if he goes further (Book 12) he will only be "groping."[7] Rousseau begins Book 12, the last book of his Confessions and the one closest to the present, with these words: "Here begins the work of darkness . . . ." He is lost in the obscure and tortuous underground tunnels which lead to the first movers, the first causes which combine to work the strange events of his life.[8] Three more times, in three separate places in Book 12, he warns the reader that his memories of the times he is recalling are so confused

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[5] Ibid., p. 130.

[6] Ibid., 10, p. 526: mais la suite de cette histoire ...m'a fait anticiperici sur le tems. Reprenons-les dans leur ordre, autant que ma memoire me la permettra.

[7] Ibid., p. 544.

[8] Ibid., 12, p. 589-90.

and so sad that he cannot put any "order" in his narrative. The events have not had time to arrange themselves in his head.[9]

This increasing disorder, this progressive worsening of the ability to properly order the sequence of events, supports Rousseau's claim that he "sees well" only when he recalls. It is as if his understanding were in his memory. In time, the events arrange themselves in his head. The present (and the recent past) is in darkness. It would seem, then, that only when he can remember his whole life will he understand his whole life. Only after death will he see his life clearly. He assures us that in spite of his poor memory, in spite of his many errors, everything important to his subject is "remembered," is rendered faithfully and exactly.[10] But this does not solve the problem of present darkness. Even if only the important things need be told, the events still need time to arrange themselves in his head. And there will be no time for him when all the events are past. As Augustine finds himself in a "vast and boundless subterranean shrine" (his memory), Rousseau finds himself in obscure and tortuous underground tunnels (his thinking about his present). For both Augustine and Rousseau temporality is a problem for one who asks "Who am I?"[11]

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[9] Ibid., p. 622.

[10] Ibid., 3, p. 130.

[11] See Burgelin, La philosophie de l'existence, p. 126.

A discussion of the nature of time as such is beyond the scope of our present concern. It is man's experience of time which is at issue here. This is not to say that there is a "real" time which is different from, something other than what man experiences. Rousseau does seem to hint at such a distinction: "I plunged myself into the darkness of chronology but I was disgusted by the critical part of it which has neither foundation nor limit. And I delighted, by preference, in the exact measure of time and the motion of the heavenly bodies."[12] Chronology is defined as the science of fixing the dates of historic events. Rousseau claims that its critical part is "bottomless" and that he prefers to study the exact measure of time and the movement of the heavenly bodies. The question of whether or not there is such a distinction between "real" time and "human" time for Rousseau will be left open. He is engaged in the task of writing his history and, apparently, the science of chronology loses him in darkness. It is with man's experience of time that we begin.

2. The pivot of time

In recounting the story of his parents' marriage,

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[12] Rousseau, Confessions, 6, p. 240: je m'enfoncai dans les ténébres de la chronologie; mais je me dégoutai de la partie critique qui n'a ni rive, et je m'affectionnai par préférence à l'exacte mesure des tems et à la marche des corp celestes.

Rousseau presents us with two seemingly different views of man's experience of time. He says that his mother and father "awaited the moment" of finding each other; then he corrects himself: "or rather the moment awaited them."[13] The former expression implies that man is stationary, fixed, immobile, and that time somehow passes over him or through him. It is as if the future approaches, touches man as the present, and then falls back into the past. The future becomes smaller and the past larger. Man remains the same. But it is obvious that man, at least in some sense, does change: at the very least, he grows older. The latter expression implies that it is man who moves through his life. From this point of view also, the future gets smaller and the past larger. The experience is the same although the understanding of the experience and of that which undergoes the experience is different.

In Book 6, Rousseau tells us how much his taste for study was inspired by his reading of Voltaire's Lettres philosophiques: "But the moment had not come to devote myself to it entirely."[14] Again, it is Rousseau who is immobile and the moments which move. And it is significant that Rousseau's expression, "the moment had not come," is so close to Jesus' words in the Gospel: "My hour has not yet come." Jesus, as divine, is surely unmoved. He knows precisely what his future is to be. Rousseau, however, can

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[13] Ibid., 1, p. 6

[14] Ibid., 5, p. 214: Mais le moment n'étoit pas venu de m'y livrer tout de bon.

only say "the moment had not come" in looking back. It is only in looking back that he knows what his future was at the moment when it had not yet come. In looking back, he can see the ordering of the moments of the past.

Now for the Christian, Jesus is the clearest and most striking example of God's providence. More correctly, he is in some sense God's providential action toward man. His life is the working out of God's plan of salvation for man. Jesus is "destined" to do all that he does and all that happens to him is "destined" to happen. His life is not a collection of chance events but is designed in every detail to be the fulfillment of the prophecies, of what was written. Augustine's Confessions is modeled on the Bible. The Bible, and especially the Gospels, is the history of God's providential action toward all men. Augustine's Confessions is the history of God's providential action toward Augustine. Augustine does not claim the perspective on his life which Jesus claims on his own life. But Augustine believes that his life is designed; and he catches glimpses of this design. In looking back on his past, he sees, though imperfectly, how God has been at work in his life leading him to where he is. The principle of the events of his life is God's providence, God's loving care for him. The principle of the events of Jesus' life is God's loving care for all men. All that has happened to Augustine and all that Augustine has done are part of God's design. And even though Augustine cannot see precisely how this is the case, even though he loses himself in the vast and boundless

underground shrine of his memory, he believes that the events of the past are somehow ordered toward the fulfillment of God's design for him. God orders the events, the moments of his life.

Rousseau often speaks as if the events of his life were ordered by someone or something other than himself. As noted above (Chapter II, pp. 74-7), he frequently uses such terms as "destiny" and "fate" to account for the events of his life. He rarely uses the term "providence." In one of those rare instances he simply says "one would say that providence . . ." and in another instance the "providence" of the Paris manuscript is replaced by "nature."[15] Fate would seem to be the pagan counterpart for providence and Rousseau perhaps comes closest to a parody of Augustine when he tells the story of his giving Mme de Luxembourg a unique copy of his Heloise.

3. The fulfilling of destiny

Mme de Luxembourg has expressed a desire for a copy of La Nouvelle Heloise. Rousseau decides to make her copy unique by adding an extract of Les Aventures de Mylord Edouard which contains passages that she might well find insulting. Rousseau calls this a "mad project, the extravagance of which can be explained only by the blind fatality which was dragging me to my destruction. Those whom Jupiter wishes to destroy,

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[15] Ibid., 6, p. 228(a).

he maddens...All concurs with the work of destiny when it calls a man to unhappiness!"[16] Jupiter is hardly the God of the Bible, Augustine's God. And Rousseau is "called" to his ruin, not his salvation. Fate works blindly toward his unhappiness; this is not the providing, the caring for of a loving father. Augustine may be blind, but God is all-seeing.

Rousseau's numerous references to destiny and fate need not each be commented on here.[17] What is noteworthy is his use of the biblical "It was written" to refer to occurrences which seem to have been inevitable.[18] It is as if Rousseau, like Jesus, is in the process of fulfilling prophecies, but prophecies which Rousseau does not know of until he "fulfills" them. It is only in looking back that one can see the ordering of events, the working out of what looks like a "plan."[19]

Perhaps the fullest and most detailed picture of the workings of destiny is presented in Book 2 of Rousseau's Confessions. Interestingly, the incident which provides

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[16] Ibid., 10, p. 525: projet insensé dont on ne peut expliquer l'extravagance que par l'aveugle fatalité qui m'entrainoit à ma perte. Quos vult perdere Juppiter dementat. ...tout concourt à l'oeuvre de la destinée quand elle appelle un homme au malheur!

[17] See, e.g., Confessions, 1, p. 42: 2, pp. 55, 63-4; 5, pp. 205, 223; 6, pp. 244, 260; 11, pp. 553, 577, 583.

[18] Rousseau, Confessions, 5, p. 222; 8, p. 360.

[19] Compare Starobinski, La transparence et l'obstacle, p. 189.

the occasion for this presentation is that of Rousseau's conversion to catholicism, to "papism." Rousseau has run away from the master to whom he was apprenticed. He wanders from town to town and meets up with a kindly priest who sends him to Mme de Warens. At the urging of her friends and with some money from the bishop, Rousseau is sent off to Turin to prepare for his baptism at l'Hospice du Saint-Esprit. At first he enjoys arguing with his instructors over doctrinal questions but, as the day of his baptism approaches, he begins to view the matter differently. He had allowed himself to be misled by the wining and dining he had enjoyed with the country priest:

> Seeing papism only in its connection with amusement and gluttony, I accustomed myself without difficulty to the idea of living that way; but the idea of solemnly entering the Catholic Church presented itself to me only in passing and in a far-off future. In this moment [the eve of his baptism] there was no longer any way to deceive myself: I saw with vivid horror the kind of obligation I had taken on and its inevitable consequences. . . .Still very young, I felt that whatever religion be true I was going to sell mine, ... The more I thought, the more I became indignant against myself and I sighed over the destiny which had led me there as if this destiny had not been my own work.[20]

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[20]Rousseau, Confessions, 2, p. 63: N'envisageant la papisme que par ses liaisons avec les amusemens et la gourmandise, je m'étois apprivoisé sans peine avec l'idée d'y vivre; mais celle d'y entrer solemnellement be s'étoit présentée à moi qu'en fuyant et dans un avenir éloigné. Dans ce moment il n'y eut plus moyen de prendre le change: je vis avec l'horreur la plus vive l'espéce d'engagement que j'avois pris et sa suite inévitable. . . Tout jeune encore je sentis que quelque religion qui fut la vraie j'allois vendre la mienne. . . Plus j'y pensois, plus je m'indignois contre moi-même, et je gémissois du sort qui m'avoit amené là, comme si ce sort n'eut pas été mon ouvrage.

He looks upon the situation in which he finds himself as if it were not his own work, as if he had not brought it about. It is as if destiny had led him there. In fact, however, he attributes his situation to what we would call a "mistake." He did not see what he was doing: he did not realize where it was that the path he was taking would lead him. The distance between his first step and the end of the journey was too great for him to adequately perceive what it was that "awaited" him. The solemn entrance into the Catholic Church had at first presented itself to him at a great distance which disguised the horror of it. And when he is very near to the end, to his baptism, he does not correct his mistake: "I pretended to reproach myself with what I had done in order to excuse what I was going to do. In intensifying the wrongs of the past, I looked upon the future as a necessary consequence."[21] But the future is not a necessary consequence. He can reproach himself for what he has done because he has done it. He excuses himself to himself for what he will do by looking upon the future action as inevitable. It is as if he had no choice. But in fact he excuses himself to us on the grounds of weakness: it would have required rare strength of soul to break the chains which he had given himself.

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[21] Ibid., p. 64: J'affectois de me reprocher ce que j'avois fait, pour excuser ce que j'allois faire. En aggravant les torts du passé, j'en regardois l'avenir comme une suite necessaire.

4. The failure of design

The events of Rousseau's life do not seem to be part of a careful design. No God is ordering the moments of his life. The "conversion" of Rousseau which parallels Augustine's conversion (Book 8 of each work) is due to a "fortunate accident." Rousseau's conversion to catholicism is due to a mistake on his part. Rousseau cannot put order into a sequence of events in terms of the principle of providence. The whole question of predestination and free will is beyond our scope and will not be discussed here. Indeed, for Augustine it is a "mystery" and can not be fully understood. The point here is that, on Rousseau's understanding, providence can be invoked to find good reasons for anything and everything that happens: chance is eliminated and mistakes ultimately have no place. Augustine can make mistakes but God does not make mistakes. And God's design is the structure (even if hidden) of Augustine's life. Even sin ultimately works for the glory of God.

Rousseau rejects the notion of a personal providence in his Letter to Voltaire. (See above, Chapter II, pp.73-4) In his Confessions, he parodies Augustine's Confessions in order to show that the order of the events of one's life is not traceable to the principle of God's providential intentions. The problem of time and self-knowledge is not solved by summing up all the moments of one's life in God who knows this "order." It is possible to look back on one's

past and to see it as if it could not have been otherwise or at least as if it was the way it was because of some design. Perhaps this is what we do. But is this not because we can no longer change what is past, what has happened? The possibilities which we rejected are no longer. If we are content with our present situation, if everything has "worked out right," we do not bemoan our mistakes; if we are not presently content we regret not having done other than what we did do or we console ourselves with the notion that we could not have done otherwise. This is what Rousseau does when he is pained by remorse over his accusation of the innocent servant girl. (See above, Chapter I, p. 51) He excuses and consoles himself with the thought that he was very young and terrified of shame, but he cannot console himself with the thought that what he did would ultimately work to Marion's good. He envisions for her a life of misery and degradation and the thought is too painful for him. He never says that she will be rewarded in heaven, that some good will come of it.

Rousseau looks upon his situation on the eve of his baptism as if it were not his own work when in fact it is his own work. This failure to properly anticipate the future is due, at least in part, to the fact that the future is uncertain. Except for death, future events, especially human events, are not inevitable. Augustine's future is already there in God although Augustine does not know what future events will take place. Augustine, like Rousseau,

can think of possibilities, is confronted with alternatives, must make choices. But there is for Augustine only one future, the future that God knows. Augustine's future is now for God. In his Confessions, Rousseau twice speaks of "futures": he forsees only cruel futures[22] and he takes into account the contingent futures.[23] In some sense, there are futures; there is not simply really one future as future. It is only in looking back that one can see what the future was. And then it is no longer future. For Rousseau, the future as future is many; there are futures.

For Augustine, the future appears to be many for him but it is really one. He can see many possible futures but his real future is already known to God. God teaches the prophets: "Ruler of your creation, tell me how it is that you teach souls the things that are to come. For you have taught this to your prophets. To you nothing is future; how do you teach the future?. . . Here your proceedings are beyond the reach of my sight: it is too mighty for me, I cannot attain unto it."[24]

Augustine must make the distinction between God's knowledge and man's knowledge. Although Augustine can know something about God's knowledge, he cannot know as God knows. God knows the future but there is no future for him. God knows the past but there is no past for him. God does

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[22] Ibid., 7, p. 278.

[23] Ibid., 5, p. 218.

[24] Augustine, Confessions 11. 19.

not experience time; the experience of time is proper to the creature: "without created being time cannot exist."[25] But if past and future do not exist for God, if time exists only for the created being, then in what manner does it exist at all? How is it that we speak about past, present, and future if these do not exist for God? In fact, we speak incorrectly. We do not mean precisely what we say, for what is to come and what is past are not now in existence:

> It is now, however, perfectly clear that neither the future nor the past are in existence, and that it is incorrect to say that there are three times - past, present, and future. Though one might perhaps say: 'There are three times - a present of things past, a present of things present, and a present of things future.' For these three do exist in the mind, and I do not see them anywhere else: the present time of things past is memory; the present time of things present is sight; the present time of things future is expectation.[26]

The mind, then, is somehow always present although it has thought thoughts in the past and will think thoughts in the future. The past, the present, and the future exist in the mind which is always present <u>to itself</u>, or always accessible to itself. Mind is experienced as memory, sight, and expectation.[27] Augustine is divided up in time, scattered in the past, present, and future. He, his mind, is always remembering, seeing, expecting.

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[25] <u>Ibid</u>., 11. 30.

[26] <u>Ibid</u>., 11. 20.

[27] See Etienne Gilson, <u>Introduction a l'étude de Saint Augustin</u>, Etudes de Philosophie Medievale, no. 11 (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1929), p. 250.

Now Rousseau's Confessions does not provide us with any extensive discussion of man's experience of time. We are presented with scenes in which we see his experience of time. The experiences with which Rousseau presents us are remarkably similar to those for which Augustine attempts to account. In Book 1, Rousseau tells of the beatings he received from his master for the minor thefts he had been committing. The beatings did not deter him; he became insensible to bad treatment. Punishment seemed to be a compensation that he made for the thefts and an authorization for continuing them: "Instead of turning my eyes back and looking at the punishment, I carried them in advance and I looked at the vengeance."[28] In the present, he can look back on punishment and look ahead to vengeance. In Augustine's words: "The mind looks forward to things, it looks at things, and it looks back on things."[29] Memory, seeing, and expectation are present events.

5. Presence and vision

It is significant that Augustine's "looking at" (the presence of things present) is paralleled in Rousseau by "present darkness." (See above, pp.110-2) Rousseau sees clearly only when he remembers. It is as if, for Rousseau, there is no "looking at" but only looking back at and looking forward to. Seeing disappears in remembering and

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[28]Rousseau, Confessions, 1, p. 34: Au lieu de retourner les yeux en arrier et de regarder la punition, je les portois en avant et je regardois la vengeance.

[29]Augustine, Confessions, 11. 28.

expecting. The present is dispersed into the past and future, into "what is not yet" and "what is no longer."[30] Only memory and expectation are present. The remembering and the expecting <u>are</u> the looking at. The past is no longer. Rousseau returns to Mme de Warens after he has been supplanted: "Frightful illusion of human things! . . . I came to look for the past which was no longer and which could not be reborn."[31] The frightful illusion of human things is that we somehow think the past is "there." But, in a sense, the past is still here. In Book 8, Rousseau recounts the story of an unexpected visit from Venture with whom he had spent a part of his youth. After Venture leaves, Rousseau remembers certain delightful incidents which took place at the time he was closely associated with Venture: he had believed these times to be "passed" forever but they have "returned."[32] There is a present which Rousseau goes through but he does not see it for what it is; the present is in darkness.

This present darkness is perhaps due to the character of the futures. Book 12 of Rousseau's <u>Confessions</u> is the work of darkness. (See above, pp. 110-2 and Chapter I, pp. 44, 47) The darkness of Book 12 extends back over four years from the writing of <u>The Confessions</u>. That is, it extends far back into the past. He cannot see the first causes of his

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[30] Rousseau, <u>Confessions</u>, 11, p. 585.

[31] <u>Ibid</u>., 6, p. 270: Affreuse illusion des choses humaines! . . . je venois rechercher le passé qui n'étoit plus et qui ne pouvoit renaitre.

[32] <u>Ibid</u>., 8, p. 399.

present misfortune, he cannot see how these causes have worked the strange events of his life because they have not completed their work. It is the uncertainty of the future which puts the present in darkness and which even determines, at least in certain respects, our looking back on the past. In recalling his flight from Montmorency, Rousseau tells us: "I think about the evil I have received only as the cause of the evil I can still receive and, if I were sure that the offender would do no more to me, what he has done would be forgotten at once."[33]

Remembering the bad things that have happened is painful and often bitter; one would prefer to forget them. Anticipating bad things which might happen is painful; one would prefer not to "worry." Anticipating good things is not wholly pleasant for one always fears that what is hoped for will not come about. Remembering good things is not wholly pleasant for one regrets that they are only memories. In his Confessions, Rousseau is very much concerned to show us himself as he is spread out in time, as he is dissipated in remembering and anticipating. And his remembering and anticipating bear directly on his happiness and unhappiness.

In the first place, one can fail to see what will in fact happen in the future. In spite of careful and earnest planning, one can be frustrated in one's attempts to bring

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[33] Ibid., 11, pp. 585-6: Je ne pense au mal que j'en ai receu qu'à cause de celui que j'en peux recevoir encore, et si j'étois sûr qu'il ne m'en fit plus, celui qu'il m'a fait seroit à l'instant oublié.

some desirable end about. To save Mama from financial ruin, the young Rousseau persuades her to send him off to study music:

> Here, one is going to see again one of those inconsistencies of which my life is full and which have so often made me go against my end, precisely when I thought I was heading directly toward it. . . .Thus, always with the project of preventing bankruptcy and of repairing in the future the work of her dissipation, I began at the same moment by causing her an expense of eight hundred francs: I hastened her ruin in order to put myself in the position of stopping it.[34]

Hope for some future good can blind one: "This is how, blind and confident in my hopes, I am always impassioned for what must bring about my misfortune."[35] Some things do not depend on man and man's plans (e.g., death) and interfere with man's plans. Distant objects rarely have enough power to make him act. The incertitude of the future has always made him look upon projects of long execution as the lures of the dupe.[36] One is reminded of the deadening of the passions which remove our hopes and fears to a distance. (See above, Chapter II, pp. 90-8) Ambition, vanity, the desire for revenge have us living in the future, a future

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[34] Ibid., 5, pp. 207-8: Ici l'on va voir encore une de ces inconsequences dont ma vie est remplie, et qui m'ont fait si souvent aller contre mon but, lors même que j'y pensois tendre directement. . . .Ainsi toujours avec le projet de prévenir une banqueroute et de réparer dans l'avenir l'ouvrage de sa dissipation, je commencai dans le moment même par lui causer une dépense de huit cent francs: j'accelerois sa ruine pour me mettre en etat d'y remedier.

[35] Ibid., 11, p. 587: C'est ainsi qu'aveugle et confiant dans mes espérances, je me suis toujours passionné pour ce qui devoit faire mon malheur.

