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A New Approach in Rousseau's Confessions

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ABSTRACT:

Some readers of Rousseau reach his writings through his life. And if they happen to dislike his unconventional conduct, they also form an unfavourable opinion of his work. No doubt, as in the case of so many writers, his life and his work are near allied, but we always need to possess a certain discretion in seeing life as life and art as art. It is important, therefore, in the case of Rousseau, more than in the case of any other writer, to know what his life was like and how it enters into his work. However, even when we embark upon an account of his life, it is not possible to ignore his work and its importance to the world of letters and the world of ideas. Let us cast a glance at the great work he accomplished in the world, at the revolution he wrought in the intellectual and imaginative life of Europe. Think, first of all, of the more imaginative side of his achievement. Think of the vast space which he fills in the purely literary movement of his time. He was the one who gave a new and most fruitful turn to the European novel, just as Flaubert did a century after him. He brought a keener observation, a more searching analysis, of incident and character than had been known until his time. It is widely acknowledged that he was the fountain-head of the English Romantic Movement. Wordsworth and Coleridge, Byron and Scott, all are considered his spiritual children. In the related field of reflection and abstract thought, call it philosophy, he has left a yet deeper mark behind him. He is considered a great moral and spiritual teacher. He is also considered the father of all that has since been done for educational reform. He was the one who gave an impulse to social and political progress, of which the world has still cause enough to be thankful. He was the one who recast the whole fabric of political philosophy from top to bottom. It was his Contract Social that dealt the first deadly blow to the individualism, which since the day of Locke had swept everything before it. From the publication of the Contract Social, that theory has tottered slowly to its fall. There are a very few men, indeed, in the entire history of Europe whose influence upon subsequent generations has been so strong and so definite as that of Rousseau. Except perhaps Plato and Aristotle, no one else compares more favourably with him in the annals of western philosophy.

Keywords: certain, corrupted, primitive,contract, social.

ROUSSEAU AND ROMANTICISM

In his famous book Rousseau and Romanticism, Iriving Babbit calls Rousseau "the father of romanticism." No one has ever disputed it. It has become an acknowledged truism of literary criticism. Although he died eleven years before the French Revolution, and some of his books could see the light of 10 the day only after his death, and those that did were banned and burned, his ideas attracted people like the forbidden fruit and became responsible for the greatest change in Europe. Let us see in short what he wrote and which seminal ideas of the romantic movement his writings contained. Rousseau was thirty eight years old, when his essay on a subject proposed by the Academy of Dijon, Discours sur les sciences et les arts (1750) was awarded the first prize and published. In the Discours, the first of many works in which the natural man is preferred to the civilized counterpart, Rousseau argued that the development and spread of knowledge and culture, far from improving human behaviour, had corrupted it by promoting inequality, idleness, and luxury. The Discours sur l'origine de l'inegalite (1755) contrasts the innocence and contentment of primitive man in a "state of nature" to the corruption and discontent of the civilized man. He argues that the primitive man's mode of existence is determined by none but genuine needs, whereas there is dissatisfaction and perpetual agitation of modern social man, the majority of whom are condemned to the legally sanctioned servitude necessary to preserve the institution of private property. Rousseau's work, the Lettre sur les spectacles (1758), was provoked by the suggestion of d'Alembert that a theatre should be established at Geneva. In this work, the passive nature of playgoing, the preoccupation of modern plays with love, and the consequent unnatural bringing forward of women are seen as dangerous symptoms of the ills of society. Rousseau was aware of the fact that a return to primitive innocence, after so many centuries of civilization, was just not possible. The ills of modern society, he thought, could only be remedied by reducing the gap separating modern man from his natural archetype and by modifying existing institutions in the interest of equality and happiness. His next work, therefore, entitled Emile (1762), lays down the principles for a new scheme of education in which the child is to be allowed full scope for individual development in natural surroundings, shielded from the harmful influence of civilization, in order to form an independent judgment and a stable character. The "Profession de foi du vicaire Savoyard," contained in the fourth book of Emile, sets against institutional Christianity a form of deism grounded in religious sentiment and guided by the divine instinct of conscience. The year 1762 also saw the publication of Du contrat social, his theory of politics, in which he advocated universal justice through equality before the law, a more equitable distribution of wealth. In that work, Rousseau defined government as fundamentally a matter of contract providing for the exercise of power in accordance with the "general will" and for the common good, by consent of the citizens as a whole, in whom sovereignty ultimately resides. Rousseau also wrote a novel called Julie, ou la Nouvelle Heloise (1761), which was his greatest popular success. The work is a critical account of contemporary manners and ideas, which is