[36] Ibid., 4, p. 146.

which is uncertain and mostly beyond our control. And living in the future is somehow living in what is not. Expectation, anticipation is of what is not now. It is anticipation of what may never be. There are "contingent futures" and one cannot possibly plan for all of them or even know them. One would face Rousseau's problem on the night before he is supposed to see the king. He wants to envelop some great and useful truth in a beautiful and merited praise for his response to the king but in order to prepare such a response he would have to foresee what the king would say to him and the possibilities are almost infinite.[37]

6. Imagination and extension

Rousseau's clearest description of his living in the past and the future occurs within the context of his recollection concerning his flight from Montmorency:

> It is astonishing with what ease I forget past evil, however recent it may be. As much as foreseeing it frightens me and troubles me so long as I see it in the future, so much the memory of it comes back weakly to me and extinguishes itself without difficulty as soon as it has happened. My cruel imagination, which torments itself without ceasing to foresee evils which are not yet, distracts my memory and prevents me from recalling those which are no longer. Against what is done there are no more precautions to take and it is useless to occupy myself with it. I exhaust, in some way, my unhappiness in advance; the more I suffer in foreseeing it, the easier it is to forget it. While, on the contrary, ceaselessly occupied with my past happiness, I recall it and turn it over in my mind, so to speak, to the point of enjoying it again whenever I wish.[38]

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[37] Ibid., 8, p. 380.

[38] Ibid., 11, p. 585: Il est étonnant avec quelle facilité j'oublie le mal passé, quelque récent qu'il puisse être. Autant sa prévoyance m'effraye et me trouble tant que je le vois dans l'avenir, autant son souvenir me revient foiblement et s'eteint sans peine, aussi-tôt qu'il est arrivé. Ma cruelle imagination qui se tourmente sans cesse à prevenir

Rousseau's imagination is cruel: it has him suffering over misfortunes which are not yet and which may never be. And his anticipation of future misfortunes causes him to remember past misfortunes. Later, within the same context, he tells us that he would forget the harm his enemies have done to him except for the fact that these past injuries may cause him harm in the future. What is past, what is no longer, can somehow act as a cause which can bring about what is now not yet real.

It is significant that Rousseau uses the incident of his flight to show us himself as he is stretched out back into the past and ahead into the future. The flight is not one of his many delightful journeys or "promenades." He is not going ahead toward some desirable destination and he is not enjoying a leisurely walk. He is forced into movement. And the cause of his flight (his enemies) awaits him at the end of his flight. The flight is simply a "between."

The cruelty of the imagination which has him living in the future is not limited to such incidents as the flight, the forced movement. One sees it also during times of "rest." Rousseau usually describes such times of rest as happy or

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les maux qui ne sont point encore, fait diversion à ma mémoire, et m'empêche de me rappeller ceux qui ne sont plus. Contre ce qui est fait il n'y a plus de précautions à prendre, et il est inutile de s'en occuper. J'épuise en quelque façon mon malheur d'avance; plus j'ai souffert à le prévoir, plus j'ai de facilité à l'oublier; tandi qu'au contraire sans cesse occupé de mon bonheur passé, je le rappelle et le rumine, pour ainsi dire, au point d'en jouir derecher quand je veux.

peaceful. At Charmettes, for example, he enjoys those moments which give him the right to say he has lived. But Charmettes is also the "death scene," the time when there is no anticipating because there is no future for him. His "rest" on the Ile de St. Pierre is another matter. Rousseau draws special attention to what he says about his feelings and ideas while on the island by introducing his account with a statement of his intention to expose faithfully what he was and what he thought. He proceeds to tell us of his contentment: all his desires are inscribed in this island. Because all his desires are inscribed there, he desires never to leave it. But

> the experience of the past had made me fearful. It is sufficient that something delight my heart in order to make me expect to lose it and the ardent desire of ending my days on this island was inseparable from the fear of being forced to leave it. . . .This repose, which I passionately enjoyed, was troubled only by the apprehension of losing it, but this apprehension went so far as to spoil its sweetness.[39]

Where enjoyment is great, the fear of losing what one enjoys is also great. This is one of those instances of the foreseeing which has always spoiled his joy.[40] One has had the experience of and one remembers the "passing" of joy and one fears its passing. The fear of losing somehow

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[39] Ibid., 12, p. 645: l'expérience du passé m'avoit rendu craintif. Il suffisoit que quelque bien flattât mon coeur pour que je dusse m'attendre à le perdre, et l'ardent desir de finir mes jours dans cette Ile étoit inséparable de la crainte d'être forcé d'en sortir. . . . Ce repos dont je jouissois avec passion n'étoit trouble que par l'inquiétude de le perdre. Mais cette inquiétude alloit au point d'en alterer la douceur. Je sentois ma situation si précaire que je n'osois y compter.

[40] Ibid., 3, p. 106.

causes the loss; one loses by oneself what one wishes to preserve from the hatred and envy of others.

Another incident towhich Rousseau especially calls our attention is that of the encounter with Zulietta. He introduces his account of the incident with the caution that the reader can really get to know a man by reading these few pages with care. Rousseau enters this courtesan's room as if it were the sanctuary of love and beauty; he believes that he sees the divinity in her. But "no sooner had I recognized in the first familiarities the value of her charms and caresses than, for fear of losing the fruit of them in advance, I wanted to hasten to gather them. Suddenly, instead of the flames which devoured me, I felt a deadly cold run in my veins; my legs trembled and, ready to faint, I sat down and I cried like a child."[41] The cold is "mortal." The encounter with Zulietta is a disaster and ends with Zulietta's telling him to "give up the ladies, and study mathematics." Rousseau tells us that he "killed" his own pleasure. But the story about the encounter with Zulietta is a story about nature: "No. Nature has not made me for enjoyment. She has put into my wretched head the poison of that ineffable happiness, the desire for which she has

[41] Ibid., 7, p. 320: à peine eus-je connu dans les prémiéres familiarites le prix de ses charmes et de ses caresses, que de peur d'en perdre le fruit d'avance je voulus me hâter de le cueillir. Tout à coup au lieu des flammes qui me dévoroient, je sens un froid mortel courir dans mes veines; les jambes me flageolent, et prêt a me trouver mal, je m'asseye, et je pleure comme un enfant.

put in my heart."[42] The anticipation of losing what one enjoys or desires is "poison."

Zulietta tells him to give up the ladies and study mathematics. Mathematics is not of the passing, the fleeting. It cannot be lost or taken away or killed. Rousseau comments on his passion for women: "Here is why my soul is always agitated. Desires and fears devour me alternatively." Music was his other passion. His passions have made him live and his passions have killed him: "Here is my history."[43] Women and music are of the passing, the fleeting. The soul is agitated, devoured by desire and fear. The poison which kills happiness is <u>in his head</u>. It is the anticipation of losing, of coming to the end of, which destroys the present enjoyment. Anticipation takes us out of the present, out of what <u>is</u>, and throws us into what is not yet. But this happens in the case of women and music and not in the case of mathematics. It is the character of certain things to be passing. Our experience, our memory of their passing puts the poisonous anticipation in the head.

The problem of "human" time (or memory and anticipation) is bound up with the problem of self-knowledge (knowing what we <u>are</u>) and with the problem of happiness (what we <u>want</u> to be). It is here that the question of nature presents itself most forcefully.

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[42] <u>Ibid</u>., Non, la nature ne m'a point fait pour jouir. Elle a mis dans ma mauvaise tête le poison de ce bonheur inéfable, dont elle a mis l'appetit dans mon coeur.

[43] <u>Ibid</u>., 5, p. 219: Voila comment j'avois toujours l'ame agitée. Les desire et les craintes me dévoroient alternativement. . . .Voilà mon histoire.

7. The unimaginative man

Rousseau has said that nature has put in his head the poison which kills happiness and the appetite for happiness. But are not this appetite and this poison the inevitable consequences of the dissipation of oneself in the past and future, in memory and anticipation? Nature is no more responsible for this than she is for the disaster at Lisbon or for disease. The dissipation of oneself in the past and future is not the work of nature. Rousseau says of the savages: "Foresight meant nothing to them, and far from being concerned about a distant future, they did not even think of the next day."[44] In fact, "the present infinitive was the sole tense of verbs."[45] But the savage does desire and fear; these are "the first and almost the only operations of his soul until new circumstances cause new developments in it."[46] His desires and fears, however, are due to the simple impulsions of nature: "His desires do not exceed his physical needs;. . .the only evils he fears are pain and hunger."[47] The only goods which the

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[44]Rousseau, Discours sur l'inégalité, pt. 2, p. 166: la prévoyance n'étoit rien pour eux, et loin de s'occuper d'un avenir éloigné, ils ne songeoient pas même au lendemain.

[45]Ibid., pt. 1, p. 149: l'infinitif fut le seul tems des verbes.

[46]Ibid., p. 143: les premiéres, et presque les seules operations de son ame, jusqu' à ce que de nouvelles circonstances y causent de nouveaux développemens.

[47]Ibid., Ses desirs ne passent pas ses besoins Physiques; . . .les seuls maux qu'il craigne, sont la douleur, et la faim.

savage knows are food, a female, and repose. He does not fear death; he does not know death. His soul is "agitated by nothing." (See above, Chapter II, pp. 104-5) Desire and fear ("appetite" and "poison") are the work of nature, but foreseeing is not. Knowledge of death is one of the first acquisitions man makes in moving away from the animal condition.

The eating of food, the encounter with a female, the experience of pain and hunger are passing, yet the soul of the savage is not agitated. The soul of civilized man is always agitated, always alternately devoured by fear and desire.[48] It is in such activities as the study of mathematics that civilized man can find repose.

Augustine, too, sees himself divided up in fear and desire: "In adversity I long for prosperity, in prosperity I fear adversity. What middle place is there between these two when the life of man is not all trial?"[49] It seems that there is no repose, no resting place between longing and fear.

Until Augustine is "united" in God, he is a burden to himself. His only hope is in God's great mercy. While he is in this life, he is constantly drawn toward dissipation

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[48] In this context, see Epicurus, Principal Doctrines, 29: "Among desires some are natural and necessary, some natural but not necessary, and others neither natural nor necessary, but due to idle imagination." For a discussion of the relationship between "idle"imagination and anticipation, see below, Chapter IV, pp. 166-71.

[49] Augustine, Confessions 10. 28.

in the many. He must constantly struggle against the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the ambition of the world.[50] The lust of the flesh is the desire for the pleasures of the senses (a female, food). The lust of the eyes is the appetite for knowing, the empty curiosity which is dignified by the names of science and learning. The ambition of the world is the lust for the praise of men. It is with regard to this last temptation that Augustine finds it most difficult to see himself: "Yes, Truth, in you I see that when I am praised the pleasure I feel should not be for my own sake but for the sake of the good of my neighbor. But whether this is really how I feel I do not know."[51] Augustine sees himself pulled, drawn out of himself, dissipated in the many. As a sinner, he is spread out among the things of this world, the temporal things. But God commands that we be continent, contained: "Certainly it is by continence that we are brought together and brought back to the One, after having dissipated ourselves among the Many."[52] Continence is ultimately from God: God must grant what he commands.

For Rousseau, the pleasures of the senses as the satisfaction of the simple impulsions of nature (a female, food) are surely not evil. The appetite for knowing, science and learning, seems to have its roots in vice. Yet those who need no teachers are praised.[53] And Rousseau, in the

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[51] Ibid., 10. 37.

[52] Ibid., 10. 29

[53] Rousseau, Discours sur les arts, pt. 2, p. 29.

face of death, studies simply for the sake of knowing. It is the desire for the good opinions of other men which dissipates us in the many. The ardor to be talked about, the furor to distinguish oneself, "nearly always keeps us outside of ourselves."[54] This being outside of ourselves is the work of society, not the result of original sin: "the sociable man, always outside of himself, knows how to live only in the opinion of others; and it is, so to speak, from their judgment alone that ne draws the sentiment of his own existence."[55]

Now society is a kind of "human providence."[56] It is made possible by man's recognition that he has a future which extends beyond the next day. Time makes man perceive the conformity between himself and other men. In the beginning, associations among men lasted only as long as the passing need which had formed them. At that time, "foresight meant nothing to them, and far from being concerned about a distant future, they did not even think of the next day."[57] It is noteworthy that Rousseau cites metallurgy and agriculture as the two arts which produced the great revolution,

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[54]Rousseau, Discours sur l'inégalité, pt. 2, p. 189: ...nous tient presque toûjours hors de nous mêmes.

[55]Ibid., p. 193: l'homme sociable toûjours hors de lui ne sait vivre que dans l'opinion des autres, et c'est, pour ainsi dire, de leur seul jugement qu'il tire le sentiment de sa propre éxistence.

[56]See Rousseau, Du Contract social, bk 2, chap. 10, p. 389: The legislator must "forsee" and "calculate."

[57]Rousseau, Discours sur l'inégalité, pt. 2, p. 166: la prévoyance n'étoit rien por eux, et loin de s'occuper d'un avenir éloigné, ils ne songeoient pas même au lendemain.

the great change from independent intercourse to slavery and misery. Metallurgy supposed "much courage and foresight to undertake such difficult labor and to envisage so far in advance the advantage they could gain from it;" and "to devote oneself to [agriculture] and seed the land, one must be resolved to lose something at first in order to gain a great deal later: a precaution very far from the turn of mind of savage man, who as I have said, has great difficulty thinking in the morning of his needs for the evening."[58] Society has men in prolonged contact with one another and always looking ahead to an indeterminate future. Vanity comes into being through this prolonged association: each man begins "to look at the others and to want to be looked at himself."[59] And ultimately this leads to each man's living outside of himself in the opinions of others.

It is here that one sees the relationship between the problems of self-knowledge, happiness, and society and the problem of time. In society (made possible by foresight) men come to seek their happiness in the opinions of others and to see themselves as they are reflected in the opinions

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[58] Ibid., pp. 172-3: bien du courage et de la prévoyance pour entreprendre un travail aussi pénible et envisager d'ausssi loin les avantages qu'ils en pouvoient retirer. . . . pour se livrer à cette occupation et ensemencer des terres, il faut se résoudre à perdre d'abord quelque chose por gagner beaucoup dans la suite; précaution fort éloignée du tour d'esprit de l'homme Sauvage qui, comme je l'ai dit, a bien de la peine à songer le matin à ses besoins du soir.

[59] Ibid., p. 169: à regarder les autres et à vouloir être regardé soi-même.

of the others. They are dissipated in the manyness of opinion. This dissipation follows from the fact that they see before them an indeterminate future which consists essentially in their relationships with other men. What they will be, what they want, are from other men.

Rousseau claims that he is the least vain among men.[60] And in the face of death, he abandons all vain and ambitious projects (but not learning) and all concern with the opinions of men. It is significant that Charmettes is at the same time the scene of his imminent death (his being cut off from the future) and of his retreat (his being cut off from other men).

8. Self-transcendence in Augustine

While Augustine is "in time" his self-knowledge and his happiness are radically imperfect. It is only in union with God that he will see and be what he truly is. Augustine tells us this in the same passage in which he expresses the problem of time and self-knowledge:

> But because Thy loving kindness is better than all lives, see, my life is a kind of distraction and dispersal. And Thy right hand upheld me in my Lord, the Son of Man, the Mediator betwixt Thee, the One, and us, the many (many also in our many distractions over so many things), so that through Him I may apprehend in whom I have been apprehended and that I may be gathered up from my former days to follow your Oneness, forgetting what is behind, not wasted and scattered on things which are to come and things which will pass away, but intent and stretching forth to those which are above - no longer distracted but concentrated as I follow on for the prize of my

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[60] Rousseau, Confessions, 1, p. 14.

> heavenly calling, where I may hear the voice of Thy praise, and contemplate Thy delight which is neither coming nor passing. But now are my years spent in mourning, and you, my comfort, my Lord, my Father, are eternal. But I have been divided up in time whose order I do not know; my thoughts, the innermost bowels of my soul, are torn apart with the crowding tumults of variety, and so it will be until all together I can flow into you, purified and molten by the fire of your love.[61]

Augustine cannot now grasp all that he is. He will see himself, see what he is, only when he "stands" in God, in his "own true form."[62] Only when he no longer moves through time, only when he is gathered up, will he know what he is, see his life for what it is. It is God who knows Augustine and Augustine does not have access to God's knowledge: he does not see as God sees.

When Augustine recognizes his dissipation, his distraction over many things, he returns to his own self: "I entered into the innermost part of myself, and I was able to do this because you were my helper. I entered, and I saw with my soul's eye (such as it was) an unchangeable light shining above this eye of my soul and above my mind."[63] Entering into the innermost part of oneself (the mind) is not sufficient to know oneself. What is revealed to the soul's eyes is not the self into which one has entered but something above the mind. The unchangeable light above the mind points up the radical deficiency of the mind to

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[61] Augustine, Confessions 11. 29.
[62] Ibid., 11. 30.
[63] Ibid., 7. 10

see itself. Augustine can see the light above the mind only because God is his helper. What this light enables him to see is that his mind (his self) is to be understood only in terms of what is other than (above) his mind and what must be shown to him.

The self, then, is seen only when it has been transcended. Augustine permits us a glimpse of this transcendence in his recounting of the incident which takes place shortly before his mother's death. Augustine and his mother are alone looking out a window over the garden. They are talking about what the eternal life of the saints could be like. They agree that the greatest possible delights of the bodily senses do not even deserve mention when compared with the joys of eternal life.

> Then, with our affections burning still more strongly toward the Selfsame, we raised ourselves higher and step by step passed over all material things, even the heaven itself from which sun and moon and stars shine down upon the earth. And still we went upward, meditating and speaking and looking with wonder at your works, and we came to our own souls, and we went beyond our souls.

Beyond their souls is Eternal Wisdom in whom there is no place for "to have been" or "to be going to be." And Augustine and his mother "just lightly came into touch with her."[64] Before death one might have only this briefest glimpse, this moment of understanding, of what eternal life will be. This moment takes one beyond the self, beyond or above what has been and what is going to be. If one seeks Wisdom, one

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[64] Ibid., 9. 10.

cannot stop in the soul, in the innermost self. The self can only be seen for what it truly is from above the self and thus from outside the self. This perspective on the self, on one's own life, is proper to God alone.

9. Self-knowledge in Rousseau

Now Rousseau claims a "divine" perspective on his life: he sees man from the standpoint of the divinity.[65] He claims the perspective which, for Augustine, is proper only to God. That is, Rousseau claims to know himself in a way in which Augustine cannot claim to know himself for Rousseau claims a perspective outside of time. This becomes apparent from the very opening paragraphs of Book 1 of The Confessions. What Rousseau says of himself in The Confessions is what he would say of himself on the day of the Last Judgment. As noted above, Rousseau's Confessions is somehow written from the point of view of a dead man, a man whose "time" is finished.

But Rousseau's claim to self-knowledge goes even deeper than the claim to the perspective of the dead man. He says to the "Eternal Being": "I have unveiled my interior such as you yourself have seen it."[66] Rousseau sees himself as God himself would see him: he sees himself precisely as he is. The standpoint of the Eternal Being is a standpoint outside of time. For God, there is no past

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[65] Rousseau, Confessions, 8, p. 388.

[66] Ibid., 1, p. 5: j'ai devoilé mon intérieur tel que tu l'as vu toi-même.

and future; for God, there is only the eternal now. Rousseau, then, does not claim the standpoint of the Eternal Being because of any knowledge of the future. He speaks of "contingent futures." And even his knowledge of his past in incomplete and inaccurate. In spite of his poor memory and in spite of his inability to see the future, he can reveal himself such as God himself, the Eternal Being, would see him.

What Rousseau claims to see and reveal, then, is not the story of his life as the details of his life. The reader can "finish knowing a man" by finishing his Confessions. It is not necessary to know all the details of Rousseau's life in order to know him. Yet The Confessions takes the form of a chronicle of the details of his life, a chronicle which is halted almost eight years before his death. If a man is not simply the sum of what happens to him, then why present the "portrait of a man as he is according to nature" in the form of a story of a life, of what he did and what happened to him?

The form of Rousseau's presentation seems even more puzzling when one considers certain passages in which he comments on his enterprise. In Book 2, he pauses to justify his recording of the minute details of certain incidents. His enterprise is that of showing himself "entirely." In order to accomplish this, it is necessary that nothing remain obscure or hidden; the reader must not lose sight of him for a single instant. There must be no voids, no gaps,

no occasion for asking "What has he done during that time?" In Book 4, he claims that in order to render his soul transparent to the eyes of the reader, no movement of his soul must pass unperceived. He is simply "saying all," detailing all that happened to him, all that he did, thought and felt.

Augustine, on the other hand, does not even attempt a detailing of all that happened to him. He chooses certain incidents in which he sees most clearly the action of God in his life. The gaps in his story are obvious. The form of Augustine's Confessions is a prayer. Within the context of this prayer of praise, he recounts certain incidents in which God's providence is most manifest to him. Augustine makes no attempt at a coherent tale, an uninterrupted history. The unity of Augustine's story is in terms of God's providence.

The gaps in Rousseau's story are hidden: The Confessions has the appearance of a coherent tale. But Rousseau has selected certain incidents and omitted others. And he admits to voids by referring to gaps which are caused by his poor memory. Yet these gaps do not affect the completeness of his story. Rousseau is revealing his interior, what he truly is. He is not the sum of all that he does and all that happens to him. When Rousseau seeks to reveal himself, seeks to grasp and show what he is, he re-enters inside himself: "The proper object of my

confessions is to make known exactly my interior in all the situations of my life. It is the history of my soul that I have promised, and in order to write it faithfully I do not need other memories: it is sufficient for me, as I have done until now, to re-enter inside myself." The perspective of the divinity is not above him, outside him, but precisely within him. Rousseau is not "divided up in time" whose order he does not know. His memory is poor, he cannot see the future, and his present is darkness. Yet he sees himself as the F+ernal Being would see him. Rousseau is "always the same at all times."[67]

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[67] Ibid., 6, p. 272.

CHAPTER IV

IMAGINATION AND MEMORY

The problem of time and self-consciousness is the problem of grasping the self which seems to be "dissipated" in a past which is no longer, a present which one cannot get hold of, and a future which is not yet. As indicated above (Chapter III, pp.138-41, Augustine claims that he will know himself only when he "stands" in God, only when he is no longer "in time," and Rousseau claims to see himself from a perspective outside of time. What is to be considered here is the question of the grounds for the making of these claims. That is, why does Augustine claim that he cannot fully grasp what he is and why does Rousseau claim that he sees himself as he is? The problem of time and self-consciousness gives way to a discussion of memory and imagination as instruments in the achievement of self-awareness, for these faculties would seem to be our only access to the past which is no longer and the future which is not yet.

1. Augustine on "recollection"

Augustine's account of his conversion is presented at the very end of Book 8 of his Confessions. In Book 9

Chapter 1, he asks the question "Who am I and what am I?" But Augustine asks this question about himself after he asks "O Lord, who is like unto Thee?" and he asks the question about himself not of himself but of God. The question "Who am I and what am I?" is followed by Augustine's account of his baptism, his "rebirth," and of his mother's death. The concluding paragraph of Book 9 contains Augustine's plea to God that his parents be "remembered" by those "who are my brethren under you, Our Father, in our Catholic mother [the Church] and my fellow citizens in the eternal Jerusalem for which your people in their pilgrimage sigh from the beginning of their journey until their return home."[1] Augustine sees himself as a child of God and of the Church and thus as a pilgrim. His life, like that of his mother Monica, is a pilgrimage, a journey toward God. The life of the pilgrim is continuous movement from birth (baptism) to death.

Augustine must ask the question "Who am I and what am I?" of God for while he is a pilgrim, while he is "on the way," he cannot grasp who he is. But Augustine shows us his attempt to grasp himself and in doing so he reveals the futility of that attempt. The futility of the attempt sheds light on what he is.

It might be said that the subject of Book 10 of Augustine's Confessions is memory. In some sense this is

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[1] Augustine, Confessions, 9, 13.

obvious, for most of the Book is devoted to a discussion of memory. Yet the very obviousness of the concern with memory may work to conceal the context in which the question about memory is raised. If this context is overlooked, the question about memory cannot be seen for what it is.

Augustine begins Book 10 with the prayer: "Let me know You, my known; let me know Thee even as I am known." Augustine asks that he may know God even as God knows Augustine. Augustine's first request is that he may know God; he does not first ask that he may know himself.[2] He asks that he may know as he is known. It is only then that he takes up, re-raises, the question about himself. "Who am I and, what am I?" is first the question about God's knowledge of Augustine and not Augustine's knowledge of himself: "For Thou, Lord, dost judge me; because, although no man knoweth the things of a man, but the spirit of a man which is in him, yet there is still something of man which even the spirit of man that is in him does not know. But you, Lord, know all of him, you who made him."[3] God, the Creator, knows perfectly what he has made; man, the creature, does not know himself perfectly. And while he is "in time" man is faced with the radical imperfection of his knowledge of God and of himself:

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[2]See Groethuysen, J. J. Rousseau, p. 238. Groethuysen claims that, for Rousseau, the question about man precedes the question about God and that the question about man is a question about nature.

[3]Augustine, Confessions, 10. 5.

> Certainly now we see through a glass darkly, and not yet face to face, and so as long as I am on pilgrimage away from You, I am more present to myself than to you; . . . So I will confess what I know of myself, and I will also confess what I do not know of myself; because what I know of myself I know by means of your light shining upon me, and what I do not know remains unknown to me until my darkness be made as the noonday in your countenance.[4]

It is because he is more present to himself than to God that Augustine's knowledge of himself becomes the subject of inquiry.

But why does Augustine make this public inquiry about himself? He tells us that he does so at the command of God for the sake of his "fellow pilgrims."[5] He confesses what he has been and what he is, what he once was and what he is at the very moment of writing his confessions, so that the sharers in his mortality may be glad for his good deeds which are the work of God and sad for his evil deeds which are Augustine's faults and God's punishments. Augustine has shown what he was and in Book 10 he will show what he is now and what he continues to be. He will confess what he knows of himself and what he does not know of himself. That he knows and does not know is due to what he is.

What Augustine does know about himself is that he loves God. There is no doubt in his mind about this: he feels it with certainty. He loves God because God has

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[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., 10. 4.

struck his heart with His word; his love for God is God's work. But what is God? Augustine addresses this question to all the things which stand about the gates of his senses and all of them reply that they are not God. Then Augustine asks them to tell him something about God and they answer "He made us." Their answer is in their beauty. Augustine proceeds in his search for God: "And I turned my attention on myself and said to myself: 'And you, who are you?' And I replied: 'A man.'"[6] Augustine finds in himself a body and a soul, the one exterior and the other interior. The interior part is the better part for it is ministered to by the outer part. Here, Augustine identifies the "I" with the "inner man," with the soul. Man is body and soul; the "I" is soul. The soul is the life of the body and God is the life of the soul. It seems, then, that God is to be sought in the soul. The soul not only gives life to the body but also perception to the flesh and "through these senses, with all their diverse functions, I act, retaining my identity as one soul." But life and perception are not proper to man as he is different from the other animals. One must seek God "above the summit of [the] soul" and so one must go beyond the forces of life and perception in order to "ascend" to God.[7] When one passes beyond these forces, one comes to memory.

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[6] Ibid., 10. 6.

[7] Ibid., 10. 7.

Now "memory itself is mind"[8] and "it is I myself who remember, I, the mind."[9] The "I" is the mind and the mind is memory: "this thing [memory] is the mind, and this thing is I myself."[10] Augustine seeks to encounter God in his mind and he both finds Him and does not find Him: "And I went into the seat of the mind itself (which the mind has in memory, since the mind remembers itself), and you were not there. . . .You are not the mind itself. . .Certainly you do dwell in my memory, because I remember you from the time I first learned of you and I find you there when I call you to mind."[11] God is above the mind, not the mind, but there is nowhere else to look for Him.

It is on the way to God, on the way to what is above himself and what is not himself, that Augustine encounters himself. He encounters himself inside himself, in the huge court of his memory:

> There too I encounter myself; I recall [re-collect] myself--what I have done, when and where I did it, and in what state of mind I was at the time. These are all the things I remember to have experienced myself or to have heard from others. From the same store too I can take out pictures of things which have either happened to me or are believed on the basis of experience; I can myself weave them into the context of the past, and from them I can infer future actions, events, hopes, and then I can contemplate all these as though they were in the present.[12]

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[8] Ibid., 10. 14.
[9] Ibid., 10. 16.
[10] Ibid., 10. 17.
[11] Ibid., 10. 25.
[12] Ibid., 10. 8.

The self is recalled, re-collected, in the memory. It encounters itself in the act of "remembering" itself. And the memory gives access not only to the past but also, in some sense, to the future. Future actions, events, hopes are inferred by means of the "pictures" or images stored up in memory. The memory enables one to recollect oneself from the past and future and to make oneself present for oneself.

But when he encounters himself in his memory, Augustine is forced to exclaim: "How great, my God, is this force of memory, how exceedingly great! It is like a vast and boundless subterranean shrine. Who has ever reached the bottom of it? Yet this is a faculty of my mind and belongs to my nature; nor can I myself grasp all that I am. Therefore, the mind is not large enough to contain itself." (Emphasis added.)[13] Memory is a help to self-discovery but it is also a bottomless descent. One finds and does not find oneself in the memory. That is, one cannot fully grasp all that one is. It seems that the self is somehow outside the self. Yet where else is one to look for the self but within the self?

The incompleteness of the self-awareness afforded by the memory is manifested in the manner in which Augustine writes the story of his life. As noted above (Chapter III, p. 143), the gaps in Augustine's "autobiography" are obvious and numerous. He does not attempt to write a coherent tale nor does he attempt to tell us all that he

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[13] Ibid.

remembers. He recounts those incidents which he now sees most clearly as the providential action of God. Surely, God has "provided" for him, cared for him, at every moment of his life. Even the moments which Augustine cannot remember, cannot re-collect, are seen by God. Augustine is not entirely "there" for himself as he is for God.

It is only when Augustine is united with God, only when he sees God "face to face," that he will see himself and be at one with himself. Of his attempt to re-collect himself he must say: "Great indeed is the power of memory! It is something terrifying, my God, a profound and infinite multiplicity; and this thing is the mind, and this thing is I myself. What then am I, my God? What is my nature? A life various, manifold, and quite immeasurable."[14] Augustine's life is a "puzzle" to him; he is a problem to himself, for "what can be nearer to me than my own self? Yet this force of my memory is incomprehensible to me, even though, without it, I should not be able to call myself myself."[15] Both God and the self are seen only "through a glass darkly." It is God who is sought first; God is the subject of Augustine's inquiry. Augustine's way to God (his "pilgrimage") is through his own mind, his own self. In seeking God, he finds that he cannot even find himself. This is why Augustine must tell us those things which he does know about himself and those things which he does not

[14] Ibid., 10. 17.

[15] Ibid., 10. 16.

know about himself in order to reveal what he is. The mind cannot contain itself and certainly it cannot contain God who is above the mind. Yet the mind is the only "place" where one can look for God and for oneself: "Place there is none; we go backward and forward, and there is no place." How, then, does one find God so as to have him at all in the memory? "I could only have found you in yourself, above me."[16] It is God who effects Augustine's finding of God. And it is only in God that Augustine will find himself, will grasp all that he is: "I find no secure place for my soul except in you, and in you I pray that what is scattered in me may be brought together so that nothing of me may depart from you."[17] It is only God who can "re-collect" Augustine out of the temporal things in which he is scattered and out of the moments in which he is divided up. Augustine will be together with himself and will see himself only when he "stands" in God, in his "own true form." When he sees God face to face, he will be and will see what it is that he truly is.

Augustine's question about himself, "Who am I and what am I?," cannot now be fully answered. Augustine is a problem to himself. The memory is the only means to self-awareness and the memory is bottomless. What Augustine shows us is the radical finitude of man, the radical

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[16] Ibid., 10. 26.

[17] Ibid., 10. 40.

dependence of the creature on the Creator. Man does not make himself and thus he does not know himself. He is understandable only in terms of God's providential intention and this he sees only through a glass darkly. One's recollection of oneself is radically and essentially incomplete.

2. Rousseau on "imagination"

Rousseau's Confessions, on the face of it, seems to be the work of Rousseau's memory. That is, it has the appearance of a sequence of recollections and reflections on those recollections. The Confessions seems to provide us with the story of Rousseau's past. Yet it turns out that memory plays only a secondary and perhaps even a minor role in Rousseau's Confessions. The imagination shows itself to be of much greater importance. Indeed, there is a sense in which remembering is, for Rousseau, a function of the imagination. This primacy of the imagination was implied in the discussion of the artistic, fictive character of The Confessions. (See above, Chapter I.) In the present chapter it will be argued that the imagination is the principle in terms of which The Confessions is constructed and is thus central to Rousseau's account of how it is that man understands himself.

When Rousseau seeks to encounter himself, he re-enters inside himself: "The proper object of my confessions is to make known exactly my interior in all the situations of my

life. It is the history of my soul that I have promised, and in order to write it faithfully I do not need other memories: it is sufficient for me, as I have done until now, to re-enter inside myself." When he enters inside himself, Rousseau finds himself; he does not find a bottomless, boundless, "subterranean shrine." He does not encounter his self in his memory. His memory gives him access to his past, to some of "the situations of his life," but it does not give him access to his interior (self).[18]

What gives Rousseau access to the interior history of his soul is his imagination. It is his imagination which allows him to connect the discrete situations of his life in terms of a unitary self which has gone through these situations. Rousseau says of himself that he is "always the same at all times."

Rousseau's uses of the term 'imagination' suggest that the meaning of the term is varied. On the one hand,

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[18]Compare Starobinski, La transparence et l'obstacle, pp. 235-9; Burgelin, La philosophie de l'existence, p. 148; Raymond, La quête de soi, pp. 74-5, 78; Poulet, Studies in Human Time, pp. 24-5, 174-9; Gagnebin and Raymond, "Introduction," pp. XXXV-III. Starobinski attempts to resolve the problems of accuracy and completeness by references to Rousseau's total reliance on the "affective memory." According to Burgelin, the unity of the self is, for Rousseau, the work of the affective memory. Raymond and Gagnebin claim that the affective memory is the principle of continuity of Rousseau's being. Poulet maintains that, for Rousseau, the veracity of the memory of feelings is absolute; it is the affective memory which gives Rousseau "a deeper consciousness of a self which, properly speaking, belongs neither to the past, nor to the present, nor even to duration."

images are more or less spatial/bodily events (in contrast to "concepts") located in a faculty classically contrasted with the more spiritual "intellect." This use of the term involves the understanding of images as inseparable from sense-perception.[19] Imagination is the faculty by means of which we "make pictures" and have on hand such perceptions as odors and sounds. Imagination, in this sense, is essential to remembering: "the images of things perceived are there ready to hand for thought to recall."[20] Rousseau makes considerable use of this sense of the term: he tells us that his heart was full of the "image" of Mme de Warens,[21] that all his ideas are in "images."[22]

But Rousseau goes well beyond this use of the term. 'Image' does not simply refer to "images of things perceived" which are somehow present for thought. In his account of his development of the Second Discourse Rousseau recalls his visit to St. Germain. He goes into the forest there and finds the "image" of the first times of which he traces the history.[23] While he is on the Ilse de St. Pierre he finds pleasure in sitting near the lake, especially when it is agitated. He "makes the image" of the tumult of the world and the peace of his habitation and this "idea" is so sweet

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[19] See Aristotle, De Anima, 3. 3.
[20] Augustine, Confessions, 10. 8.
[21] Roussea, Confessions, 3, p. 107.
[22] Ibid., 4, p. 174.
[23] Ibid., 8, p. 388.

as to sometimes make him weep.[24] 'Image' in this sense seems to refer to a kind of connection between what he perceives and something he does not perceive. What he perceives, the "picture" of what he sees, is an "image" of something other than what he sees. The imagination is far more, for Rousseau, than the picture-making faculty which is at the service of memory. It is not simply the faculty which receives "copies" of perceptions. The image, in this case, is less closely connected with perception as such. Rousseau's characterizations of the forest as an image of the first times and the agitated lake as an image of the tumult of the world suggest a more active intellectual role for the imagination. The connection between the forest and the first times, between the agitated lake and the tumult of the world is imaginary. The "images" are the connections between what is perceived and what is not perceived: the ideas are connected by means of the imagination. And all his ideas are in images. For Rousseau, the imagination is that faculty which constructs, which weaves feelings and possibilities; the imagination is the peculiarly creative faculty in man.

Rousseau makes specific reference to the creative imagination three times in his Confessions. He speaks about his "imagination creatrice," the imaginary objects he creates

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[24] Ibid., 12, p. 645.

and embellishes, and the objects created or embellished by his imagination. In each case, he is referring to his delightful reveries, chimeras, fictions. These imaginary objects are understood as distinguished from real, actual objects. When he finds himself disappointed in his situation, Rousseau turns to the world of chimeras: "The impossibility of reaching real beings threw me into the land of chimeras and, seeing nothing existent which was worthy of my delirium, I nourished it in an ideal world which my creative imagination soon peopled with beings after my own heart."[25] In this land of chimeras he spends hours and days without counting and he loses the memory of all other things. The beings he creates are not found "here below": his perfect "creatures" are "celestial."

Most of the imaginative creations which Rousseau describes occur during journeys which he makes alone and on foot: "Never have I thought so much, existed so much, lived so much, been so much myself, if I dare say so, than on those [journeys] I made alone and on foot." Far from everything that reminds him of his dependence, he experiences a greater audacity of thinking. He finds himself thrown into the immensity of beings in order to combine them, choose them, and appropriate them to his taste without constraint and without fear: "I dispose of the whole of

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[25] Ibid., 9, p. 427: L'impossibilité d'atteindre aux êtres réels me jetta dans le pays des chiméres, et ne voyant rien d'existant qui fut digne de mon délire, je le nourris dans un monde idéal que mon imagination créatrice eut bientot peuplé d'êtres selon mon coeur.

nature as its master; my heart, wandering from object to object, unites itself, identifies itself with those that delight it, surrounds itself with charming images, intoxicates itself with delicious feelings."[26] In his imagination, Rousseau is like God. He is alone and he is master of the universe.[27] He has never been so much himself. Augustine is on a journey toward God; Rousseau, on his journeys, is like God. And when he is most like God he is most himself.

There is, however, a difference between what he experiences while making a journey for the sake of the journey and what he experiences when he is "on the way" to some specific destination. In these cases, he is often "limited" by the real object which awaits him. When he leaves Lyon, he sees before him only an agreeable future with Mama; he is content but does not experience any delightful reveries: "Occupied with the expectation of seeing my Mama so soon again, I had a little rest from my chimeras and the real happiness that awaited me relieved me

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[26] Ibid., 4, p. 162: Jamais je n'ai tant pensé, tant existé, tant vécu, tant été moi, si j'ose ainsi dire, que dans ceux que j'ai faits seul et à pied . . . . Je dispose en maitre de la nature entiére; mon coeur errant d'objet en objet s'unit, s'indentifie à ceux qui le flatent, s'entours d'images charmantes, s'enivre de sentiments délicieux.

[27] In connection with Rousseau's chimeras, Burgelin, in his La philosophie de l'existence, p. 169, writes: "The imagination assures us the domination of the world."

from looking for it in my visions."[28] When he leaves M. Le Maitre, he travels back to Mama at Annecy as quickly as possible. His return is so prompt and his mind so distracted that he does not have the least memory of his journey. The tenderness and the truth of his attachment for Mama had uprooted from his heart all imaginary projects and all the follies of ambition.[29] The real, the actual situation, curbs his imagination provided that the real situation is agreeable. Anticipation of pleasure makes one want to cover the distance to fulfillment as quickly as possible.

But these journeys to Mama are "returns": he has already experienced what he anticipates. The journey to Turin and the journey to Paris are somewhat different. On the journey to Turin he experiences a kind of sweet inquietude which has Mama as its object and this object fixes his imagination. He looks upon himself as almost her lover and his reveries are delightful. No fear, no doubt about his fate trouble his reveries. He is young, vigorous, healthy, confident in himself and others. And there is vanity in his dreams: to follow Hannibal across the Alps seems to him

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[28]Rousseau, Confessions, 4, p. 171: Occupé de l'attent de revoir bientot ma bonne maman je fis un peu de trève à mes chiméres, et le bonheur réel qui m'attendoit me dispensa d'en chercha dans mes visions.

[29]Ibid., 3, p. 130.

a glory beyond his years.[30] The journey to Paris is recalled as one of the happiest of his life. He is on his way to become a cadet; he is young, has enough money, and much hope. Alone and on foot "my sweet chimeras kept me company and the heat of my imagination had never given birth to more magnificent chimeras." As he walks he builds the edifice of his fortune. He sees himself in an officer's uniform with a beautiful white plume; he is inflamed with this noble idea. He believes himself to be le Marêchal Rousseau: "I was so inflamed over these follies that I saw nothing but troops, ramparts, gabions, batteries, and myself, in the midst of fire and smoke, calmly giving my orders with my field-glass in my hand." But in the midst of his glory, he comes upon a peaceful country scene and renounces forever the works of Mars.[31] The two journeys are similar for they are both undertaken with a new destination, a destination he has never before reached, in view and they are both occasions for dreams of glory. The new, the unexperienced, inflames his imagination. And at the end of each journey he finds disaster, terrible disappointment.

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[30] Ibid., 2, pp. 57-8.