interwoven with the story of the passionate love of the tutor St. Preux and his pupil Julie, their separation, Julie's 11 marriage to the Baron Wolmar, and the dutiful, virtuous life shared by all three on the Baron's country estate. Rousseau's posthumously published autobiographical works Les Confessions (1781-88) and Les Reveries du promeneur solitaire (1782) were written towards the end of his life as exercises in self-justification and self-analysis. As expressions of the complex individuality of a personality, and a sensibility, unexampled in their time in candour, detail, and subtlety, they remain landmarks of the literature of personal revolution and reminiscence. The ideas contained in these books became the basis for the French Revolution as well as for the Romantic movement. The work of Rousseau has been so pervasive that everybody knows enough to cite him, and some even to abuse him. He has affected in one way or another all those who have come after him, so that to speak of his influence without further word is not enough. We must know what influence. With Rousseau and the Romantics, precisely because they are architects on a large scale, nothing less than the tendency of whole works or movements will supply correct conclusions. But the uncertainty about Rousseau tells us something besides, which may be even more important. Because of his widespread influence, everybody thinks he knows what Rousseau said. He is hotly arraigned and seldom read. If we can forget catchwords for a moment, we may be able to recover the impression Rousseau made on his contemporaries and near successors in time. He was glorified by Robespierre and the Revolution. He was of the eighteenth century and yet not with it. He wrote his Confessions, unusual and uncommon for a writer of his age. It was only in the next century that the romantics wrote autobiographical poetry and prose, including Wordsworth's The Prelude, Keats's Letters, Coleridge's Biographia Literaria, and Byron's Childe Harold. Rousseau's Confessions alone can show the centrality of his influence in the writings of the Romantics who followed him half a century later. On reading this autobiographical work, what do we gather from it beyond the author's opinion about his own character? It holds an important but neglected clue, not only to Rousseau's work, but to the history of the old regime. We can see from this work that Rousseau was the only man of genius who traversed eighteenth century society from the bottom to the top. He was the only one who did not take root and stay fixed. The same cannot be said of any other eighteenth century writer. But the same cannot be said of almost every Romantic writer. In the course of his career, he was by turn a vagrant, a seminarian, a composer, a musician, an artisan, and a hundred more things from the lowest servant to the distinguished guest, friend as well as enemy of great philosophers and statesmen. Thus, by the accident of fortune, he was forever being dislodged from the society that his mind examined and condemned. The same can be said of Byron and Shelley, Wordsworth and Coleridge, Blake and even Keats. He was in effect, and so were the Romantics, outside his society. As such, he was bound to become the prophet of Revolution, and the prophet of a new world. 12 In short Rousseau achieved by chance and genius that sense of primitive nakedness in the face of nature which Pascal had felt a hundred years before, and which the generation of the Romantics was to feel half a century later. With them all it was of course a primitivism born of ethical judgment. History proved Rousseau right about what was alive and what was dead. The eighteenth century rationalists had tried to define man as within the laws of physics. But Rousseau saw man as a political being acting upon impulse and emotion …. No doubt he knew more about politics and society than all the Enlighteners taken together. His view of man in society was realistic. By 1762, the date of Rousseau's Emile and Social Contract, the rationalists looked belonging to the past, doomed with the society in which they held the position of critical and destructive profiteers. Rousseau can he said to have enjoyed a unique position as a man whose youth belonged to the Enlightenment but whose maturity was of a later age. Returning to the slogans associated with his ideas, the most famous is certainly "Back to Nature." Although Rousseau himself never used this phrase, it does serve as a condensed way of putting his objection to the artificialities of a superannuated society or regime. He never intended that we should return to living in caves and wearing skins. He clearly saw that this was neither possible nor desirable. But he also saw that the complication of life resulting from civilization disturbs or destroys in man something serious and valuable; something that cannot be flouted with impunity. This he calls nature. He found that children were dressed and reared as if they were miniature men. He found the mothers of well-to-do families sending their infants to baby farms. This resulted in neglect and high mortality of children. He saw a useless nobility and clergy given over to gambling, intrigue and etiquette. He saw a widening gap between the idling rich and toiling poor. Tragic or trivial, these were social symptoms as indicative of the precarious state of France as the inefficiencies of public finance or the 285 different codes of custom law which defined the rights and controlled the relations of men. Now all this can be called artificiality and complexity without suggesting that its extreme opposite – the absence of all laws – is what Rousseau desired. The moot question is: if Rousseau attacks existing conventions as artificial and yet declines to return to savagery, what does he propose; what is a natural society or a natural man? The symbol of the tree, which Rousseau often uses, and so do the Romantics, gives a standard by which we can apprehend what he really means by nature. The tree is a natural product. It remains natural product. It remains natural even if "artificially" watered, and tended, and protected by the hand of man. But suppose the hand of the same man started twisting the growing plant into fanciful shapes for topiary ornament, the tree does become artificial. In other words, what Rousseau means by nature is the given norm that we can discover under any deformation, like the eighteenthcentury gentleman's hair under his wig. 13 Of course, this discovery of the "nature" of anything is always tentative, never absolute. But the desire to discover it is a guide which western civilization had come to neglect. Layers of conventions act as a cushion which society clings to, and never attempts to reach the "nature" underneath. Whoever proposes to penetrate these layers is termed an anarchist, as Rousseau and the Romantics were. Established societies, especially those civilized by science and cultural sophistications, neglect the claims of whole classes of men of life, liberty, or the pursuit of happiness: Reason, custom, legality, all resist any change. But something in man breaks through the crust. As we have it said in a Frost poem ("Mending Wall") "Something there is that doesn't loke a wall;" This "something" is "nature" in man. It is in pointing out this presence and its necessity for expression, which call for planning a new society, that Rousseau is a revolutionary, that he is regarded an individualist and an apostle of freedom. He, and after him, the Romantics attack legality in the name of human nature, just as man have always done where social conditions become absurd, or unbearable or both. The opening sentence of Rousseau's Social Contract, "man is born free; and everywhere he is in chains", has been misunderstood to mean a call of anarchism. The romantics like Byron and Shelley were also labled as anarchists for that very reason. What Rousseau is trying to say here, and what the romantics followed, is only to mean that the newborn infant has no notion whether he is a prince or a pauper, but he grows up into one or the other. But it does not mean that Rousseau wants to break all chains. We may recall here the sentence that follows the first on in his social contract: "One man thinks himself the master of others, but he is even greater slave than they." In other words, society binds all the freeborn in a network of duties and compulsions. His Social Contract is thus an attempt to make clear under what conditions social chains are legitimate, to reconcile the rights of free individuals with the requirements of society. In his view, men have a will to be free. "To renounce liberty is to renounce being a man", he says. But he also says that man by nature is a social animal; and men always have an urge to live together. This dichotomy between solitude and society is one of the major themes of Romantic poetry. From Blake to Keats, all of them remain