[31] Ibid., 4, pp. 158-9: mes douces chiméres me tenoient compagnie, et jamais la chaleur de mon imagination n'en enfanta de plus magnifiques. . . . Je m'échauffois tellement sur ces folies que je ne voyois plus que trouppes, remparts, gabions, batteries, et moi au melieu du feu et de la fumée donnant tranquillement mes ordres la lorgnette à la main.

On two occasions he undertakes journeys because of "chimeras." He abandons a secure and promising career to go off like a vagabond with Bâcle and his heron-fountain. He imagines that the fountain will provide for his subsistence for the rest of his life. The heron-fountain is the principle on which he and Bacle build the edifice of their fortune.[32] He goes off to Paris with his system of musical notation: "Full of the magnificent ideas which had inspired me, and always the same at all times, I left Savoy with my musical system as before I had left Turin with my heron-fountain."[33] Again, his expectations are not met; his journeys end in disillusionment for they were begun from illusions. Rousseau's glorious visions of himself are invariably shattered. He creates for himself a world of future glory and great fortune and each time he is disillusioned. The reveries in which he indulges <u>because of</u> his disappointment with real situations result in his glory: <u>Julie</u> is the product of his "escape" from real beings.

The imagined is not the ordinary. The distance between the real and the imaginary is the place of misery: "The world of reality has its bounds, the world of imagination is boundless; as we cannot enlarge the one, let us restrict the other; for all the sufferings which really

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[32] <u>Ibid</u>., 3, p. 101.

[33] <u>Ibid</u>., 6, p. 272: plein des idées magnifiques qui me l'avoient inspirée, et toujours le même dans tous les tems, je partis de Savoye avec mon Système de musique, comme autrefois j'étois parti de Turin avec ma fontaine de Héron.

make us miserable arise from the difference between the real and the imaginary."[34] One's "vision" of oneself and one's happiness are somehow related in terms of the imagination.

It is not the imaginary which is the source of misery but the difference between the real and the imaginary. The imaginary is both more pleasant and more painful than the real. Through the imagination one sees oneself in situations where one would wish to be and in situations where one would not wish to be. When Rousseau suffers an attack of his malady, M. de Luxembourg brings him a doctor who tells him that he will live a long time. His imagination is repressed and he no longer fears a cruel death. He is delivered from imaginary evils which are more cruel than real evils and he suffers less.[35] Rousseau tells us that the night he spent with one of the characters in his opera, the Princesse de Ferrare, was a hundred times more delightful than he would have had in the arms of the Princess herself.[36] In the first incident the imaginary is more painful than the real and in the second incident the imaginary is more delightful than the real. The difference between the two incidents is that in the case of his illness

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[34]Rousseau, Emile, bk. 2, p. 305: Le monde réel a ses bornes, le monde imaginaire est infini; ne pouvant élargir l'un retrécessons l'autre; car c'est de leur seule différence que naissant toutes les peines qui nous rendent vraiment malheureux.

[35]Rousseau, Confessions, 11, p. 572.

[36]Ibid., 7, pp. 294-5.

the imaginary may become real and in the case of the Princess the imaginary is seen for what it is. Rousseau sees his cruel death as if it were real and beyond his power to prevent. But he has the Princess as he wants her: he can do with her as he likes precisely because she is not real.

What the imaginative creations show is the powerfulness of man. In his imagination he is master of the universe. He is anything he wants to be: Hannibal, Marêchal Rousseau, God. But in the "real world" he is far from all-powerful: it is rare that he can bring about what he wishes and prevent what he does not wish. It is the attempt to make the delightful imaginary world the real world and the attempt to prevent imaginary evils as if they were real which are at the source of misery. The imaginary creation is in the mind and only in the mind. God creates what is; man creates what is not. The creative imagination works in the realm of the possible, not the actual.

3. Creative imagination

Thus, the creative imagination has to do with what is not. Man creates what is not and his creation acts upon him. He sees himself as what he is not and thus "becomes" what he is not. Rousseau describes the role played by his imagination:

> This was [the role] of nourishing itself on situations which had interested me in my reading, recalling them, varying them, combining them, appropriating them to myself so much that I became one of the persons I imagined and saw myself always in positions most agreeable to my taste; and that, finally, the fictive state in which I succeeded in putting myself made me forget my real state with which I was so discontent. This love for imaginary objects and this facility for occupying myself with them ended by disgusting me with everything around me and determining this taste for solitude which has always remained with me.[37]

He <u>becomes</u> the person he imagines. And as this person he moves in an imaginary world doing whatever he pleases. This requires solitude: he must be removed from the real world, the world of other men. The imaginary world is precisely private. To be Hannibal, Marêchal Rousseau, God in public is to be mad. One can be whatever one wants to be within the confines of one's skull. That is, one can see oneself in any situation one chooses, one can make any <u>connections</u> one wishes between oneself and what is not oneself.

In one's imagination, then, one can be in a different "present": what is not is present to one not as what is no longer or what is not yet, but as <u>now</u>. Rousseau shows us this presence in his account of the kid of life he would

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[37] <u>Ibid</u>., 1, p. 41: Ce fut de se nourrir des situations qui m'avoient intéréssé dans mes lectures, de les rappeller, de les varier, de les combiner, de me les approprier tellement que je devinsse un des personnages que j'imaginois, que je me visse toujours dans les positions les plus agréables selon mon gout, enfin que l'état fictif où je venois à bout de me mettre me fit oublier mon état réel dont j'étois si mécontent. Cet amour des objects imaginaires et cette facilité de m'en occuper acheverent de me dégouter de tout ce qui m'entouroit, et déterminerent ce gout pour la solitude, qui m'est toujours resté depuis ce tems-là.

have had if he had fallen into the hands of a better master. As an engraver his ambition would have been limited: "Having an imagination rich enough to embellish all states with its chimeras, powerful enough to transport me, so to speak, at will from one to the other, it would have been of little importance in which state I was in fact."[38] It is not ambition which is at the root of his transporting himself, not some hope for the future. Through his imagination he can be in another state, another place, in the present. This is how he enjoys women without possessing them, without having them actually present.[39] This is why he leaves Mama, when she has visitors, in order to have her as he wants her.[40] Through the imagination fulfillment can follow immediately upon desire. The time between desire and fulfillment is eliminated: the "future" is eliminated.

But the realm of the possible as opposed to the actual is the future. As discussed above (Chapter III, pp.121-2), Rousseau speaks about futures. The future as future is many. And the faculty which gives one access to the future is the imagination. The future is entirely imagined: one can imagine countless possibilities. One imagines what might happen and therefore what is not and may never be. The

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[38] Ibid., p. 43: Ayant une imagination assez riche pour orner de ses chimères tous les états, assez puissante pour me transporter, pour ainsi dire, à mon gré de l'un à l'autre il m'importoit peu dans lequel je fusse en effet.

[39] Ibid., p. 17.

[40] Ibid., 5, p. 182.

imagination creates futures for us. It goes out in advance and places us in possible situations. We are and feel ourselves in these situations as if they were actual. And these created futures cause us to act in order to prevent them or bring them about. The future which is not is made present within the imagination and brings about, actualizes, what occurs in the space between the present and the imagined future. This is what we call "prudence," foresight, and this is how we make mistakes. The prudent man is the man who anticipates correctly, who imagines the right future. Rousseau shows us his imprudence in the story of his conversion to papism and in the story of his causing Mama expense in his effort to save her from ruin.

The imagination has us always living in the future, in what is not and may never be. It dissipates us in the countless possibilities which are its own creation. It has us wrenching ourselves apart between desire and fear. This is Rousseau's "history": "My cruel imagination, which always goes ahead of misfortunes, showed me this one [Mama's ruin] without ceasing in all its excess and in all its consequences. I saw myself in advance [ahead of myself]. . . . Here is why my soul is always agitated. Desires and fears devour me alternately."[41] The future reaches back to the present

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[41] Ibid., p. 219: Ma cruelle imagination qui va toujours au devant des malheurs, me montroit celui-là sans cesse dans tout son excés et dans toutes ses suites. Je me voyois d'advance. . . Voila comment j'avois toujours l'ame agitée. Les desire et les craintes me devoroient alternativement.

and destroys it: the making present of the future destroys the present as present.[42] The past is not nearly so powerful: "My cruel imagination, which torments itself without ceasing in foreseeing evils which are not yet, distracts my memory and prevents me from recalling those which are no longer." This is because "against what is done there are no more precautions to take and it is useless to occupy oneself with it."[43] The past is a source of concern for him only insofar as it might cause some future harm. Rousseau's memory, which retraces for him only agreeable objects, is the fortunate counterweight of his frightened imagination which makes him foresee only cruel futures.[44] The very disagreeable objects he retraces in his Confessions, especially in Part Two, occupy him because they are part of the "chain of events" which stretches ahead of him into the cruel future.

The imagination is that faculty by means of which one "pictures" oneself in "future" situations. In fact,

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[42]On the question of the anticipatory imagination and its relation to unhappiness, see Poulet, Studies in Human Time, pp. 163-5; and Burgelin, La philosophie de l'existence, p. 132.

[43]Rousseau, Confessions, 11, p. 585: Ma cruelle imagination qui se tourments sans cesse à prevenir les maux qui ne sont point encore, fait diversion à ma mémoire, et m'empêche de me rappeller ceux qui ne sont plus. . . . contre ce qui est fait il n'y a plus de précautions à prendre, et il est inutile de se'en occuper.

[44]Ibid., 7, p.278.

one can picture an entire future for oneself: one sees oneself stretched out ahead of oneself. The imagination does not simply present us with situations which are not yet and may never be: it presents us with ourselves in those situations. And it is possible for us to imagine a whole lifetime for ourselves in an instant. Rousseau describes one of the walks he took outside the city while he was living with Mama. His heart is full of her image and of the desire to spend his life with her:

> I saw myself as in ecstasy transported to that happy time and that happy place, ...I do not remember ever being thrown into the future with more force and illusion than I was then; and what struck me most in the memory of this reverie when it had been realized was having found the objects again exactly as I had imagined them. If ever the dream of a man awake had the air of a prophetic vision surely this one did. I had been deceived only in its imaginary duration; for the days and the years and an entire life passed there in an inalterable tranquillity, but in fact all this lasted only a moment.[45]

Desire has us imagining no end to its fulfillment. It encourages us to deceive ourselves by ignoring the passing character of things human. Rousseau's reverie does not admit the possibility of a change in his happy situation.

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[45] Ibid., 3, p. 108: Je me vis comme en extase transporté dans cet heureux tems et dans cet heureux séjour . . . Je ne me souviens pas de m'être elancé jamais dans l'avenir avec plus de force et d'illusion que je fis alors; et ce qui m'a frappé le plus dans le souvenir de cette rêverie quand elle s'est réalisée, c'est d'avoir retrouvé des objets tels exactement que je les avois imaginés. Si jamais rêve d'un homme éveillé eut l'air d'une vision prophétique, ce fut assurément celui-là. Je n'ai été décu que dans sa durée imaginaire; car les jours et les ans et la vie entiére s'y passoient dans une inaltérable tranquillité, au lieu qu'en effet tout cela n'a duré qu'un moment.

The contrast between this reverie and what actually occurs when he is supplanted by Witzenried is revealing: "In a moment I saw evaporate forever the entire future of happiness I had painted. . . .This moment was frightful. . . .I saw before me only the sad remains of an insipid life."[46] When he is happy, he desires that his happiness be without end and imagines it without an end. When he is sad he sees only sadness before him. This failure or reluctance to imagine an end is also clear from his account of his contentment with Therese: "The future no longer touched me or touched me only as the prolonged present: I desired nothing but to assure its duration."[47] But as we see in his account of himself on the Isle de St. Pierre, Rousseau learns of the passing character of human things. He desires the continuation of his stay on the island but fears being forced to leave; this fear of a possible future event destroys his happines. (See above, Chapter III, pp. 128-32).

Now the most complete and irreversible of all "passings" is death. And death is that future event which is certain: it is not simply one among many possibilities. It is not yet but it surely will be. Just as we tend to imagine present

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[46] Ibid., 6, p. 263: En un moment je vis évanouir pour jamais tout l'avenir de félicité que je m'étois peint . . . .Ce moment fut affreux. . . . Je ne vis plus devant moi que les tristes restes d'une vie insipide.

[47] Ibid., 7, p. 333: L'avenir ne me touchoit plus ou ne me touchoit que comme le présent prolongé: je ne desirois rien que d'en assurer la durée.

happiness and present sadness to extend before us indefinitely, so we tend to imagine ourselves before an indeterminate future. Perhaps it is precisely because it is certain that death can be "imagined away": it does not haunt us as a possibility. Rousseau is familiar with the "image" of death; he has looked death in the face. He has been "near enough" to death to familiarize himself with its image.

Rousseau "sees himself" as a dead man. (See above Chapter II, pp. 61-4). There is a sense, then, in which Rousseau has his entire future present to him. It is not that he knows the details, the events, of the rest of his life. It is that, no matter what the events, it <u>will be</u> himself who will go through the events. It is not the future but <u>himself</u> which he sees in advance, stretched out before him. This seeing is the work of the creative imagination.

But what of Rousseau's seeing of himself in the past, in what is no longer? Is this not the work of the memory? Surely, <u>The Confessions</u> is Rousseau's "memoirs." Much has already been said about the problem of memory in connection with the discussion of the artistic character of <u>The Confessions</u> and the discussion of the problem of time and self-awareness. In particular, it has been noted that, on the one hand, Rousseau claims that he is "telling all" and that he sees clearly only what he remembers and, on the other hand, Rousseau makes frequent reference to his very poor memory. This apparent contradiction is resolved through a consideration of the character of memory.

4. Rousseau on memory

Rousseau often speaks of memory as his means of access to the past. The memory is concerned with that which is no longer. It makes that which is no longer somehow present. When Venture visits him many years after their close association, the years of Rousseau's youth are brought back to him: "I felt [the memories] then in all their force and I believed the time [of which they were memories] past forever."[48] But the times past are not simply reproduced, repeated in the mind. Remembering is not simply running the film again or playing back the recording. One sees the past only from the perspective of the present. After recounting his abandonment of Le Maitre, Rousseau writes: "That is how I saw the thing then; I see it differently today."[49] This is Augustine's experience when he looks back upon his past sins; he sees them differently now and he sees them for what they are. Augustine's memories of his sinful pleasures are painful, bitter. Rousseau consoled himself easily over his abandonment of Le Maitre immediately after he did it. Now, as he writes about it, he feels remorse.

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[48] Ibid., 8, pp. 398-9: j'avois senti alors dans toute leur force, et dont je croyois le tems passé pour jamais.

[49] Ibid., 4, p. 132: Voila comment alors je voyois la chose; je la vois autrement aujourd'hui.

But, for Rousseau, it is not just that his feelings about the events change with the perspective provided by the distance of time. He can, if he wishes, "go through" the events again, re-live them. The re-living is not simply a repeating: "Moments precious and so regretted, begin again for me your delightful course; run more slowly through my memory, if it is possible, than you really did in your fugitive succession."[50] The rememberer can make a longer time; he does not simply recall but somehow re-produces as the painter re-creates. Of certain memories Rousseau can say: "This coming together of objects vividly retraced has delighted my memory a hundred times, as much and more than in reality."[51] The past <u>is</u> not and cannot be what it <u>was</u>. Rousseau's "objectivity" is not at issue here. Rousseau does not claim to have access to himself through his memory. It does not matter whether or not he can "remember": the frankness and accuracy he promises us are not about the situations of his life. At the beginning of Part Two, after having "remembered" the years of his youth, he writes: "The proper object of my confessions is to make known exactly my interior in all the situations of my life. It is the history of my soul that I have promised and in order to write it faithfully I do not need other memories: it is sufficient

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[50] <u>Ibid</u>., 6, p. 225: Momens précieux et si regrettés, ah recommencez pour moi vôtre aimable cours; coulez plus lentement dans mon souvenir s'il est possible que vous ne fites reellement dans votre fugitive succession.

[51] <u>Ibid</u>., 3, p. 122: ce concours d'objets vivement retracé m'a cent fois charmé dans ma mémoire, autant et plus que dans la réalité.

for me, as I have done until now, to re-enter inside myself."[52] Rousseau's memory gives him access to some of the situations of his life, situations which are no longer but which can be recalled. He, his self, is not those situations. Throughout Part One he has not been remembering but entering inside himself.

What Rousseau means by "entering inside himself" is understood in terms of what all of this seeming "remembering" really is. Of the time he spent at Charmettes Rousseau writes:

> Nothing of all that happened to me during that precious epoch, nothing of what I said and thought all the time it lasted has escaped from my memory. The times that precede and that follow come back to me at intervals. I recall them unequally and confusedly; but I recall this one as if it still lasted. My imagination, which in my youth always went in advance and now goes backward, compensates by these sweet memories for the hope that I have lost forever. (Emphasis added.) [53]

Rousseau recalls, remembers, some of the situations of his life. He imagines himself in those situations. The movement

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[52] Ibid., 7, p. 278: L'object propre de mes confessions est de faire connoitre exactement mon interieur dans toutes les situations de ma vie. C'est l'histoire de mon ame que j'ai promise, et pour l'écrire fidellement je n'ai pas besoin d'autres mémoires: il me suffit, comme j'ai fait jusqu'ici, de rentrer au dedans de moi.

[53] Ibid., 6, p. 226: Rien de tout ce qui m'est arrivé durant cette époque chérie, rien de ce que j'ai fait dit et pensé tout le tems qu'elle a duré n'est echappé de ma mémoire. Les tems qui précédent et qui suivent me reviennent par intervalles. Je me les rappelle inégalement et confusément; mais je me rapelle celui-là tout entier comme s'il duroit encore. Mon imagination, qui dans ma jeunesse alloit toujour en avant et maintenant rétrograde, compense par ces doux souvenirs l'espoir que j'ai pour jamais perdu.

from birth to death is the growth of the past and the diminishing of the future. As one moves from birth to death, the imagination goes less and less in advance and more and more backward. Rousseau's access to the past is through memory; his access to the history of his soul is through imagination. It is his imagination which allows him to connect the discrete situations of his life in terms of a unitary self which has gone through these situations. Rousseau says of himself that he is "always the same at all times." He is not divided up in time whose order he does not know; he is not lost in the bottomless, boundless subterranean shrine of memory. Through what is no longer and what is not yet there extends the imagined and always imagineable Rousseau.

During the course of his narrative, Rousseau pauses several times to consider what might have been the case had circumstances been different. He tells us what his life, the events of his life, would have been. Had he fallen into the hands of a better master, he would have been an engraver, a good Christian, citizen, father, friend, worker. After having spent an obscure and simple but equal and sweet life, he would have died peacefully and been soon forgotten.[54] Had he married Merceret, he would have lost great pleasures but he would have lived in peace until his last hour.[55]

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[54] Ibid., 1, p. 43.

[55] Ibid., 4, p. 146.

Rousseau constructs "possible" lives for himself.[56] He takes us through these entire lives right up until the death which would end them. One might argue, then, that since he is able to distinguish between what might have been (the possible) and what did in fact happen, his account of what did happen corresponds to something real, a real life, a real self.

But at the very beginning of Book 1 Rousseau tells us that "I have been able to suppose true what I know to have been possible." He has filled up the voids, the gaps, in his story which are occasioned by the failure of his memory. He has filled these gaps with accounts of events that might have happened, that could possibly have happened. And he does not even tell us when he does this. He does now show us which parts of his Confessions are "fables." (See above, Chapter I, pp. 35-41) How, then, is this supposedly real life different from the possible lives he constructs for himself? The mistakes which he makes because of his poor memory and the fables he uses to fill in the gaps occasioned by his poor memory do not interfere with the "truth." Thus it is not his memory but something very like a creative imagination which appears to guarantee the truth of what is said. His "true life" seems to be just as surely a construct of his imagination as the possible lives he constructs for himself.

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[56] See Voisine, "Introduction," pp. LXXXIII, CVI.

Rousseau, then, is not the sum of the details of his life. The truth about himself is not revealed in an accurate chronicle of what he did and what happened to him. This is why he can, at the very end of his Confessions, make his declaration: "I have told the truth. If anyone knows things contradictory to what I have just exposed, were they proven a thousand times, he knows lies and impostures." The truth is that, no matter what the details of one's life, one is "always the same at all times." One is always the same self. And this self is accessible through the creative imagination. The self that is spread out in the past which is no longer and the future which is not yet is at any moment imagined to be the same self.

5. The fevers of imagination

Yet to claim that it is the imagination which gives one access to one's true being is to raise many serious difficulties. The imagination, as Rousseau represents it, is the creative faculty which constructs, weaves possibilities, connects the discrete situations of his life. The creative imagination makes one life out of the many moments of his life. His life is a coherent whole, a unity, because the imagination allows him to connect all of the parts with each other, to "systematize" the details of his life. Now in Book 7 of his Confessions, Rousseau tells the story of his friend Mussard who has retired from public life in order to find rest and enjoyment before he dies. Mussard is

described as a true "philosophe de pratique" who lives in a house that he has built himself and a garden that he has planted with his own hands. The story continues:

> While digging up the terraces of this garden, he found some fossil shells. He found them in such great quantity that his lively imagination saw only shells in nature and, finally, he sincerely believed that the universe was only shells and remains of shells and that the entire earth was nothing but shell sand. Always occupied with this object and with his singular discoveries, he became so excited with these ideas that they would have finally turned into a system in his head, that is to say, into madness, had not death - fortunately for his reason but unfortunately for his friends who were very attached to him and found at his house a most agreeable refuge - removed him from them by a most strange and cruel disease.[57]

Mussard's imagination would have constructed a system in which everything would be explained in terms of the principle of shells. And the system would have been an expression of madness. Rousseau calls Mussard's pre-occupation with his shells "conchyliomanie." Just as Mussard, the true "philosophe de pratique," has built his house himself, so he builds in his head an entire universe of shells. Although this is a mania, a madness, Rousseau tells us that he himself worked in Mussard's study with as much pleasure as Mussard.

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[57] Rousseau, Confessions, 7, p. 373: En fouillant à fond de cuve les terrasses de ce jardin, il trouva des coquillages fossiles, et il en trouva en si grande quantité que son imagination exaltée ne vit plus que coquilles dans la nature, et qu'il crut enfin tout de bon que l'univers n'etoit que coquilles, débris de coquilles, et que la terre entiére n'étoit que du Cron. Toujours occupé de cet objet et de ses singuliéres découvertes, il s'échauffa si bien sur ces idées qu'elles se seroient enfin tournées dans sa tête en système, c'est à dire, en folie, si très heureusement pour sa raison mais bien malheureusement pour ses amis auxquels il étoit cher et qui trouvoient chez lui l'azile le plus agréable, la mort ne fut venue le leur enlever par la plus étrange et cruelle maladie.

"Conchyliomanie" is the result of the imagination, the creative imagination gone wild. On the basis of a few shells in his garden Mussard creates a system which accounts for all that is. Everything is connected with everything else. But these connections, or rather this connection, is imaginary just as the connection between the agitated lake and the tumult of the world is imaginary. (See above, pp. 156-7) The question which arises here is that of the truth or falsity of the "system." Are the connections merely imaginary? Is the imagined unity an illusion having no relation to reality? Or does the creative imagination give us access to the truth, to what is in fact the case? It is true of man that he constructs, creates, a unity which he calls his life. But is the self which is the unifying principle of this life a mere figment of the imagination having no relation to what is real?

The problem of the constructive creative imagination as the means of access to the self is revealed most strikingly in the apparent contrast between Parts One and Two of The Confessions. As suggested above (Chapter I, p. 45), Rousseau's division of his Confessions into Parts One and Two marks a division in the work itself rather than a division in the life of which The Confessions is the story. There is a space of two years of silence between the writing of Part One and the writing of Part Two and Rousseau calls attention to this space in the very opening sentence of the second part. Part One is the story of a not terribly

extraordinary life, a life marked by joys and sorrows, good fortune and bad fortune, of a rather common character. Part Two, however, is dominated by Rousseau's preoccupation with the Great Plot; he seems to believe that a conspiracy of enormous proportions is being mounted against him, and we are never quite sure of what its "real" character is. But within the wider context of the Great Plot of Part Two Rousseau discusses a lesser conspiracy--the brief Jesuit plot of Book 11--which he ultimately comes to see for what it is, a figment of his imagination.

The publication of the Émile has been suspended and he has not been told the reason: "Here is how my imagination, kindled by this long silence, busied itself by conjuring up phantoms." He torments himself in looking for the cause of this delay and, as usual, he imagines the worst; in the delay in printing he sees the suppression of the book. But he cannot imagine the cause of this suppression. Then he learns that a certain Jesuit, P. Griffet, has been speaking about the Émile and has given an account of certain passages from it: "At that instant my imagination went off like lightening and unveiled for me the whole iniquitous mystery: I saw its progress as clearly, as surely as if it had been revealed to me." He figures out that the Jesuits are furious over the disdain with which he has spoken of their colleges and are trying to have the printing delayed until after Rousseau's death. Then they would be able to alter the work and attribute to Rousseau their own views.

The mystery is solved: "It is astonishing what a crowd of facts and circumstances comes into my mind to support this madness and to give it an air of truth, even to show me evidence and to demonstrate it." Guerin is the instrument of the Jesuits; his friendly advances have been prompted by the Jesuits: "I saw nothing but Jesuits everywhere." He considers Malesherbes' objections to his "vision" yet his vision persists.[58] But the Émile is published. The Jesuit plot is the work, he finally realizes, of his perfervid imagination. He refers to this construct as a phantom, a madness. There is no plot: he had connected numerous events and circumstances and formed them into a coherent system to which nothing "real" corresponds.

The Great Plot of Part Two is of a different order of magnitude. Immediately after, indeed in the same paragraph as his reference to the "mad" Jesuit plot, Rousseau refers to "today" when he "sees proceed without obstacle to its execution the blackest, most frightful plot which has ever been woven against the memory of a man."[59] He sees himself surrounded

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[58] Ibid., 11, pp. 566-7: Voila donc mon imagination qu'allumoit ce long silence occupée à me tracer des fantômes. . . .A l'instant mon imagination part comme un éclair et me dévoile tout le mistere d'iniquité: j'en vis la marche aussi clairement, aussi surement que si elle m'eut été révélée. . .. Il est étonnant quelle foule de faits et de circonstances vint dans mon esprit se calquer sur cette folie, et lui donner un air de vraisemblance, que dis-je, m'y montrer l'évidence et la démonstration. . . .Je ne voyois par tout que Jesuites.

[59] Ibid., p. 568: vois marcher sans obstacle à son execution le plus noir, le plus affreux complot qui jamais ait été tramé contre la mémoire d'un homme.

by enemies: as he takes up his pen to begin writing his second part, he tells us that the roof above him has eyes, the walls which surround him have ears, and spies are all around him.[60] Everything that happens to him is fitted into the scheme of those who are seeking to destroy him. Apparently innocent and even kind acts are really intended to work toward his ruin: visitors come to spy on him, "friends" are kind to him so that he will confide in them. The enormity of the plot is even more fully spelled out in the Dialogues: an invisible hand directs all of Europe, from the great and powerful to shopkeepers and children playing in the street, in a conspiracy for the destruction of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. He sees clearly that "all the events related to him which seem accidental and chance are only successive developments concerted in advance and so ordered that all that must happen to him in the sequence already has its place in the picture and must have its effect only at the appointed moment."[61] This account of the plot takes place within a discussion concerning the various portraits (paintings) of Jean-Jacques.

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[60] Ibid., 7, p. 279.

[61] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Rousseau Juge de Jean-Jacques: Dialogues, in Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Oeuvres complètes, ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond, vol. 1: Les Confessions; Autres textes autobiographiques, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1959), 2, p. 781: tous les événemens rélatifs à lui qui paroissent accidentels et fortuits ne sont que de successifs developpements concertés d'avance et tellement ordonnés que tout ce qui lui doit arriver dans la suite a déja sa place dans le tableau, et ne doit avoir son effet qu'au moment marqué.

6. Rousseau as "Ikonographer"

In The Confessions Rousseau does not tell us who it is who directs the conspiracy. He is in darkness, lost in the underground tunnels of the present: he feels the blows and he perceives the immediate instrument of his suffering but he does not see the hand by which the variety of intermediary causes are combined to work the strange events of his life.[62] The reader must recognize the importance of even the least details of the events (e.g., the time at which the decree against him is issued) if he is to discover the secret causes by induction, if he is to follow the thread of the plot.[63] It is clear from The Confessions who the "author" of the plot is. The hand which directs a successful conspiracy of such enormous proportions must be that of an all-knowing, all-powerful being. And this is confirmed in the Dialogues: "The bringing together of all these causes [men] is too inferior to the effect in order not to have some other more powerful cause [than man], a cause that it is impossible for me to imagine."[64]

The Great Plot which dominates Part Two of The Confessions is of much greater magnitude than the Jesuit plot

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[62] Rousseau, Confessions, 12, pp. 589-90.

[63] Ibid., 11, p. 588.

[64] Rousseau, Dialogues, 2, p. 914: la réunion de toutes ces causes est trop au dessous de l'effet, pour qu'il n'ait pas quelque autre cause encor plus puissante, qu'il m'est impossible d'imaginer.

but is it different in kind? In the same passage Rousseau speaks about the Jesuit plot which was "demonstrated" for him and which he finally sees as a mere figment of his imagination and the Great Plot which he seems to regard as real. He must have been aware of the similarity between the two.[65] The characterization of his construction of the Jesuit plot as "mad" points to the character of the Great Plot as a figment of his imagination. Both are clear examples of paranoiac invention which Rousseau places before us so that we may see their madness.[66] Both are the work of the creative imagination.

Clearly, the Great Plot of Part Two is presented as

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[65] Compare Starobinski, La transparence et l'obstacle, pp. 192-3. Starobinski's account of the relationship between the two plots is that there is "a strange demarcation" which "separates a 'zone' of consciousness where Rousseau is still capable of recognizing that his imagination interprets the signs in a delirious manner, and a zone where anxiety, ceasing to be conscious of its interpretive work, accepts the delirious idea as massive and indisputable evidence." According to Starobinski, Rousseau's "self-criticism" is limited to the single incident of the Émile; Rousseau revokes his first interpretation of this lesser plot in order to give greater weight to his interpretation of other complaints.

[66] Compare this understanding of Rousseau's deliberateness with Starobinski, La transparence et l'obstacle, p. 65; Guéhenno, Rousseau, 1 : 430; Raymond, La quête de soi, p. 126. It is noteworthy in this context that Guéhenno, 2: 187-9, cites the fact that the "happy" books of Part One of The Confessions are written during the period of Rousseau's quarrel with Hume. De Saussure, Rousseau et les manuscrits des "Confessions," pp. 269-71, maintains that from the first crisis (the Émile incident) until Rousseau's last years, one can follow a marvelous struggle between understanding and madness. Part Two of The Confessions, according to de Saussure, marks a change in the purpose of Rousseau's writing, i.e., his defense; however, "it is remarkable that, in spite of this change of orientation of The Confessions, the style is hardly affected."

a negative image of providence, the working of an evil genius. Everything which happens to him is fitted by Rousseau into the scheme for his destruction. Even the smallest details of every event are important within the plan and all are connected by the invisible hand which directs the conspiracy. Rousseau's denial of a personal providence has been discussed above (Chapter II, pp. 73-7); his frequent use of the term 'destiny,' especially with regard to the incident of his conversion to papism, has also been noted. (See above, Chapter III, pp.116-9) It is now clear that at least Part Two of The Confessions is a representation of the belief in providence. Rousseau is seeking to expose the "madness" of Augustine's interpretation of the events of his life, of his life as a whole, as the working out of God's design for him.

Support for this understanding of Rousseau's response to Augustine is found in the "History of the Preceding Writing" which follows his Dialogues. Here Rousseau tells us the "history" of the Dialogues. He decided to place the manuscript on the altar of Notre Dame but when he enters the church he finds his way to the altar barred by a grille which he had never seen there before. At first he is terrified for he interprets the barring of his way as a sign that God, too, is against him. On reflection, however, he realizes the foolishness of his plan and thanks heaven for preventing him from carrying it out. Then he learns of the presence in Paris of an old acquaintance and regards the news as

"a direction of providence" which indicates to whom he should entrust the manuscript. He gives the manuscript to this man but is disappointed in his response. Next, he is visited by a young Englishman who had been his neighbor at Wootton. Rousseau believes he sees the finger of God in this occasion and decides to entrust the manuscript to the young visitor. But now he has doubts on the wisdom of this choice. And so the story goes on. Rosseau sums up the "history" of this example of the workings of providence: "I did what all those unfortunates do who believe they see in all that happens to them an express direction of destiny. I said to myself: here is the depositary that providence has chosen for me; providence has sent him to me. It has rejected my choice only to lead me to its choice."[67] "Providence" really explains nothing: each failure is really the result of a "bad choice."[68] Providence admits of bad intentions but not of bad choices, not of mistakes, for God does not make his intentions accessible to man's mind. The principle of providence which seems to account for everything really accounts for nothing just as the "Jesuit" principle and Great Plot really account for nothing. These all-inclusive explanations are the work of the creative imagination and correspond to nothing real.

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[67]Rousseau, "Histoire du precedent ecrits," p. 983: Je fis comme tous les malheureux qui croyent voir dans tout ce qui leur arrive une expresse direction du sort. Je me dis: voila le dépositaire que la providence m'a choisi; c'est elle qui me l'envoye, elle n'a rebuté mon choix que pour m'amener au sien.

[68]Rousseau, Dialogues, 3, p. 952.

Now behind Augustine's account of God's providential action toward him stands the account of God's providential action toward all men, the Bible. As already noted, the most striking example of God's care for men is found in the story of Jesus Christ. Jesus' life is entirely pre-ordained from all eternity. Everything that he does and everything that happens to him is the result of divine design. Twice in his Confessions Rousseau tells us that he has been called the Anti-Christ.[69] The incident of the stoning of his house recalls the attempted stoning of Christ reported in the Gospels. And Rousseau even goes so far as to put in his own mouth a close paraphrase of the words of Jesus to the Pharisees. When he is secretary to the Ambassador in Venice, a dispute arises between them over the secretary's customary stipend for the issuance of passports. Rousseau says to the Ambassador: "Let your Excellency keep what is his and leave me what is mine."[70] He leaves on his fateful journey to Turin on the Wednesday of Holy Week[71] and, one Easter, he comes back to life.[72] Indeed, from the very opening pages of his Confessions Rousseau ascribes to himself a uniqueness which the Christian could only ascribe to Christ: "I am not made

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[69]Rousseau, Confessions, 12, pp. 627, 634.

[70]Ibid., 7, p. 299: que Votre Excellence garde ce qui est à elle, et me laisse ce qui est à moi.

[71]Ibid., 2, p. 55.

[72]Ibid., p. 72.

as any of those I have seen; I dare to believe that I am not made as any of those who exist." Nature has broken the mold, the form, in which she has cast him.[73] The attack on Augustine's understanding of his life as the work of providence must come to grips with the basis of that understanding, the revelation in Christ of God's loving care for men.[74]

There is a sense, then, in which Rousseau compares himself not only with Augustine but also with Augustine's God. Rousseau claims a perspective on his life which for Augustine would be proper to God Alone: "I have unveiled my interior such as you yourself have seen it [Eternal Being]." God, the Creator, holds the moments of Augustine's life together in one eternal "glance." And God is somehow creating Augustine at every moment. For Rousseau, it is the creative imagination which holds the moments of his life together. Rousseau's "life" is his own construct.

Augustine's reliance on memory is grounded in his belief in God's providence. His life does have a unity, even if he cannot "remember" it all. But for Rousseau the creative imagination provides the only unity in terms of

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[73] Ibid., 1, p. 5: Je ne suis fait comme aucun de ceux que j'ai vus; j'ose croire n'être fait comme aucun de ceux qui existent.

[74] With reference to Rousseau's usurpation of the place of Christ, see Burgelin, La philosophie de l'existence, p. 328. Burgelin refers to The Confessions as the "new Gospel": Rousseau finds an eternal model in himself and holds out his Confessions saying "tolle et lege." It is noteworthy that Burgelin, whether deliberately or not, has Rousseau repeat the command which Augustine claims to have heard on the occasion of his conversion.

which to express the story of his life. That faculty, however, runs too easily into sheer construction. Is not Rousseau telling us, in Part Two, that all such unifying principles are provisional to the point of being illusory? He continues to do in Part Two the "entering inside himself" which he had been doing all along in Part One. What Part One and Part Two have "in common" is the "truth."[75] Is not the innocent youth of Part One, then, equally and equally consciously an artistic construction on the part of a timeless "inner" Rousseau who is himself "always the same"?

Thus, Augustine does not attempt to present us with a coherent tale. Indeed, he cannot present us with a coherent tale. He selects those remembered moments which <u>he</u> sees as significant in terms of his salvation. But he believes that <u>all</u> of the moments of his life are significant in God's eyes. Rousseau, on the other hand, does present us with a coherent tale. As he promises, there are no "gaps." That is, there are gaps in his memory but none in his "portrait." He gives us his life from one end to the other.[76] Rousseau's <u>Confessions</u> is his portrait, his image, the work of his imagination.

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[75]Rousseau, <u>Confessions</u>, 7, p. 279.

[76]<u>Ibid</u>., 12, p. 639.

CHAPTER V

HUMAN NATURE AND PROVIDENCE

In his Confessions, Rousseau shows us a man understanding himself. The form which Rousseau's demonstration takes is what appears to be the story of the events of his life, the events woven into a coherent history. It has been maintained (above, Chapter IV) that this way of answering the question "How does man understand himself?," i.e., the autobiographical "form" of The Confessions, is in function of the role of the creative imagination in modern man's understanding of himself. The imagination constructs a history, a sequence of events which are related, in terms of a "self" (Rousseau's) which is "always the same at all times."

The form of Augustine's Confessions is that of a prayer. Augustine offers a prayer of praise to God, his Creator. It is within the context of this prayer that he re-collects certain incidents from his past in which he sees most clearly the manifestations of God's power and wisdom in his own life. Augustine "remembers" God's providence. He praises God for the manner in which, unknown to Augustine and even in spite of Augustine, God has led him to where he is. It is because of God's providence that

Augustine is able to offer his prayer of praise. But Augustine's prayer is public; he speaks to God in the presence of men. The publicness of his prayer is for the sake of his fellow pilgrims, so that they too will be moved to praise God, to recognize God as the source of their being. Thus, Augustine sees the public prayer which God has led him to make as the work of God's providence, God's loving care for all men. The "story" of Augustine's life is a story of God's providential action and, at the same time, itself a providential act.

1. Rousseau as Plutarch

It has been suggested that Rousseau's Confessions is his response to Agustine's Confessions. That is, Rousseau seems to be showing us that it is the creative imagination and not God's providence which is the unifying principle in terms of which one can speak of one's "life." And the unity constructed by the creative imagination is shown, by Rousseau, to be as illusory as the Great Plot.

Before proceeding to a consideration of Rousseau's account of the "real" self, it is worthwhile to mention here another work to which Rousseau calls our attention. This, too, is a work about "lives." The Fourth Reverie, in which Rousseau discusses his Confessions within the context of a distinction between fictions and lies (See above, Chapter I, pp. 36-8), begins:

"Of the few books I still read sometimes Plutarch is the one to which I am most attached and which profits me most. This was the first reading of my childhood, this will be the last of my old age. He is almost the only author that I have never read without drawing some profit from him."[1] His life is somehow "bounded" by the reading of Plutarch. In his Confessions, one of the first works which he mentions having read in his childhood is Plutarch's Lives. The relationship between Rousseau's reading of Plutarch's Lives and his "self-consciousness" will be discussed subsequently. Our present concern is with the form of the work in relation to the form of Rousseau's Confessions and Augustine's Confessions.

The title of Plutarch's work is The Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans and it is often referred to as the Parallel Lives. Without pursuing the questions concerning the history of the work, it can be said that it generally follows the following pattern: the "biography" of a noble Greek, the "biography" of a noble Roman, a comparison of these two men. Plutarch's Lives, then, has within it many lives while Rousseau's Confessions and Augustine's Confessions are each, in some sense, about one life. The stories of the lives are told by Plutarch, by someone other than those whose stories are told. Both Augustine and Rousseau tell

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[1] Rousseau, Rêveries, 4, p. 1024: Dans le petit nombre de Livres que je lis quelquefois encore, Plutarque est celui qui m'attache et me profite le plus. Ce fut la premiere lecture de mon enfance, ce sera la derniere de ma vieillesse; c'est presque le seul auteur que je n'ai jamais lu sans en tirer quelque fruit.

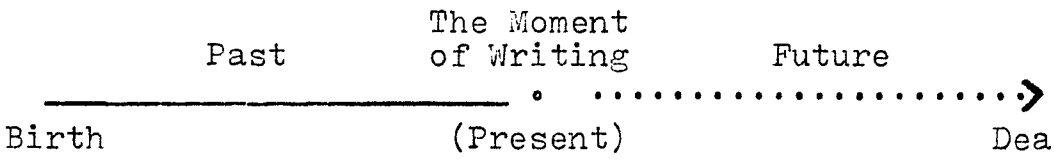
their own stories. The noble Greeks and Romans are all men of action, men engaged in political activity. They are founders of cities, rulers, military commanders; they are men whose actions had profound effects upon the history of their cities, men who have "provided for" their cities. By contrast, Augustine and Rousseau are more like Plutarch than they are like the men he writes about. Yet Augustine and Rousseau constitute between them a case of "parallel lives": Rousseau makes his Confessions parallel to Augustine's Confessions and thus provides for a comparison between himself and Augustine. And Rousseau's Confessions being essentially a fiction (i.e., one must distinguish between the private Rousseau and the Rousseau of The Confessions), Rousseau (as author of The Confessions) is closer to Plutarch than to Augustine.