preoccupied with these contrary pulls in human nature. The also try, as Rousseau does, to reconcile the conflicting claims of the contraries. For "without contraries is no progression", as Blake says. Therefore, in Rousseau's view, society as such is not bad. Here is what Rousseau says about the passage from an imaginary pre-social conditions to the civil state; "It produces a very remarkable change in man, by substituting justice for instinct in his conduct, and giving his actions the morality they had formerly lacked. Then only, when the voice of duty takes the place of physical impulses and the right of appetite, does man, who so far had considered only himself, find that he is forced to act on different principles, to consult his reason before listening to his inclination. Although in this state he deprives himself of some advantages, which he got from nature, he gains in return others so great … that did not the abuses to this new condition often degrade him below that which he left, he would be bound to bless continually the happy moment which took him from it for ever, and, instead of a stupid and un imaginative animal, made him an intelligent being and a man." The fact of the matter is that Rousseau is both reasonable and creative, revolutionary and practical. What makes it hard for some to conceive the contraries together is that some of us approach him with a series of unhistorical images in the mind's eye. He is considered a romantic who loved country walks, jumping to the conclusion that he was unable to see reality. Similarly, he is considered an old man with a persecution mania, which blinds to the thousands of accurate observations that he made – not only in political science, but in education, philosophy, botany, and music. Rousseau, even though he owes something to Locke and Montesquieu, actually belongs to the tougher school of Hobbes and Machiavelli, whom he supplements and perfects by showing that they do not go far enough. They show the necessity of government at all costs. Rousseau shows the possibility of reconciling government with individual liberty. This is the distinctive contribution Rousseau made, and which the Romantics embodied in their poetry. He, like most Romantics after him, is a proponent of balance, not an advocate of any extreme, of contradiction if you will, rather than of unity achieved at the cost of one or the other legitimate claim. Thus, Rousseau inspired the Romantics with his ideas of primitive naturalness, child's innocence, individual literty, primacy of emotion over idea, all of which the English poets of the nineteenth century imbibed and illustrated, dramatized and lyricised in their prose writings as well as poetic compositions. It changed the outlook of writers and thinkers on history and civilization, on man and nature, on child and primitive, on emotion and imagination, on state and society. It turned upside down the neoclassical concepts on these subjects and made possible the advent of the modern world. The idea of organic universe, of integrated personality, of harmonious society, all flow from the writings of Rousseau.

CONFESSION AS A LITERARY FORM

Rousseau's Confessions cannot be said to be without a precedent. We have under the same title the work of St. Augustine, written at the close of the fourth century. It is considered, on the one side, a culmination of the classical mode of giving an account and justification of one's life. However, Augustine converts the classical procedure of putting oneself forward as the representative of a cultural idea, performing overt deeds on a public stage, into a circumstantial narrative of the private events of the individual mind. Rousseau's Confessions is also a work of this type in which private, not public, circumstantial, not culturally representative narrative, reveals the individual life. While Augustine's work can be said to be the first sustained history of an inner life, Rousseau's can be said to be the last in that order. Augustine expanded in great and fine detail the tendency to individualize and internalize the pattern of Biblical history, in so doing, he imposed on the flux of experience, the randomness of events, and the fugitive phenomena of memory, the enduring plot-form and the standard concepts and imagery of the unique and characteristic genre of the spiritual autobiography. Rousseau's Confessions, too, is a spiritual autobiography of the author, and follows the same pattern that Augustine had laid down in the seminal work of this new literary genre. Rousseau's work, like its predecessor, is not merely the presentation of an individual life for its inherent interest. It is decidedly written from a special point of view and for a specific purpose. However, Rousseau's confession is not addressed to God, rendered in the form of colloquies with himself, which constitutes the form of Augustine's Confessions. Rousseau addresses the readers of future generations, and adopts the form of communication rather than selftalk. Since the work is written about a period of the author's life which lapsed several years ago, it begins in the present time with a sort of reminiscence of the earlier life. Then it proceeds to take up the narrative proper, opining with the events in the author's infancy. Hence, there emerge two distinctive selves in the work – what the author once was, and what the author is now at the time of writing. Throughout the book, Rousseau evokes his life explicitly as the present recollection of the past, in which Rousseau as he was in co-present with Rousseau as he is at present: I have entered upon a performance which is without precedent, whose accomplishment will have no imitator. I intend to present my fellow-mortals with a man in the integrity of nature; and this man shall be myself. The performance may not be without a precedent – Augustine's Confessions having appeared fourteen hundred years before Rousseau – But in a sense it is first of its kind in that while Augustine confessed before God, Rousseau does it before his "fellow-mortals". Another significant difference is that while Augustine presented himself as a "fallen man" before the Supreme Authority, Rousseau presents himself as a "man in the integrity of nature." St. Augustine may make confessions as a private individual, he still takes himself to be a representative Christian; Rousseau is an individual through and through, with his identity defined in terms of difference with others, not in sharing a common destiny with other "fallen" individuals: I know my heart, and have studied men; I am not made like any one I have met, perhaps like no one in experience. If not better, I at least claim originality, and whether Nature did wisely in breaking the mould with which she formed me, can only be determined after having read these books. Even Wordsworth and Whitman consider themselves representatives of mankind in its prime, Adam-like, innocence. Rousseau alone insists upon his complete difference with others. And it is this very unique individuality which becomes the basis for the unique individuality of his ideas on man, nature, and society. It must also be noted here that unlike Augustine, he does not use the word God; instead, he prefers "nature". Even when Rousseau talks of the supreme power in the universe, he avoids using the word God. Instead, he prefers to use the expression, "sovereign Judge": Whenever the last trumpet shall sound, I will present myself before the sovereign Judge with this book in my hand and loudly proclaim, 'thus have I acted; these were my thoughts; such was I.' With equal freedom and truth have I related what was laudable or wicked, I have concealed no crimes, added no virtues; and if I have sometimes introduced unessential ornament, it was merely to occupy a void occasioned by defect of memory: I may have called that certain, which I only knew to be probable, but have never asserted a truth, a conscious falsehood. Such as I was, I have declared myself; sometimes low and despicable, at others virtuous, generous and sublime; even as thou hast my inmost soul. Power eternal! Assemble round thy throne an innumerable throng of my fellow-mortals, let them listen to my confessions, let them blush at my depravity, let them tremble at my sufferings; let in each his turn expose with equal sincerity the failings, the

wanderings of his heart, and, if he dare, aver, I was better than that man. Once again, even though Rousseau speaks of the last trumpet sounding, meaning death, he does not use the Christian terminology of the Judgment Day, etc. He only vows to reveal himself honestly, without withholding anything good or bad done in life. Of course, he does not promise to narrate every inane details; he only promises to record the laudable and the wicked acts of his life and include in the autobiographical narrative only those that, in his life and view, matter in the growth of his personality. One can recall here Wordsworth's The Prelude, which relates events indicating the growth of his mind. He is committed fully to reveal his innermost soul, showing all that is there, showing it in all its hues. Like Whitman, he does invite the reader to make a similar exposure of his soul; but, unlike Whitman, he does not offer to be a guide or teacher to the reader. He places himself at par with other individuals. Since Rousseau's interest is greater in his inner life than in the outer, not all the outer events are for their own sake; most are meant to indicate what happens to the inner self, his spiritual life. From the multitude of the post events, therefore, he selects, orders and dwells upon only those few which are heavy with spiritual significance, as indices of a stage in his hazardous journey from sensual involvement and conventional commitments to intellectual understanding and unconventional or revolutionary ideas, but the emotional or intellectual impact they make on the person of Rousseau that count, and that alone count, in the spiritual history of the author. As the author himself states, I have but one faithful guide on which I can depend: this is the chain of the sentiments by which the succession of my existence has been marked, and by these the events which have been either the course or the effect of the manner of it, I easily forget my misfortunes, but I cannot forget my faults, and still less my virtuous sentiments. The remembrance of these is too dear to me even to suffer them to be effected from my mind. I may omit facts, transpose events, and fall into some errors of dates; but I cannot be deceived in what I have felt, nor in that which from sentiment I have done; and to relate this is the chief end of my present work. The real object of my confessions is to communicate an exact knowledge of what I interiorly am and have been in every situation of my life. I have promised the history of my mind, and to write it faithfully I have no need to other memories: to enter into my own heart, as I have hitherto done, will alone be sufficient. Thus, very clearly it is an inner biography of Rousseau the man and writer. As he says, it traces the development of his mind, just as Wordsworth's The Prelude does the development of the poet's mind. In the case of Augustine's Confessions, it is the growth of his spirit in relation to God. Here, it is the growth of mind and heart in relation to the social and natural world. The transcendental is replaced here by the transient, the spiritual by the contingent. In the Confessions of Rousseau, there is an element of self-reflectiveness. For the very act of writing confessions also becomes a theme of the book. Time and again the writer returns to it. He keeps examining the act of writing as to its being what it ought to be, always remaining alert about the possible lapses in the effort. Note, for instance, the following: I come to one of the critical moments of my life, in which it is difficult to do anything than to relate, because it is almost impossible that even narrative should not carry with it the marks of censure or apology. I will, however, endeavour to relate how and upon what motives I acted, without adding either approbation or censure. Or I have promised my confession and not my justification; on which account I shall stop here. It is my duty faithfully to relate the truth, that of the reader to be just; more than this I never shall require of him. Thus, there is a good deal of self-consciousness on the part of the author. He is all the time conscious of the fact that he is writing confessions, and all the more conscious that his case must be properly understood and that it must be properly judged by the reader. His difficult and to peculiar circumstances explain it all. He very much needed to be understood from the view point of the facts of his case, not from the viewpoint of slanderous propaganda about him. He has naturally to work hard to clear the clouds of vicious prejudice and conventional attitudes to whatever he was doing by being thoroughly honest with himself. He was acting as his feelings dictated. Later, on maturity, he was acting as truth demanded. In the interest of the truth, he sacrificed wealth and fame, friends and patrons, even 'mother' and mistress. However, his too much self-consciousness as a writer of confession betrays a certain desperation for appreciation of his position in relation to his detractors and the society at large. The self-awareness and self-consciousness at times seems to stand face to face with each other spoiling the natural flow of the narrative. At times, it makes the narrative contentious, bringing out the man in the fore, pushing the artist behind.