2. The "movement" of The Confessions

The philosophical implications of Rousseau's "closeness" to Plutarch will be considered within the context of a discussion of Rousseau's answer to Augustine concerning the nature of man. Rousseau has "paralleled" and thus attacked the principle of the unity of Augustine's life (providence) by reducing it to the illusory unity provided by the creative imagination. Then, what, if anything, is "the same at all times"? What about man is "real"? That is, what is man's nature? And how does he

have access to that nature? If the creative imagination constructs a unity which does not correspond to anything real, then how is dissipation in the manyness of the past and future and in the manyness of opinion to be dealt with?

In the first place, while the form of Rousseau's Confessions appears to be autobiographical, it turns out that the events of this life are woven together in terms of a unitary and effectively timeless "self." The thread of the plot is the self which is "always the same." The chronological sequence of The Confessions, then, is not what is essential: the history of the portrait is not the portrait. The temporal movement of The Confessions is an instrument by which to reveal an inner self which is somehow "timeless." But Rousseau's access to his self is different in kind from our access to him, the access he gives us and which he alone can give us. The artist, through the process of painting, shows us something that he already sees. It is the revealing in time of what he sees which requires successive events. On one level, then, the movement of The Confessions appears to be something like this:



This horizontal movement gives expression to the experience of one's life as a movement through time from birth to death. On this level, Augustine's vision of his life while he is "in time" looks no different from Rousseau's. But Rousseau tells us that he is concerned with what is "intus, et in cute." He is revealing his "interior" and, in order to do this, he enters inside himself. The movement of Rousseau's Confessions is not essentially temporal; it is rather a movement from without (from the "external" events) to within (to the "interior" self), a "spatial" movement.

For Augustine, the parallel vertical movement is quite different. Augustine "ascends" from the many things outside himself to the vast spaces of memory within himself to God who is above the summit of his soul. But this movement cannot be completed while he is in time, while the movement is necessary for him in his attempt to understand himself. As movement toward God, its completion parallels the completion of the temporal movement of his life.

The incompleteness of Augustine's ascent leaves him in the bottomless, boundless subterranean shrine of memory. He knows that there is another perspective on his life but he does not have this perspective; he cannot claim for himself a vantage point outside of time. Rousseau, on the other hand, does claim a perspective outside of time: he claims the perspective on his life which for Augustine is proper only to God, the <u>Eternal</u> Being. Thus, Rousseau's movement

from the exterior to the interior constitutes a transcendence of time: "I have unveiled my interior such as you yourself [Eternal Being] [would] have seen it."

Augustine's Confessions is like the recitation of a psalm, the recitation to which he compares his experience of his life. (See above, Chapter III, pp.109-10) Indeed, his Confessions is a prayer of praise. Prayer is directed toward God; it is a form of ascent toward God. Prayer is a kind of union with God which approaches, approximates the eternal union with God in heaven. Rousseau, however, refers to his Confessions as a portrait, a painting: "Here is the only portrait of man painted exactly according to nature." The character of Rousseau's Confessions as an artistic construction has been shown to be philosophically significant. (See above, Chapter IV, pp.183-9) It is the analogy with painting, as opposed to music, which must be further explored since it bears on Rousseau's transcendence of the temporal.

It is significant that Rousseau, who described himself as passionately devoted to music and who himself composed several operas, does not choose to compare his Confessions to a musical composition or to an opera. On one level, The Confessions is much like an opera (the succession of scenes, the variety of characters) or a musical composition (the "rests" or silences, the sharps and flats). Why, then, does he constantly and only employ the analogy with painting?

3. The spatial and the temporal

In his Essay on the Origin of Languages Rousseau includes a chapter on "False Analogy between Colors and Sounds." This false analogy is an absurdity due to certain physical observations and the construction of systems. To reduce sounds to colors is to misunderstand the operations of nature, to fail to see that "the effect of colors is in their permanence and that of sounds in their succession."[2] The succession of sounds is what affects us. In a musical composition, sounds follow each other. Of course, harmony is the occurrence of different sounds at the same time. But melody which is essential to a musical composition is precisely a succession of sounds and a succession of varying sounds. Extending the sound of one note does not make a melody. The succession of sounds which constitutes a melody is analogous to the temporal (horizontal) movement of The Confessions, and thus to the experiencing of one's life as movement through time. The permanence of color is analogous to the sameness of that which remains the same through the "fugitive succession" of the moments of one's life.

Both the temporal and spatial movements of The Confessions, then, have their analogs in the fine-arts: "The sphere of

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[2]Rousseau, Essai sur l'origine des langues, chap. 16, p. 536: l'effet des coleurs est dans leur permanence et celui des sons dans leur succession.

music is time, that of painting is space."[3] The musical composition as a succession of sounds has a beginning and an end. The first note is before all the others, the last note is after all the others, and each of the other notes is both before and after some other notes. Each time the composition "occurs" it occurs as a succession of sounds, as a movement through time. The act of composing requires, perhaps, display of notes on paper, but this is not essential. And if the melody is written out, this is for the sake of the repetition, the repeated occurrence, of the succession of sounds. The process of painting has "befores" and "afters" but the painting itself does not, and the act or process of painting results in a product which is not repeatable. Even if the process were repeated exactly, the product would not be the same. Rousseau was by trade a copyist of music. Having a "copy" of a piano concerto is very different from having a copy of a Rembrandt.

The writing out of a musical composition has to do with the relationship between music and memory. The figures on the paper are there for the sake of recalling and reproducing the sound. The figures on the paper are not the sounds. Sounds are fleeting, painting is permanent:

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[3] Ibid. : Le champ de la musique est le temps, celui de la peinture est l'espace.

"Colors are durable, sounds evaporate."[4] In Book 7 of his Confessions, Rousseau recounts the story of his attendance at an opera in the theater of St. Chrysostome: "I still recall this delightful piece and I will never forget it as long as I live. . . . I wanted to have it, I got it, and I kept it for a long time; but it was not the same on paper as it was in my memory. Certainly the notes were the same but it was not the same thing. This divine air can only be performed in my head as it was actually performed on the day it awoke me."[5] One can remember a musical composition and one can remember a painting. But the remembering of a musical composition is the executing of it in one's head, not the "looking at" figures on a piece of paper.

4. Painting and music

The relationship between music and memory is even more telling. As one goes through the execution of a piece of music, either while executing it in one's head or while hearing it played aloud, one holds the composition together in one's head. One does not "hear" or experience separate, unrelated sounds: "each sound is only relative

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[4]Ibid.: Les couleurs sont durables, les sons s'évanoissent.

[5]Rousseau, Confessions, 7, p. 314: Ce morceau ravissant que je me rappelle encore et que je n'oublierai de ma vie. . . .Je voulus avoir ce morceau, je l'eus, et je l'ai gardé longtems; mais il n'étoit pas sur mon papier comme dans ma mémoire. C'étoit bien la même note, mais ce n'étoit la même chose. Jamais cet air divin ne peut être executé que dans ma tête, comme il le fut en effet le jour qu'il me réveilla.

for us and is distinguished only by comparison."[6] One remembers what has preceded and one anticipates what will follow. A musical composition is not experienced all at once. To experience it as a whole requires memory.[7] The experience of a painting is of a different kind: "At first glance, the whole is seen. The more one looks, the more one is enchanted; no more is needed than to admire and contemplate without ceasing."[8] To be sure, the colors in a painting are also parts of a whole and stand in relationship to each other. But the whole is seen all at once. The relationship among the colors is spatial: they do not follow each other in time. They have been placed on the canvas at different times, but we do not experience them one after the other. We see the whole (and its parts) at once.

As indicated above, (pp.190, 196) Augustine's Confessions is analogous to a musical composition, a psalm of praise. In the Émile, Rousseau has the Savoyard Vicar say:

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[6] Rousseau, Essai sur l'origine des langues, chap. 16, p. 536: chaque son n'est pour nous que relatif, et ne se distingue que par comparaison.

[7] See Gilson, Introduction a l'etude de Saint Augustine, p. 249. Gilson compares the difference between God and the creature to the difference between a consciousness to which all the notes of a melody would be present at once and our consciousness which perceives the notes only one after the other and which requires memory and expectation.

[8] Rousseau, Essai sur l'origine des langues, chap. 16, p. 536: du premier coup-d'oeil tout est vu. Mais plus on regarde et plus on est enchanté; il ne faut plus qu' admirer et contempler sans cesse.

"My personal identity depends upon memory and. . . to be indeed the same self I must remember that I have existed."[9] On this view, one holds the moments of one's life together by means of memory: one re-collects oneself. But in his Confessions Rousseau has himself say something different. After telling the story of his "conversion," indeed within the story of his conversion, he compares his memory of the details of events to his remembering songs. He speaks of a certain "singularity" of his memory which merits comment within the context of his recalling what is perhaps the most significant event of his life: "This singularity follows me into music. Before learning it I knew multitudes of songs by heart: as soon as I knew how to sing from notes I have not been able to retain any songs."[10] One need not "remember" when one can "see." Rousseau sees himself at a glance, all at once. His personal identity does not depend on memory. The spatial movement of The Confessions, the movement from without to within, gives him access to what it is that he is. He is not the events of his life, he need not see (remember) the events of his life. The history of

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[9]Rousseau, Émile, bk. 4, p. 590: l'identité du moi ne se prolonge que par la memoire, et. . . pour être le même en effet, il faut que je me souvienne d'avoir été.

[10]Rousseau, Confessions, 8, p. 351: Cette singularité me suit jusques dans la musique. Avant de l'apprendre je savois par coeur des multitudes de chansons: sitôt que j'ai su chanter des airs notes je n'en ai pu retenir aucun.

the portrait is not the portrait. The unity of the song is in the memory: the unity of the painting is in the painting. There are no "gaps" in the portrait. It is the analogy with painting which expresses the timeless character of what he is (his nature).

Rousseau tells us that "the perpetual emanation of the stars is the natural instrument which acts on sight: on the other hand, nature alone engenders few sounds." (Emphasis added.) One sees from this that "painting is closer to nature, and that music is more closely tied to human art."[11] The revelation of man as he is "according to nature" is analogous to painting because "the sphere of music is time, that of painting is space" and "the effect of colors is in their permanence and that of sounds in their succession."

The closeness of painting to nature shows itself not only in terms of "timelessness" but also in terms of its connection with solitude: "One also feels that one [music] interests us more than the other [painting] precisely because it brings closer the man of man and always gives us some idea of those like us." Painting can transport one to the midst of a desert, but "as soon as vocal signs

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[11] Rousseau, Essai sur L'origine des langues, chap. 16, p. 537: la perpétuelle émanation des astres est l'instrument naturel qui agit sur elle: au lieu aue la nature seule engendre peu de sons. . . . la peinture est plus près de la nature, et que la musique tient plus à l'art humain.

strike your ears, they announce a being like you." The ears tell you that you are not alone.[12] Rousseau wishes to show to those "like" him a man in all the truth of nature. We are not alone. But what he shows us is a portrait, a painting of himself: The Confessions is the only portrait of man painted exactly according to nature. The proper form for the revelation of man as he is according to nature (i.e., not l'homme de l'homme) is painting, rather than music. Rousseau is both like us and not like us. He must show to those like him a man (himself) who is unique: "I wish to show to my kind [those like me] a man in all the truth of nature; and this man, this man will be me. Me alone. I feel my heart and I know men. I am not made as any of those who exist. . . . I am other."[13]

5. The revelation of nature

Rousseau, then, sees himself as a natural man, a man according to nature. But what might he mean by this? In Book 8 of his Confessions, Rousseau recalls for us

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[12] Ibid.: On sent aussi que l'une intéresse plus que l'autre précisément parce qu'elle rapproche plus l'homme de l'homme et nour donne toujours quelque idée de nos semblables. . . . sitôt que des signes vocaux frappent votre oreille, ils vous annoncent un être semblable à vous.

[13] Rousseau, Confessions, 1, p. 5: Je veux montrer à mes semblables un homme dans toute la vérité de la nature; et cet homme, ce sera moi. Moi seul. Je sense mon coeur et je connois les hommes. . . . je suis autre.

the meditations which resulted in his Discourse on Inequality: "Buried in the forest, I looked for and found there the image of the first times of which I proudly traced the history; I demolished the little lies of men, I unveiled their nature in its nakedness to follow the progress of the times and the things which have disfigured nature and, comparing the man of man with natural man, I showed him in his pretended perfection the true source of his miseries."[14] The task of revealing man as he is according to nature (l'homme naturel) entails distinguishing natural man from "the man of man" (civilized man, social man). And in the Outlines of the Confessions Rousseau tells us that "in order to really know a character it is necessary to distinguish in it the acquired from the natural." Nature, in man, is not what one sees: "What shows itself is only the least part of what is; this is the apparent effect of which the internal cause is hidden."[15] Rousseau himself bears little if any resemblance to the savage of the Second Discourse. Yet Rousseau claims to find in himself something which, in civilized, sociable man, has been covered over, hidden from man himself.

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[14] Ibid., 8, p. 388: enfoncé dans la forest, j'y cherchois, j'y trouvois l'image des prémiers tems dont je traçois fiérement l'histoire; je faisois main basse sur les petits mensonges des hommes, j'osois dévoiler à nud leur nature, suivre le progrès du tems et des choses qui l'ont défigurée, et comparant l'homme de l'homme avec l'homme naturel, leur montrer dans son perfectionnement prétendu la véritable source de ses miséres.

[15] Rousseau, Ébauches des Confessions, p. 1149: pour bien connoitre un caractére il y faudroit distinquer l'aquis d'avec la nature. . . . Ce qui se voit n'est que la moindre partie de ce qui est; c'est l'effet apparent dont la cause interne est cachée.

In his Confessions, Rousseau deals with the question of the relevance of the "state of nature" to men who are so far removed from it. That is, The Confessions accounts for the possibility of the existence of a "natural man," the possibility of a "return" by civilized man to the state of nature. And in The Confessions Rousseau shows us his return to the state of nature and the conditions for the possibility of that return. Nature, in man, is what is inside, interior. The return to the state of nature, then, is not a turning back (in time) but a turning within;[16] it is not a "temporal" but a "spatial" movement. Rousseau shows us this turning within by painting himself as he is in the face of death and as he is in his solitude. (See above, Chapter II, pp.85-98)

6. Conversion as unveiling

As suggested in Chapter I, the structural parallel between Rousseau's Confessions and Augustine's Confessions has at its center the "conversions" recounted in Book 8 of each work. The conversion incident marks a radical turning point for both Augustine and Rousseau. Augustine refers to his conversion as "that very moment in time" in which he became "something else."[17] For Augustine, this conversion is clearly the work of divine providence. It is

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[16]See Burgelin, La philosophie de l'existence, p. 576; Cassirer, The Question of Jean Jacques Rousseau, p. 50.

[17]Augustine, Confessions, 8. 11.

immediately after telling the story of his conversion that he asks "Who am I and what am I?" His conversion, his "turning" to God, enables him to see what he is, though through a glass darkly, and to recognize the limits of his seeing.

Rousseau speaks of his "conversion" in two places. In Book 8 of The Confessions he provides us with an account of the incident but, because of his "singular" memory (see above, p. 201) he refers us to his Four Letters to Malesherbes for the details of the incident. In The Confessions, he tells us that on his way to visit Diderot, he comes upon the question proposed by the Academy of Dijon: "Whether the progress of the sciences and of the arts has contributed to the corruption or to the purification of morals?" The reading of this question has a remarkable effect on him: "At the instant of this reading, I saw another universe and I became another man."[18] When he arrives at Vincennes he is obviously agitated and, when Diderot perceives his agitation, Rousseau reads to him the prosopopée of Fabricius (Plutarch) which he had written while under the oak tree. Diderot exhorts him to write what turns out to be the First Discourse and to compete for the prize: "I did it, and from that instant I was lost. All the rest of my life and of my

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[18] Rousseau, Confessions, 7, p. 351: A l'instant de cette lecture je vis un autre univers et je devine un autre homme.

misfortunes was the inevitable effect of this moment of aberration."[19]

Now Rousseau regards his Four Letters to Malesherbes as a kind of summary of his Confessions. And in The Confessions he tells us what prompted him to write those letters. Malesherbes has the impression that Rousseau is wretched in his solitude and Rousseau thinks it very important to correct that impression. The account of his conversion which he includes in the second of these letters is preceded by a discussion of his detachment from society. This discussion deals, in part, with his early reading of Plutarch and with his creation of an imaginary society for himself. He prefaces the account of his conversion with the following statement:

> After having spent 40 years of my life thus discontent with myself and with others, I sought uselessly to break the bonds which held me attached to that society which I esteemed so little and which enchained me to occupations the least to my taste by needs that I esteemed those of nature but which were only those of opinion. Suddenly a fortunate accident came to enlighten me on what I had to do for myself and what I had to think of those like

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[19] Ibid.: Je le fis, et dès cet instant je fus perdu. Tout le reste de ma vie et de mes malheurs fut l'effet inévitable de cet instant d'égarement.

[20] Rousseau, Quatre lettres à Malesherbes, p. 1135: Apres avoir passé 40 ans de ma vie ainsi mécontent de moi meme et des autres je cherchois inutilement à rompre les liens qui me tenoient attaché à cette societé que j'estimois si peu, et qui m'enchainoient aux occupations le moins de mon gout par des besoins que j'estimois ceux de la nature, et qui n'étoient que ceux de l'opinion. Tout à coup un heureaux hasard vint m'eclairer sur ce que j'avois à faire pour moi meme, et à penser de mes semblables sur lesquels

> me, about whom my heart was ceaselessly in contradiction with my mind and whom I felt myself still inclined to love with so many reasons to hate. I would like, Sir, to be able to paint for you this moment which has made such a unique epoch in my life and which will always be present to me were I to live eternally.[20]

And after his account of the incident, he tells us: "Here is how, when I thought least about it, I became an author in spite of myself."[21]

Rousseau refers to this turning point in his life as the result of a "fortunate accident," a happy event. His conversion is not the work of God, not part of an infallibly executed plan conceived by an all-knowing and carried out by an all-powerful Being (as in Augustine). It is rather explicitly characterized as the result of chance and chance, of course, has no place in an all-inclusive divine design. What Rousseau is painting in his Confessions is the portrait of man as he is according to nature. It is through an accident that he is enabled to see man as he truly is. That is, it is the work of chance that nature re-asserts itself in him.[22] Nature has room for

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mon coeur etoit sans cesse en contradiction avec mon esprit et que je me sentois encore porté à aimer avec tant de raisons de les hair. Je voudrois Monsieur vous pouvoir peindre ce moment qui a fait dans ma vie une si singuliere epoque et qui sera toujours present quand je vivrois eternellement.

[21] Ibid., p. 1136: Voila comment lorsque j'y pensois le moins je devins auteyr presque malgré moi.

[22] See Jean Starobinski, "Le Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité," in Jean-Jacques Rousseau: La transparence et l'obstacle, suivi de Sept essais sur Rousseau (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), p. 341; Guéhenno, Rousseau, 1 : 205.

chance; all-inclusive "systems" are madness. (See above, Chapter IV, pp.177-9) The recovery, or uncovering, of nature is an accident because one does not know that the recovery has to be made until it has been made. Rousseau did not plan or provide for it; it happens to him and in him.

7. The inner and the outer

Rousseau's account of his conversion seems to include certain contradictory assertions. He is attempting to show Malesherbes that he is happy and he refers to the incident on the way to Vincennes as a fortunate accident. Yet in The Confessions he seems to trace all the misery of the rest of his life to that moment. The contradiction is resolved, at least on one level, by the distinction between Rousseau's seeing and his writing. It is the writing of the First Discourse and the competing for the prize which is the source of his misery. He becomes an author. The moment in which he sees what he must do for himself in order to be happy is followed by the moment of madness in which he becomes a "public" figure. He sees the chains which bind him to society as the work of opinion and not the work of nature and then proceeds to throw himself into the arena of public opinion. The "turning point" in Rousseau's life is a turning within (a turning toward solitude) and the beginning of his public life: he became an author and a

solitary.