CONFESSIONS AS GROWTH OF THE WRITE'S MIND

As in the case of Wordsworth, so in the case of Rousseau, the impressions of early youth have done a good deal in the shaping of his mind. No wonder that he returns to his childhood and early youth quite often in the narrative. Also like Wordsworth, he not only narrates the events of his early life but also goes behind them to know the impact these events had on the growth of his mind. Note, for instance, the following; The long details of my early youth must have appeared trifling and I am sorry for it: though born a man, in a variety of instances, I was long a child, and am so yet in many particulars. I did not promise the public a great passage: I promised to describe myself as I am, and to know me in my advanced age it was necessary to have known me in my youth. As, in general, objects that are present make less impression on me than the remembrance of them (my ideas being all from recollection), the first traits which were engraven on my mind have distinctly remained those which have since been imprinted there, have rather combined with the former than effaced them. There is a certain yet varied succession of affections and ideas, which continue to regulate those that follow them, and this progression must be known in order to judge rightly of those they have influenced. I have studied to develop the first causes, the better to show the concatenations of effects. I would be able by some means to render my soul transparent to the eyes of the reader, and for this purpose endeavour to show it in every possible point of view, to give him every insight, and act in such a manner, that not a motion should escape him, as by this means he may form a judgment of the principles that produce them. Here is emphasized, in the first place, the importance of youth for the understanding of the age. As in Wordsworth, so here, the idea is of the organic growth of the human personality. It is just like the growth of a tree, a natural object, where the seed becomes the plant, and the plant the tree, without any separable division of the different stages. One grows out of the other, thereby making a complete whole. Further, we are told how it is, not so much the event, as its recollection which has been a significant factor in the growth of the writer's mind. It reminds us of Wordsworth once again, his insistence upon the remembrance or recollection of things that happened to him. This process led to the imaginative creation of his poetry. Here too, the process of composition takes the same course. Rousseau explains at length here how the impressions make a chain in themselves and get interrelated to each other to make an autonomous whole. The mind of man and the composition of literary work take shape on the same lines. Rousseau's concern, more than Wordsworth's is as much with the art of writing as with the subject of writing. He is a very conscious artist. He is always, and all the time, conscious of the reader he is addressing, never forgetting his

commitment to the reader – of giving the whole, and nothing but the whole, truth about himself. He goes on to show also how the whole truth includes presenting a picture of his soul from all sides, from all view-points, so that nothing remains unseen, and the soul becomes entirely transparent to him. Note, for instance, the following: Did I take upon myself to decide, and say to the reader, 'such is my character', he might think that if I did not endeavour to deceive him, I at least deceived myself; but in recounting simply all that has happened to me, all my actions, thoughts, and feelings, I cannot lead him into an error, unless I do it willfully, which by this means I could not easily effect, since it is his province to compare the elements, and judge of the being they compose; thus the result must be his work, and if he is then deceived, the error must be his own. It is not sufficient for this purpose that my recitals should be merely faithful, they must also be minute; it is not for me to judge of the importance of facts; I ought to declare them simply as they are and leave the estimate that to be formed of them to him. I have adhered to this principle hitherto, with the most scrupulous exactitude, and shall not depart from it in the continuation, but the impressions of age are less lively than those of youth; I began by delineating the latter; should I recollect the rest with the same precision, the reader may perhaps become weary and impatient, but I shall not be dissatisfied with my labour, I have but one thing to apprehend in this undertaking. I do not dread saying too much or advancing falsities, but I am fearful of not saying enough or concealing truths. Here again, the subject and the manner of writing are inseparable. Rousseau prefers to give to the reader the account of his "actions, thoughts, and feelings" rather than an intellection of these. He believes that these are concrete things that should speak to the reader themselves, and the reader should see them as he wishes, rather than the author impose his own view of himself. In other words, Rousseau does not wish to act as an omniscient author; rather; he chooses to stay as a neutral narrator. The only thing he insists upon is to give the reader all the wealth of actions, thoughts and feelings that he can recollect so that noting is concealed wilfully or otherwise from the reader who is to judge the man on the basis of the evidence produced before him. Here, he would not mind to indulge in excesses; he would feel guilty if anything remains unsaid. Of course, the narrative is not without a strict sense of relevance. Nothing that would not shed any light on the person being presented has to be included in the narrative, however cumbersome it might be otherwise. Like Wordsworth, when Rousseau recalls his experiences of youth, he recalls mainly those relating to the theodicy of the private life, of the landscape, and the redemptive imagination. For it is these and in response to these that the mind or person of the author has grown from youth to age.

THEODICY OF PRIVATE LIFE

In the opening of his Confessions, when Rousseau declares his intent to present his fellow mortals "with a man in the integrity of nature", it becomes his version of Milton's undertaking to "justify the ways of God to men". Rousseau's argument, like Milton's, is a theodicy which locates the justification for human suffering in the restoration of a lost paradise. In Milton's view, thus events will not occur "till one great Man/Restore us, and regain the blissful seat". Rousseau's paradise, however, can be achieved simply by a union of man's mind with nature, and so is a present paradise in this world, capable of being described without recourse, that is, either to an intervenient deity or to a heavenly kingdom to redress any imbalance between the good and evil of our moral state. In Rousseau's work the ultimate goodness governing the course of his life brought into question by his suffering and crisis of spirit. It is then established by the outcome of his experience. His assumption is that of life is to be worth living there cannot be a blank unreason or mere contingency at the heart of things. There has to be meaning, in the sense of good and intelligible purpose, in the occurrence of both physical and moral evils. The Christian theodicy of the private life, in the long lineage of Augustine's Confessions, transfers the locus of the primary concern with evil from the providential history of mankind to the providential history of the private self, and justifies the experience of wrongdoing, suffering, and loss of a necessary means towards the greater good of personal redemption. But in the case of Rousseau, it is a secular theodicy – a theodicy without an operative theos – which retains the form of the ancient reasoning, but makes the process coterminous with our life in this world, and justifies suffering as the necessary means towards the end of a greater good which is no other than the stage of achieved maturity. In other words, Rousseau's theodicy of the private life belongs to the distinctive Romantic genre which translates the painful process of Christin conversion and redemption into a painful process of self-formation, crisis, and self-recognition, which culminates in a stage of self-coherence, self-awareness, and assured power that is its own reward. In this process of maturation from youth to age, the Romantic self regains the lost paradise in a composed self that is not easily moved by the challenge of evil. Everything comes to be placed in an integrated picture of life, with the equipoise of mind accepting it without commotion. Here is a piece from the Confessions showing that sort of equipoise of maturity: The facility with which I forget past evils, however recent they may be, is astonishing. The remembrance of them becomes feeble, and, sooner or later, effaced, in the inverse proportion to the greater degree of fear with which the approach of them inspires me. My cruel imagination, incessantly tormented by the apprehension of evils still at a distance, diverts my attention, and prevents me from recollecting those which are past. Caution is needless after the evil has happened, and it is time lost to give it a thought. I, in some measure, put a period to my misfortunes before they happen: the more I have suffered at their approach the greater is the facility with which I forget them; whilst, on the contrary, incessantly recollecting my past happiness, I, if I may so speak, enjoy it a second time at pleasure. It is to this happy disposition I am indebted for an exemption from that ill humour which ferments in a vindictive mind, by the continual remembrance of injuries received, and torments it with all the evil it wishes to do its enemy. Here is the Wordsworthian neglect of evil done to one's self and the recollection instead of the emotion of joy in tranquility, leading the possession of to the thing of beauty which remains a joy forever. Here is the picture of a positive (good) mind becoming poised. On the one level Rousseau tells this story, in his Confessions, in terms of his literal experience of error, pain, misery, suffering, climaxed by his crisis in the storm provoked by his publications and the consequent malicious propaganda against him. He then justifies these experiences as, to borrow Wordsworth's words, "bearing a part/And that a needful part" in making him a man, in making him a writer, and in making him exactly the kind of writer he is. But through out the Confessions there is a double story being told – a story of Rousseau's life in the world and a correlative story of his life in nature. And on this second narrative level Rousseau incorporates the problem of suffering within his overarching myth of the interaction between mind and nature, in which fostering nature conducts the mind through successive stages of growth, while nature defines and imparts to the mind that degree of self-knowledge which its stage of cumulative experience has prepared it to receive.