In the Outlines of the Confession, Rousseau claims that "there was a Rousseau in the world, and another in his retreat who resembled him in nothing."[23] Rousseau in his retreat is the Rousseau of Charmettes (Book 6), of l'Hermitage (Book 9), and of St. Pierre (Book 12); and Rousseau in his retreat is happy. In his solitude he is somehow like the savage and enjoys the happiness of the savage:

> Savage man and civilized man differ so much in the bottom of their hearts and inclinations that what constitutes the supreme happiness of one would reduce the other to despair. The former breathes only repose and freedom; he wants only to live and remain idle;. . . On the contrary, the citizen, always active, sweats, agitates himself, torments himself incessantly in order to seek still more laborious occupations; he works to death, he even rushes to it in order to get in condition to live, or renounces life in order to acquire immortality. . . What a sight the difficult and envied labors of a European minister are for a Carib! How many cruel deaths would that indolent savage not prefer to the horror of such a life. . .? But in order to see the goal of so many cares, the words 'power' and 'reputation' would have to have a meaning in his mind, he would have to learn that there is a kind of men who set some store by the consideration of the rest of the universe and who know how to be happy and content with themselves on the testimony of others rather than on their own. Such is, in fact, the true cause of all these differences: the savage lives within himself; the sociable man, always outside of himself, knows how to live only in the opinion of others; and it is, so to speak, from their judgment alone that he draws the sentiment of his own existence.[24]

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[23] Rousseau, Ébauches des Confessions, p. 1151: Il y avait un Rousseau dans le grand monde, et un autre dans le retraite qui ne lui ressembloit en rien.

[24] Rousseau, Discours sur l'inégalité, pt. 2, pp. 192-3: L'homme Sauvage et l'homme policé différent tellement par le fond du coeur et des inclinations, que ce qui fait le bonheur suprême de l'un réduiroit l'autre au désespoir. Le premier ne respire que le repos et la liberté, il ne veut que vivre

Living in the opinions of others is vanity. The sociable man knows how to live only in the opinions of others: he is dissipated, emptied, in the manyness of opinion.[25] Vanity has him always agitated, always seeking, and thus always living in the future and rushing blindly toward his death. The sociable man lives outside of himself in the opinions of those who are not himself and in the future which is not yet and may never be. The savage, on the other hand, lives within himself; his are the idleness and freedom which comes from the absence of foresight. What ultimately accounts for the differences between the savage and the sociable man is, in great part, the relative powers of the imagination. The soul of the savage is agitated by

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et rester oisif, ...Au contraire, le Citoyen toujours actif, suë, s'agite, se tourmente sans cesse pour chercher des occupations encore plus laborieuses: il travaille jusqu'à la mort, il y court même pour se mettre en état de vivre, ou renonce à la vie pour acquerir l'immortalité. . . . Quel Spectacle pour un Caraïbe, que les travaux penibles et enviés d'un Ministre Européen! Combien de morts cruelles ne préférer_oit pas cet indolent Sauvage a l'horreur d'une pareille vie. . . ? Mais pour voir le but de tant de soins, il faudroit que ces mots, puissance et réputation, eussent un sens dans son esprit, qu'il apprêt qu'il y a une sorte d'hommes qui comptent pour quelque chose les regards du reste de l'univers, qui savent être heureux et contens d'eux mêmes sur le temoignage d'autrui plûtôt que sur le leur propre. Telle est, en effet, la véritable cause de toutes ces différences: le Sauvage vit en lui-même; l'homme sociable toûjours hors de lui ne sait vivre que dans l'opinion des autres, et c'est, pour ainsi dire, de leur seul jugement qu'il tire le sentiment de sa propre éxistence.

[25]Burgelin, La philosophie de l'existence, pp. 160, 176, 180, points to the "fictive self" which exists in the opinions of others and to the "other Jean-Jacques" produced by Rousseau's own imagination, the fictive person which tries to imitate what seems to be the perfection of a social type. According to Burgelin, Rousseau writes his Confessions, at least partly, to show that the "image" the others have of him is false. Also see Groethuysen, J. J. Rousseau, p. 47.

nothing because his imagination suggests nothing to him. The soul of civilized man is always agitated because his imagination suggests everything to him. (See above, Chapter III, pp. 128-38) Civilized man constructs an imaginary integral self for himself out of the manyness of opinion and out of the manyness of the moments of a past which is no longer and a future which is not yet. But "imagination, which causes so much havoc among us, does not speak to savage hearts."[26] The soul of the savage "is given over to the sole sentiment of its present existence without any idea of the future, however near it may be, and his projects, as limited as his views, barely extend to the end of the day."[27]

Surely, Rousseau is not a man without imagination. He often speaks of the tremendous power and richness of his imagination.[28] Thus, Rousseau seems far removed from the savage whose imagination suggests nothing to him. Rousseau has uncovered the role of the creative (constructive)

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[26]Rousseau, Discours sur l'inégalité, pt. 1, p. 158: L'imagination qui fait tant de ravages parmi nous, ne parle point à des coeurs Sauvages.

[27]Ibid., p. 144: se livre au seul sentiment de son existence actuelle, sans aucune idée de l'avenir, quelque prochain qu'il puisse être, et ses projets bornés comme ses vûes, s'étendent à peine jusqu'à la fin de la journée.

[28]See, for example, Confessions, 4, pp. 159-60: "It is impossible for men and difficult for nature herself to surpass my imagination in richness."

imagination in civilized man's understanding of himself. And in connection with the constructed, imaginary self, it is noteworthy that Rousseau says of himself: "I believe that no individual of our kind would have naturally less vanity than myself."[29] Rousseau, then, has a great deal of imagination and very little vanity. His true self is not constructed out of the opinions of others and out of the moments of the past and future, but his self-consciousness is closely tied, in its beginnings, to his powerful and active imagination.

8. A return to Plutarch

Toward the beginning of Book 1, Rousseau tells us: "I do not know what I did until I was five or six years old. I do not know how I learned to read; I only remember my first readings and their effect on me: this is the time from which I date without interruption the consciousness of myself."[30] In the Fourth Reverie he indicates that Plutarch was the first reading of his childhood and in The Confessions he says that Plutarch was his favorite reading. He remembers the effect that this reading had on him:

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[29]Rousseau, Confessions, 1, p. 14: Je crois que jamais individu de notre espece n'eut nauturellement moins de vanité que moi.

[30]Ibid., p. 8: J'ignore ce que fis jusqu'à cinq ou six ans: je ne sais comment j'appris à lire; je ne me souviens que de mes prémiéres lectures et leur effet sur moi: c'est le tems d'où je date sans interruption la conscience de moi-même.

> Ceaselessly occupied with Rome and Athens, living, so to speak, with their great men, born myself a citizen of a Republic and the son of a father whose love of country was his strongest passion, I inflamed myself by his example. I believed myself Greek or Roman; I became the person whose life I read. The account of traits of constancy and intrepidity which struck me made my eyes sparkle and my voice strong. One day, as I recounted at table the adventure of Scevola, it was frightening to see me put out my hand and hold it on a chafing-dish in order to represent his action.[31]

Rousseau became the person whose life he read and, from the time he began to read, he dates the uninterrupted consciousness of himself: his consciousness of himself occurs at the same time as he imagines himself to be another.[32] He re-presents the action (exterior) of the person he imagines himself to be. Émile, however will not at first be permitted to read Plutarch. Since he must have books, his tutor chooses one which will contribute to "the earliest training of the child's imagination." This book is Robinson Crusoe and is the first book Émile will read.[33]

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[31] Ibid., p. 9: Sans cesse occupé de Rome et d' Athénes; vivant, pour ainsi dire, avec leurs grands hommes, né moi-même Citoyen d'une République, et fils d'un pere dont l'amour de la patrie étoit la plus forte passion, je m'en enflamois à son exemple; je me croyois Grec ou Romain; je devenois le personnage dont je lisois la vie; le recit des traits de constance et d'intrepidité qui m'avoient frappé me rendoit les yeux étincellans et la voix forte. Un jour que je recontois à table l'avanture de Scevola, on fut effrayé de me voir avancer et tenir la main sur un réchaud pour representer son action.

[32] See Starobinski, La transparence et l'obstacle, p. 17; Raymond, La quête de soi, p. 96.

[33] Rousseau, Émile, bk. 3, p. 455.

Émile is not Rousseau. Rousseau has transcended his education, has seen his education for what it was. But Émile is an ordinary boy and must not be exposed at an early age to the dangers of imagining himself as a hero who is glorified and honored by his fellow-men. When he does study the ancient authors, he will generally prefer them to modern authors because the ancients are "nearer to nature." The example which Rousseau chooses to illustrate the difference between ancient and modern tastes is that of the incriptions on tombs: "Our monuments are covered with praises, theirs recorded facts. 'Stand, traveler; you are tramping on a hero.' If I had found this epitaph on an ancient monument, I should at once have guessed it was modern; for there is nothing so common among us as heroes, but among the ancients they were rare. Instead of saying a man was a hero, they would have said what he had done to gain that name."[34] Rousseau gives three examples of ancient epitaphs: "Tarsus and Anchiales I built in a day, and now I am dead" (the epitaph of the effeminate Sardanopalus), "They died without stain in war and in love" (Xenophon's tribute to the memory of some warriors who were slain by treason during the retreat of the Ten Thousand), and "Go, Traveler, tell Sparta that here we fell in obedience to her laws" (epitaph engraved on a tomb at Thermopylas). Imagining

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[34] Ibid., bk. 3, p. 675: Les nôtres sont couverts d'éloges; sur ceux des anciens on lisoit des faits. Sta viator, Heroem calcas. Quand j'aurois trouvé cette épitaphe sur un monument antique, j'aurois d'abord deviné qu'elle étoit moderne, car rien n'est si commum que des heros parmi nous, mais chez les anciens ils étoient rares. Au lieu de dire qu'un homme étoit un heros ils auroient dit ce qu'il avoit fait pour l'être.

oneself as a hero costs nothing. What is praised in the second and third epitaphs is heroic death. Heroism usually occurs in the face of death and the awareness of imminent violent death tends to discourage heroic imaginings. The first epitaph does not praise Sardanopalus; it points to his ultimate powerlessness, his mortality, which he shares with all other men.

The ancients are closer to nature; Rousseau is closer to Plutarch than he is to Augustine. What is significant for the public is public action, not heroic imaginings and not the awareness of the inner self which is the hidden pre-condition for such imaginings. On the level of the political, the exterior (actions) is all important. **And Christianity is** essentially a-political.[35] For Augustine it is sinning which is trying to be what we are not, acting as if we were what we are not: man is God's creature and totally dependent upon God. Sin is more a matter of intention than of action. For Rousseau, man is by nature a-social but must live as if he were social. He must live as if he is what he is not.[36] Therefore, on

[35]See Burgelin, La philosophie de l'existence, p. 443.

[36]For Rousseau it is living as social which is being what we are not. Perhaps the most obvious comparison is with Aristotle, Politics 1. 9. 1253a: "Man is by nature an animal intended to live in a polis." The sharpest contrast between Aristotle and Rousseau with reference to man's nature would seem to be expressible in terms of the distinction between the self-sufficiency of Rousseau's isolated "natural man" and the self-sufficiency described in the Nicomachean Ethics 1. 7. 1097b: "For the final and perfect good [happiness] seems to be self-sufficient. However, we define something as self-sufficient not by reference to the 'self' alone. We do not mean a man who lives his life in isolation, but a man who also lives with parents, children, a wife, and friends, and fellow-citizens generally, since man is by nature a social and political being." But this is not

the level of the political, the exterior which is not what he is assumes a greater importance than the interior which is what he is.[37] The interiorization of the self is

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Aristotle's last word on the subject of self-sufficiency, in Book X, Chapter 7, of his Nicomachean Ethics (1177a) he discusses the happiness of the wise: "Like a just man and any other virtuous men, a wise man requires the necessities of life; once these have been adequately provided, a just man still needs people toward whom to act justly, and the same is true of a self-controlled man, a courageous man, and all the rest. But a wise man is able to study even by himself, and the wiser he is the more is he able to do it. Perhaps he could do it better if he had colleagues to work with him, but he still is the most self-sufficient of all." Theoretical activity, contemplation, is godlike (1178b) but engaging in this most self-sufficient activity is at least not incompatible with friendship. There is a contrast but not an incompatibility between the just man (citizen) and the wise man (philosopher).

Now, there is a contrast but not an incompatibility between the savage and Rousseau. But this contrast does not parallel Aristotle's contrast between the just man and the wise man. Both Rousseau and the savage, despite the gulf which separates them, are isolated and self-sufficient. In this context, see Leo Strauss, "On the Intention of Rousseau," in Hobbes and Rousseau: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Maurice Cranston and Richard S. Peters, Modern Studies in Philosophy (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1972), p. 278. Here Strauss notes that there are "two different types, who stand at the opposite poles of humanity (the primitive man and the wise) and who yet belong together as natural men, as self-sufficient beings, or 'numerical units,' in contradistinction to an intermediate type, the citizen or social man, that is, the man who is bound by duties or obligations and who is only a 'fractionary unit.'" This distinction recalls Aristotle's claim in the Politics 1. 9. 1235a that "he who is without a polis, by reason of his own nature and not of some accident, is either a poor sort of being [beast] , or a being higher than man [god] ." Rousseau, as a "natural man," is somehow a beast (savage) and a god (in his divine self-sufficiency). On this latter point, see Groethuysen, J. J. Rousseau, pp. 37-8.

[37] See Groethuysen, J. J. Rousseau, p. 121. Groethuysen maintains that, from Rousseau's point of view, society does not "denature" us sufficiently. In connection with note 36 (above), Groethuysen's claim sets up parallel polarities: natural man (savage, Rousseau) vs. social man and individual vs. society. This sheds light on Rousseau's rather puzzling

politically dangerous because it allows a man to disassociate himself from his public acts: "There are moments of a kind of delirium when it would be necessary not to judge men by their actions."[38] Of his abandonment of Le Maitre, the subject of his third painful confession, Rousseau says: "There are times when I am so little like myself that one would take me for another man of entirely opposite character."[39]

Having an interior self as a point of reference, one can say "This is really me" or "This is not really me." The characters in Plutarch's Lives cannot say this. What they are for us is no more and no other than what they show themselves to be in their public acts, what is visible to us (not what would be visible only to God).[40]

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statement in the Fifth Reverie (cited below, pp. 228-9) that it would not be good in the present constitution of things for most men to experience what Rousseau experiences - the feeling of one's own existence. If society is to work, socialization must be as complete as possible. It requires a solitary (Rousseau) to see the problem of the individual and society. It is in terms of this problem that the distinction between Rousseau's "autobiographical" and his "political" works has philosophical significance.

[38] Rousseau, Confessions, 1, p. 39: il y a des momens d'un espéce de délire, où il ne faut point juger des hommes par leurs actions.

[39] Ibid., 3, p. 128: Il y a des tems où je suis si peu semblable à moi-même qu'on me prendroit pour un autre homme de caratére tout opposé.

In connection with this being "another man," consider Rousseau's "becomeing" Vaussore de Villeneuve (Confessions 4, p. 148) and Mr. Dudding (6, p. 250). Compare the present interpretation with the psychologically oriented interpretation of Starobinski, La transparence et l'obstacle, pp. 78-83; Raymond, La quête de soi, pp. 19-22; Guéhenno, Rousseau, 1:79.

[40] See Rousseau, Émile, bk. 4, p. 531. Here Rousseau speaks of the excellence of Plutarch, of the true art of

9. Self-awareness through communion with an other

The movement from the exterior to the interior, the essential movement of Rousseau's Confessions, is the movement from living in the opinions of others (God being an other) to living within oneself, the movement from dissipation in past and future to unity in the "timeless" moment of self-awareness. The movement from living in the opinions of others to living within oneself is expressed in the movement from society to solitude.[41] Rousseau shows us the beginning of his self-consciousness in the imagination of himself as someone else, as the noble Greek or Roman he read about. He begins to be conscious of himself in imagining himself greatly honored by other men. The movement from this initial drawing the sentiment of his existence from the opinions of others, from living outside himself, to the ultimate living by and in himself

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portraiture: it is trifles which show what we really are. The trifles which Rousseau cites as having been mentioned in Plutarch are "little things" such as a word, a smile, a gesture. From these visible things Rousseau infers the characteristics of Plutarch's heroes. Rousseau makes the same kind of inferences concerning some of the characters in his Confessions: see Voisine, "Introduction," p. XCVI.

[41] With reference to the "a-social" character of Rousseau's Confessions, see Voisine, "Introduction," p. XCV. Voisine compares The Confessions to the genre of "memoirs" and notes Rousseau's indifference to public events and the relative independence of Rousseau's "interior history" from the "common chronology."

is mediated by his living with another. Rousseau tells us that, after Mama had "saved" him from death,

> We began, without thinking about it, to be inseparable, to put in some way our entire existence in common, and feeling that we were not only necessary but sufficient to each other, we became accustomed to thinking of nothing that was strange to us [not us], to completely limit our happiness and all our desires to this possession of each other - a possession perhaps unique among human beings which was not, as I have said, that of love [l'amour] but a more essential possession which, without being linked to the senses, sex, age or appearance, was concerned with all that by which one is self and that one can lose only in ceasing to be.[42]

If Rousseau had not known Mama or had not lived with her long enough he might have "died without having known his being." His living with her is one of those "occasional causes" by which he comes to know himself.[43] This "common existence," this "mutual possesion," would seem to be "the most intimate society possible" and he says of this society that it is his greatest, most inextinguishable need. He describes this intimacy as "two souls in the same body" but explicitly dissociates it from sexual union.[44] The members of this

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[42] Rousseau, Confessions, 5, p. 222: Nous commençames, sans y songer, à ne plus nous séparer l'un de l'autre, à mettre en quelque sorte toute notre existence en commun, et sentant que reciproqement nous nous étions non seulement necessaires mais suffisans, nous nous accoutumames à ne plus pense à rien d'étranger à nous, à borner absolument notre bonheur et tous nos desirs à cette possession mutuelle et peutêtre unique parmi les humains, qui n'étoit point, comme je l'ai dit, celle de l'amour; mais une possession plus essencielle qui, sans tenir aux sens, au sexe, à l'age, à la figure tenoit à tout ce par quoi l'on est soi, et qu'on ne peut perdre qu'en cessant d'être.

[43] Ibid., 3, p. 104.

[44] Ibid., 9, p. 414.

most intimate society are both necessary and sufficient to each other.

Rousseau does not look upon relationships of this kind as rooted in vanity. (See above, pp. 211-3) He does not equate the desire to be loved with the living in the opinions of others which is characteristic of civilized man.[45] In the course of his reflections on his life as a student at Bossey he tells us: "Tender, affectionate, peaceful sentiments were the foundation [of life at Bossey] . I believe that no individual of our kind would have naturally less vanity than myself. . . .To be loved by all those who approached me was the most lively of my desires."[46]

Augustine, on the other hand, does reduce such relationships to vanity. In Book 4 of his Confessions he recounts the incident of the death of a very dear friend whom Augustine's soul "could not be without."[47] When this friend died, Augustine "was unhappy and so is every soul unhappy which is tied to its love for mortal things." Augustine loved this friend as though his friend would never die; he was his friend's "other self." He agrees with the

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[45]See Burgelin, La philosophie de l'existence, p. 373: Burgelin maintains that friendship (as distinguished from sexual union) is a prolongation of the natural l'amour de soi. L'amour de soi is distinguished from l'amour propre in which vanity is inherent.

[46]Rousseau, Confessions, 1, p. 14: Les sentimens tendres, affecteux, paisibles en faisoient le fond. Je crois que jamais individu de notre espéce n'eut naturellement moins de vanité que moi. . . . Etre aimé de tout ce qui m'approchoit étoit le plus vif de mes desirs.

[47]Augustine, Confessions, 4. 4.

poet who called his friend "the half of his own soul" for he felt that his soul and his friend's soul had been "one soul in two bodies."[48] Augustine's recollection of and reflection on his friend's death is part of his attempt to call back to mind his past impurities: "And gathering myself together from the scattered fragments into which I was broken and dissipated during all that time when, being turned away from you, the One, I lost myself in the distractions of the Many. . . .pleasing myself and being anxious to please in the eyes of men. And what was it that delighted me? Only this-- to love and be loved."[49] The friendship which Augustine describes was not true friendship "because there can be no true friendship unless those who cling to each other are welded together by [God] in that love which is spread throughout our hearts by the holy spirit which is given to us."[50] The souls of two friends (friendship being the condition of "one soul in two bodies") must be welded together by God who is "above the summit" of each soul. For the Christian, only God is necessary and sufficient.

In the Second Dialogue, Rousseau discusses the solitude of Jean-Jacques. He states the claim that absolute solitude is contrary to nature and that "our sweetest existence is relative and collective, and our true self is not entirely within us."[51] Thus, the solitary Jean-Jacques must be

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[48] Ibid., 4. 6.

[49] Ibid., 2. 1-2.

[50] Ibid., 4. 4.

[51] Rousseau, Dialogues, 2, p. 813: Notre plus douce existence est relative et collective, et notre vrai moi n'est pas tout entier en nous.

very discontent: this is how he appears in the "portraits" that others have painted. In fact, however, he is happy and serene. And he writes his letters to Malesherbes in order to show how it is that he can be happy in his solitude. Rousseau attributes the happiness of the solitary Jean-Jacques to his reveries: "An active heart and a natural laziness must inspire the taste for reveries. This taste breaks out and becomes a very lively passion, however little it is supported by the imagination."[52] The taste for reveries is attributed to providence/nature: "O providence! O nature! treasure of the poor, resource of the unfortunate."[53] As soon as Rousseau is alone, he is happy.