THEODICY OF LANDSCAPE

Very much like Wordsworth, more familiar to us, Rousseau also begins the story of his life as a child unusually attracted to the pleasures of the countryside. He correlates this to showing his soul, also like Wordsworth, in direct engagement with nature. Throughout his Confessions, as he recalls his experiences of life, he repeatedly represents his mind as developing by a sustained interchange with different, even opposing, attributes of nature. Note, for instance, the following: The idea of this walnut tree, with the little anecdotes it gave rise to have so well continued, or returned to my memory, that the design which conveyed the most pleasing sensation during my journey to Geneva, in the year 1754, was visiting Bossey, and reviewing the monuments of my infantile amusement, above all, the beloved walnut tree, whose age at that time must have been verging on a third of a century, but I was so beset with company that I could not find a moment to accomplish my design. There is little appearance now of the occasion being renewed; but should I ever return to the charming spot; and find my favorite walnut tree still existing, I am convinced I should water it with my tears. It is this kind of emotional, even sentimental, attachment that Rousseau in his childhood and youth felt with nature. Whenever he could find time from his hard life, he would quietly withdraw into the lap of nature and seek solace there to sooth his mind and heart. This remained a habit with him all his life. However, it were not just the beauties he saw in nature and abandoned himself to their enjoyment. Like Wordsworth he also experienced in the same nature scenes of fear and awe. Here, for instance, is one such experience: I have frequently fatigued myself running after and stoning a cock, a cow, a dog, or any animal I saw tormenting another, only because it was conscious of possessing superior strength. This may be natural to me, and I am inclined to believe it is, though its lively impression of the first injustice I became the victim of was too long and too powerfully remembered not to have added considerable force to it. This occurrence terminated my infantile serenity; from that moment I ceased to enjoy a pure unadulterated happiness, and on a retrospection of the pleasure of my childhood, I yet feel they ended here. We continued at Bossey some months after this event, but were like our first parents in the garden of Eden after they had lost their innocence; in appearance our situation was the same, in effect it was totally different. As Rousseau moves from natural setting into the urban centers of civilization, moving from one country to another, it is a movement, from the rural milieu into the variegated life of the city. He represents himself as coming to terms with his experience in periodic accountings with the natural scene. At such moments, what the mind brings to nature is the hitherto inchoate product of its experience of man and the world since it had last come to an understanding with nature. Although carrying with him the antithetical images of the natural worlds, he always felt drawn to it compared to the city world. I felt a natural inclination to retirement and the country; it was impossible for me to live happily elsewhere. At Venice in the train of public affairs, in the dignity of a kind of representation, in the pride of projects of advancement, at Paris in the vortex of the great world, in the luxury of suppers, rivulets and solitary walks, constantly presented themselves to my recollection, interrupted by thoughts, rendered me melancholy, and made me sigh with desire. All the labour to which I had subjected myself, every project of ambition which by feet had animated my ardour, all had for object this happy country retirement, which I now thought near at hand. Rousseau, like Wordsworth, is committed to a procreative marriage between man and nature. He finds his mind is exquisitely fitted to the natural world, and the natural world to the mind, and the two in union begetting a new world. Although the child's bliss or paradise is no longer possible, its being a force that recomposes the stressed and strained mind of the author after having been in the hub of urban life in Paris or Venice remains a reality even in his later life. As Rousseau calls it, the "rural delirium" enables him to face afresh the devastating onslaughts of the city life. He still finds in himself the capacity to abandon himself to the joys of county life: Although the weather was cold, and the ground lightly covered with snow, the earth began to vegetate, the trees began to bud, and the evening of my arrival was distinguished by the song of the nightingale, which was heard almost under my window, in a wood adjoining the house …. and I exclaimed in my transport: 'At length, all my wishes are accomplished? The first thing I did was to abandon my self to the impression of the rural objects with which I was surrounded …. The more I examined this charming retreat, the more I found it to my wishes. The solitary, rather than savage, spot transported me in idea to the end of the world. I had striking beauties which are just seldom near cities, … Thus, theodicy of nature, of landscape, became a sort of substitute religion for Rousseau as well as Wordsworth. His pantheism may not be mystical like that of Wordsworth; it is no less committed to the powerful impressions of nature. The impression may be ennobling, hypnotizing or terrifying, it is acknowledged as the strongest force in the shaping of the mind of man. Of course ,not all can respond to the beauties and powers of nature. Only men of imagination like Rousseau and Wordsworth have the capacity to open themselves to its influences. Rousseau shows difference with Wordsworth in his mood of indolence, which brings him closer to Keats, in so far as it relates to creativity, or even as a mood that prevents participation in the worldly pursuits of appetites. See how he goes out to woo one kind of indolence, and flees from another kind: I have observed the indolence of great companies made them unsupportable to me, and I am now seeking solitude for the sole purpose of abandoning myself to inaction. This however is my disposition; if there be in it a contradiction, it proceeds from nature and not from me …. The indolence of company is burdensome because it is forced. That of solitude is charming because it is free, and depends upon the will. It is in this indolence of solitude that, like most remnants, he feels the independence and autonomy of self, a sort of theodicy of private life. Rousseau explains further the precise nature of his indolence as under:- The indolence I love is not that of a lazy fellow who sits with his arms across in total inaction, and thinks no more than he acts, but that of a child which is incessantly in motion doing nothing, and that of a dotard who wanders from his subject. I love to amuse myself with trifles, by beginning a hundred things and never finishing one of them, by going or coming as I take either in my head, by changing my project at every instant, by following a fly through all its windings, in wishing to overturn a rock to see what is under it, by undertaking with ardour the work of ten years, and abandoning it without regret at the end of ten minutes; finally, in musing from morning until night without order or coherence, and in following in everything the caprice of a moment. The "caprice of a moment" explains it all. The writer comes closer to Keats here, not in his mood of utter inaction, but in the action of the "negative capability," in one's ability to get lost in the momentary pleasure of an object or activity, just as the childh does, fully identifying itself with whatever object or activity it happens to get involved with. This quality, too, is one of the essential aspects of the Romantic sensuality which finds solace in solitude rather than society, in silence rather than noise, in inaction rather than action, in caprice rather than care or concern. In a way, Rousseau's Confessions constitute a kind of preparation for the writing of his great works, just as Wordsworth's Prelude is. However, in describing that preparation both Rousseau and Wordsworth achieve the masterpiece itself. For his Confessions is no less an important work in terms of its literariness than say Miss Julia or Emile.