10. From the manifold inward to the self

The movement from society to solitude proceeds as follows:

many (society/vanity)
↓
two (common existence)
↓
one (solitude/happiness)

It is noteworthy that this movement is the reverse of the movement of the "history" of man presented in the Second

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[52] Ibid., p.816: Un coeur actif et un naturel paresseux doivent inspirer le gout de la rêverie. Ce gout perce et devient une passion très vive, pour peu qu'il soit secondé par l'imagination.

[53] Ibid., p. 813: O providence! Ô nature! tresor du pauvre, ressource de l'infortuné.

Discourse. The temporal movement of man is reversed in the spatial movement of one man.[54] And the "spatial" movement of Rousseau, his separation from the society of men, is parallel to the movement inward from the manyness of past and future to the "timeless" instant of self-awareness. Rousseau reveals these parallel movements by showing us himself as he is at Charmettes: Charmettes is the scene of his retreat from society and of his imminent death. In the face of death, Rousseau is like the savage of the Second Discourse whose "soul, agitated by nothing,

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[54] See Starobinski, La transparence et l'obstacle, p. 31. According to Starobinski, nature ceases to be what is furthest behind us and offers itself as what is most central in us. Also see Groethuysen, J.J. Rousseau, p. 17, for a discussion of nature as an "interior reality." Further, the problem of the "supposed primitivism" of Rousseau is central within the context of Rousseau's "return" to the state of nature. See A. O. Lovejoy, "The Supposed Primitivism of Rousseau's Discourse on Inequality," Essays in the History of Ideas (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins Press for The History of Ideas Club of the Johns Hopkins University, 1948), p. 20. Lovejoy writes: "That men are, in Rousseau's sense, less happy than doges or sheep, is a familiar, almost a platitudinous, conjecture, and not lacking in plausibility, though somewhat difficult of proof. Rousseau's thesis about the happiness of the state of nature has essentially the same meaning. And just as the admission of the former conjecture does not imply that one would, on the whole, prefer to be a dog or a sheep, so Rousseau's thesis does not necessarily imply a preference for the condition of the truly natural man." As already noted, Rousseau bears little if any resemblance to the savage of the Second Discourse. His "return" to the state of nature is not a return to the condition of the stupid animal-man. See Leo Strauss, Natural Right and History (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953; Phoenix Books, 1965), p. 292: "The feeling of existence as Rousseau experienced and described it has a rich articulation which must have been lacking in the feeling of existence as it was experienced by men in the state of nature. Here at least civilized man or those civilized men who have returned from civil society to solitude reach a degree of happiness of which the stupid animal must have been utterly incapable."

is given solely to the feeling of its present existence without any idea of the future." (See above, Chapter II, pp. 85-98)

The movement from dissipation in the manyness of the past and future to the "timeless" instant of self-awareness is mediated by the experience of the "prolonged present" in union with the beloved. He says of his moments alone with Mama: "I had neither transports nor desires when I was with her: I was in a state of delightful calm, enjoying without knowing why. I would have spent my whole life and even eternity that way without being bored for an instant."[55] And of his intimacy with Therese he writes: "This sweet intimacy took the place of everything: the future no longer touched me or touched me only as the prolonged present: I desired nothing other than to assure its duration."[56] The solitude of death is like the solitude of the "timeless" moment of self-awareness.

Thus the movement from society to solitude and the movement from time to timelessness are two aspects of the

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[55] Rousseau, Confessions, 3, p. 107: "Je n'avois ni transports ni desirs auprès d'elle: j'étois dans un calme ravissant, jouissant sans savoir quoi. J'aurois ainsi passé ma vie et l'éternité même m'ennuyer un instant.

[56] Ibid., 7, p. 333: Cette douce intimité me tenoit lieu de tout; l'avenir ne me touchoit plus ou ne me touchoit que comme le présent prolongé: je ne desirois rien que d'en assurer la durée.

same movement, the movement from exterior to interior.[57] The parallel might be expressed in the following manner:[58]

manyness of {opinions / society	manyness of past and future moments
↓	↓
common existence	prolonged present
↓	↓
solitude	"timeless" moment

Death is the ultimate solitude, the ultimate separation from others, and the ultimate timelessness, the ultimate cutting off from past and future.

The feeling of one's own existence is experienced only in the absence of the consciousness of past and future. The inner self, the true self, is grasped in the timeless instant (however extended it may be) of self-perception. But the revelation of this inner self to other men requires a spelling-out, a succession of sounds, an artistic reconstruction. What underlies this imaginative construction is the assumption of a timelessly subsistent inner self, an assumption unrecognized by the "man of man" (sociable man) but known and now revealed by the "natural Rousseau."

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[57] With reference to the parallelism between dissipation in time and dissipation in the opinions of others, see Jean Starobinski, "Rousseau et Buffon," in Jean-Jacques Rousseau: La transparence et l'obstacle, suivi de Sept essais sur Rousseau (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), p. 388; and Burgelin, La philosophie de l'existence, p. 136. For a discussion of the relationship between the movement to timelessness and the movement within, see Poulet, Studies in Human Time, pp. 166-7.

[58] Compare Raymond, La quête de soi, p. 115.

11. The portrait completed

As noted in Chapter I, Rousseau's Confessions has the appearance of incompleteness. Yet Rousseau paints a complete portrait. The Confessions does have in itself the completeness of death, of movement within. But if we permit ourselves to take the apparent incompleteness seriously we also find a completion of The Confessions in Rousseau's Reveries. The Reveries, he tells us, may be regarded as an appendix to his Confessions.[59] The Confessions has its vertical (inward) movement contained within itself and its horizontal (temporal) movement pointing to the Reveries. In the First Promenade, Rousseau described his situation as he writes the work: "Everything is finished for me on earth. One can no longer do me good or evil. Nothing remains for me to hope or fear in this world, and I am here, tranquil, at the bottom of the abyss, a poor unfortunate mortal, but impassive as God himself."[60] His death is near and he is alone. The Confessions, on the temporal level, stops far short of his death. A thorough-going examination of the Reveries is beyond our scope. What is at issue here is the movement of The Confessions, the movement which shows itself to be the "return" to nature.

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[59] Rousseau, Reveries, 1, p. 1000.

[60] Ibid., p. 999: Tout est fini pour moi sur la terre. On ne peut plus m'y faire ni bien ni mal. Il ne me reste plus rien à esperer ni à craindre en ce monde, et m'y voilà tranquille au fond de l'abyme, pauvre mortel infortuné, mais impassible comme Dieu même.

And the completion of this movement is presented, in the Reveries, within the context of a "dream" about the Isle de St. Pierre, the place of the last "happy" scene of The Confessions. In the Fifth Promenade, Rousseau finds himself transported there by desire. The passage which follows this transportation by desire appears to be the account of the "dream" of the inward movement painted in The Confessions:

> I have noticed in the vicissitudes of a long life that the epochs of the sweetest joys and the most lively pleasures are not, however, those of which the memory attracts me and touches me most. These brief moments of delirium and passion, however lively they may be, are still, and by their very vivacity, only points scattered along the line of life. They are too rare and too rapid to constitute a state. The happiness that my heart regrets is not composed of fugitive instants but is a simple and permanent state - a state which is nothing lively in itself but of which the duration increases the delight to the point of finding there, at last, the supreme happiness.
>
> All is in a continual flux on the earth: nothing keeps a constant and fixed form, and our affections, which attach us to exterior things, pass and change necessarily as the things pass and change. Always ahead of us or behind us, they recall the past which is no longer or forsee the future which often must not be: there is nothing solid there to which the heart can attach itself. Also, here below one hardly has even pleasure which passes; as for the happiness which lasts, I doubt that it is known. Scarcely is there in our most lively joys an instant where the heart can truly say to us: I wish that this instant would last forever; and how can one call 'happiness' a fugitive state which leaves us with a heart still troubled and empty, which makes us regret something in advance or still desire something after?
>
> There is a state where the soul finds a solid enough site to rest itself entirely and gather together there its entire being without having to recall the past or to step over into the future; where times are nothing for it, where the present lasts always without, however, marking its duration and without any trace of succession, without any other feeling - of privation or joy, of

pleasure or pain, of desire or fear - than that alone of our existence, and this feeling alone can fill it completely. As long as this state lasts, whoever finds himself there can call himself happy, not with an imperfect happiness poor and relative such as what one finds in the pleasures of life, but with a sufficient happiness perfect and full which leaves in the soul no void which it feels the need of filling. Such is the state where I found myself often on the Isle de St. Pierre in my solitary reveries, whether lying in my boat which I let drift at the mercy of the water, whether sitting on the shores of the agitated lake, whether somewhere else on the edge of a beautiful river or a brook murmuring on the gravel.

What does one enjoy in such a situation? Nothing exterior to the self, nothing except the self and its own existence. As long as this state lasts, one is as sufficient to oneself as God. The sentiment of existence, stripped of all other affection, is by itself a precious sentiment of contentment and peace which would be sufficient alone to make existence dear and sweet to whoever knows how to set aside from himself all the sensual and earthly impressions which ceaselessly come to distract us and to disturb the sweetness here below. But most men, agitated by continual passions, hardly know this state and, having tasted it only imperfectly for a few instants, keep only an obscure and confused idea of it which does not make them feel its charm. It would not even be good, in the present constitution of things, that, eager for these sweet ecstasies, they would be disgusted with the active life for which their needs, always reborn, prescribe the duty to them. But an unfortunate who has been cut off from human society and who is no longer able here below to do anything useful and good for others or for himself can find in this state some consolations for all human happiness- consolations that fortune and men would not know how to take away from him.[61]

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[61] Ibid., 5, p. 1046-7: J'ai remarqué dans les vicissitudes d'une longue vie que les époques des plus douces jouissances et des plaisirs les plus vifs ne sont pourtant pas celles dont le souvenir m'attire et me touche le plus. Ces courts momens de délire et de passion, quelque vifs qu'ils puissent être ne sont cependant et par leur vivacité même que des points bien clairsemenés dans la ligne de la vie. Ils sont trop rares et trop rapides pour constituer un état, et le bonheur que mon coeur regrette n'est point composé d'instans fugitifs mais un état simple et parmanent, qui n'a rien de vif en lui-même, mais dont la durée accroit le charme au point d'y trouver enfin la suprème félicité.

What permits a man to talk about his life as a coherent sequence of events, as a "history," is the "obscure and confused idea" of the inner self. The inner self is the pre-condition (although unrecognized) for constructing one life out of many moments, for constructing one image of oneself out of many opinions. The feeling of one's own existence - the feeling which is the very essence of the inner self - is obscured from the man who lives only outside of himself in the manyness of time and of opinion. It is this feeling to which Rousseau "returns."

Rousseau in the face of death (time-less) and Rousseau in his solitude (society-less) constitute the essence of man, a portrait of man as he is according to nature. Human nature is precisely the "inner self." The human self is not divided up in time or summed up in

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Tout est dans flux continuel sur la terre: rien n'y garde une forme constante et arrêtée, et nos affections qui s'attchent aux choses extérieures passent et changent necessairement comme elles. Toujours en avant ou en arriere de nous, elles rappellent le passe qui n'est plus ou previennent l'avenir qui souvent ne doit point être: il n'y a rien là de solide à quoi le coeur se puisse attacher. Aussi n'a-t-on guére ici-bas que du plaisir qui passe; pour le bonheur qui dure je doute qu'il y soit connu. A peine est-il dans nos plus vives jouissances un instant où le coeur puisse véritablement nous dire: Je voudrois que cet instant durât toujours; et comment peut-on appeller bonheur un état fugutif qui nous laisse encor le coeur inquiet et vuide, qui nous fait regreter quelque chose avant, ou desirer encor quelque chose après? Mais s'il est un état où l'ame trouve une assiete assez solide pour s'y reposer tout entiere et rassembler la tout son être, sans avoir besoin de rappeller le passé ni d'enjamber sur l'avenir, où le tems ne soit rien pour elle, où le présent dure toujours sans neanmoins marquer sa durée et sans aucune trace de succession, sans aucun autre sentiment de privation ni de jouissance, de plaisir ni de peine, de

the providential intention of God (Augustine); nor is it what is spilled out and reflected in the opinions of others (civilized man, sociable man). Human nature is what underlies its own history and what remains when social contexts are removed. There being, for Rousseau, no divine providence and human providence (care for the future, society itself) being not what we are, it must be concluded from The Confessions that for Rousseau the nature of man is a private self-defining impulse, a feeling of self, beyond law, above time and without limit.

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desir ni de crainte que celui seul de notre existence, et que ce sentiment seul puisse la remplir tout entier tant que cet état dure celui qui s'y trouve peut s'appeller heureux, non d'un bonheur imparfait, pauvre et rélatif tel que celui qu'on trouve dans les plaisirs de la vie mais d'un bonheur suffisant, parfait et plein, qui ne laisse dans l'ame aucun vuide qu'elle sente le besoin de remplir. Tel est l'état où je me suis trouvé souvent à l'Isle de St. Pierre dans mes reveries solitaires, soit couché dans mon bateau que je laissois dériver au gré de l'eau, soit assis sur les rives du lac agité, soit ailleurs au bord d'une belle riviére ou d'un ruisseau murmurant sur le gravier.
De quoi jouit on dans une pareille situation? De rien d'extérieur à soi, de rien sinon de soi-même et de sa propre existence, tant que cet état dure on se suffit à soi-même comme Dieu. Le sentiment de l'existence depouillé de toute autre affection est par lui-même un sentiment précieux de contentement et de paix qui suffiroit seul pour rendre cette existence chére et douce à qui sauroit écarter de soi toutes les impressions sensuelles et terrestres qui viennent sans cesse nous en distraire et en troubler ici bas la douceur. Mais la pluspart des hommes agités de passions continuelles connoissent peu cet état et ne l'ayant gouté qu'imparfaitement durant peu d'instans n'en conservent qu'une idée obscure et confuse qui ne leur en fait pas sentir le charme. Il ne seroit pas même bon dans la présente constitution des choses, qu'avides de ces douces extases ils s'y degoutassent de la vie active dont leurs besoins toujours renaissans leurs prescrivent le devoir. Mais un infortuné qu'on a retranché de la societé humaine et qui ne peut plus rien faire ici bas d'utile et de bon pour autrui ni pour soi, peut trouver dans cet état à toutes les félicités humaines des dédomagemens que la fortune et les hommes ne lui sauroient ôter.

In the timeless instant in which Rousseau feels his own existence, he is as self-sufficient as God. When everything else, everything "exterior" falls away, what is left is something which feels its own existence. Man is that being which feels himself through himself. This feeling is unmediated; the self is not experienced through anything other than itself. The moment of this experience is the eternal moment of pure act: "I have unveiled my interior such as you yourself [Eternal Being] have seen it."

CONCLUSION

This examination of Rousseau's Confessions has been an attempt to uncover what Rousseau might mean when he promises us a "portrait of man painted exactly according to nature." Our investigation was begun on the basis of Rousseau's assurances that his Confessions is "precious for philosophers" and that it is "unique," presumably even among his own works. While our inquiry into The Confessions is by no means exhaustive, what emerges from it is an account of Rousseau's "return" to the state of nature - a return which is not a turning back in time but a turning within.

As outlined in the Introduction, the view of The Confessions presented here has its significance within a context provided by three not-unrelated considerations: first, the relevance of Rousseau's portrait of man to contemporary thinking about ourselves; second, the relationship between Rousseau's Confessions and his more obviously political writings; and third, the place of this thesis within the secondary literature in general. We will re-state and clarify the significance of our conclusions within this context, after briefly retracing our steps back through our account of the meaning of The Confessions.

The nature of man, as proposed by Rousseau in his Confessions, is the inner self. The inner self is the true

self and the essence of the true, inner self is the feeling of one's own existence. Existence is experienced only and precisely as one's own. That is, the inner self is essentially private and therefore radically a-social.

Now Rousseau frequently reminds us that he, among all men, is "other," even unique. What most men refer to as "myself" is really a creation of the imagination, a construction out of the moments of past and future and out of the opinions of other men. This construction, this fiction, is possible only because there is, in fact, an inner, true self; the real self is the condition for the possibility of the fictional self. But this real self need not be, and indeed rarely is, directly experienced. It is the unrecognized precondition, the presupposition, for our thinking about our "selves."

The feeling of his own existence has been lost to civilized man as a result of his transformation from a narrow, unimaginative animal to a being of imagination and intelligence. What this transformation entails is man's increasingly complex and expanded awareness of past and future and of the opinions of other men. The feeling of existence, by nature experienced in solitude and in the absence of awareness of past and future, is lost, surrendered; the consciousness of time and of the opinions of others makes problematic the inner self which is or would be, by nature, a given. It is by means of the creative imagination that man ceaselessly

strives to solve the problem of his self. He is, in all his remembering, regretting, hoping, fearing and planning, attempting to make himself whole for himself once again.

Now the clearest, most unmistakable and most inescapable confrontation with the problem of time and the self takes place in the facing of imminent death. The awareness of death is, according to Rousseau, one of the first manifestations of the distinctively human. The Rousseau of The Confessions, having denied the immortality of the soul, shows us himself in the face of death: he is cut off from past and future and from the opinions of other men, for he is no longer concerned with past and future and with the opinions of other men. Rousseau begins to live as a self only when he looks upon himself as a dead man.

The significance of death is manifest in The Confessions not only through the incidents which Rousseau recounts but also through the fact that the work is unfinished, incomplete as a chronicle of the events of Rousseau's life. The Confessions is incomplete as a chronicle but complete as a portrait. Rousseau's project, therefore, is not the writing of an autobiography but the painting of a portrait - a portrait of "man as he is according to nature."

Having retraced the central argument of the thesis, we return to the three contextual considerations noted above. The importance of this understanding of The Confessions in relation to the secondary literature in general lies chiefly

in its philosophical intention. While the psychological approach has concerned itself with the unconscious subtleties it finds in Rousseau's Confessions, there is a place in the literature for an account which is sensitive to Rousseau's conscious subtleties and which takes its starting-point from Rousseau's explicitly stated intentions regarding the work. If such a philosophical approach makes sense of the work in terms of Rousseau's own claims for it, then The Confessions is made available to the reader as philosophically significant both in itself and in its relation to Rousseau's other works.

The question of the relationship between Rousseau's Confessions and his more obviously political works was raised in terms of the two areas of difficulty upon which attention has generally focused: the problem of the individual and society and the problem of nature and history. Once the intimate connection between these two problems is recognized, our question concerning the relationship of The Confessions to Rousseau's political works can be put in the following manner: What is the relevance of the "state of nature" for men who are so far removed from it by the radical and irreversible transformations brought about through history and society? Our understanding of The Confessions does not provide a complete and satisfactory answer to this question. Indeed, in one sense at least, it

only intensifies the difficulty.

Rousseau is careful to point out that the portrait he is painting in The Confessions is a portrait of man as he is according to nature and, at the same time, a portrait of himself - himself alone. His recovery of human nature, the experience which is had in solitude and in the absence of awareness of past and future, is claimed by Rousseau to be exceedingly rare, perhaps even unique. We do not find in The Confessions, then, a program for civilized man's return to nature. We do not find a formula by means of which men can retain the human goods made available by history and society and at the same time regain the lost advantages of the state of nature. The Confessions serves rather to intensify the problems of nature and history and of the individual and society, to make our question concerning the relevance of the state of nature to civilized man even more puzzling. But in intensifying these difficulties, The Confessions puts them in sharper focus and brings us closer to the roots of Rousseau's political concerns.

In returning to the state of nature, in showing us man as he is "according to nature," Rousseau paints a clear picture of man as he is not "according to nature." The reverse side of the portrait of Rousseau is Rousseau's portrait of most men. What we find in Rousseau's Confessions

is a presentation of the nature and the condition of man which forms the theoretical ground of Rousseau's political writings. And it is Rousseau, the "natural man" of The Confessions, who claims to see the source of civilized man's miseries; the author of The Confessions is the author of the Discourses, the Émile, and the Social Contract.

On Rousseau's understanding, the nature of man and the actual condition of men are as different from each other as Rousseau is from other men. This tension takes us back to our starting-point and thus to our final consideration: the relevance of Rousseau's Confessions to our own thinking about ourselves. If this understanding of Rousseau's Confessions is correct, then there is to be found in The Confessions the uncovering of the "inner self" as the latent presupposition of contemporary thinking about ourselves. By virtue of its presuppositional character, the notion of the inner self is unrecognized as a presupposition and, therefore, unreflected upon and never fully or truly experienced as Rousseau experienced it. In this respect, Rousseau's Confessions provides us not with a justification but with a critique of contemporary consciousness.

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