THE CONFESSIONS –A REFLECTION OF ITS TIMES

Although Rousseau's Confessions is an autobiographical work, narrating the events of the author's life, it is not narrowly focused on the individual life alone. After all, the author was not an ordinary person; he moved from village to city, from city to city, from country to country, meeting and interacting with various important personalities of the day. Hence his life embraces or expands 25 into the life of its times. No doubt, his character is at the centre of the work. But his long journey of life through various countries of Europe, involving friends and foes of continental prominence, holding positions of political or literacy consequence, gives the work the form of a picaresque novel, in which the journey motive is used for showing what lies on either side of the road that is traversed by the picaro. Incidentally, the parallel with the picaresque novel becomes all the more pertinent when we find Rousseau qualifying for the status, placed as he is in the unenviable position of an outcast for several reasons, and for most of his life. Besides, the subjects and issues in which Rousseau got interested and involved were public, not private, carrying social, political, religious, cultural, and literary ramifications. So, his comments, his works, his life responses to the climate of his times creates a picture of the eighteenth-century Europe. He breathed that environment, was brought up in that atmosphere, got on the wrong side of the society of the time, and consequently suffered and reacted and revolted and in the process came out with radical views expressed in his books on politics, education, literature, etc., which ultimately ignited the French Revolution and changed the order of the day. He became the force that initiated the political as well as literary and educational movements. Let us therefore put together some of the images and reflections that the Confessions makes available to us about the age in which it was produced. The six volumes of the Confessions, grouped in two parts, are given the following titles, which indicate how the personal life history of the author is entangled with the impersonal history of the eighteenth century Europe. Each volume consists of two books, both parts having six books each. Opening with "childhood", "followed by youth", "Studies and Love", "Journeys", Manhood", the first part closes with "Music and Amours." The second part opens with "Theresa", followed by "Misfortunes", "Passions and Politics", "Hotel de Luxembourg", "Exile", closing with "Persecutions." Thus, the chapter headings clearly show how the author's personal history is mixed with the political history of France and Europe. No chapter, in fact, is exclusively focused on the author's self; each reflects life around this growing self. Even the first chapter, dealing with the author's childhood, and least reflective of things larger, is not without the tinge of life around the author; his milieu, so to say, in which he was brought up. Here is a glimpse of Rousseau's way of making his narrative inclusive, rather than exclusive. In my native country, in the bosom of my religion, family and friends, I should have passed a calm and peaceful life, in the uniformity of a pleasing occupation, and among connections deard to my heart. I should have been a good Christian, a good citizen, a good friend, a good man. I should have relished my condition, perhaps been an honour to it, and after having passed a happy obscurity, surrounded by my family, I should have died at peace. Soon it may be forgotten, but while remembered it would have been with tenderness and regret. Instead of this – what a picture am I about a draw – Alas! Why should I anticipate the miseries I have endured? The reader will have but too much of the melancholy subject. Thus in the opening itself, the relationship between the individual self of the author and the society around him is shown in clear terms. Seemingly concerned only about the author, the passage cited above defines indirectly the ethos of the society. What the author might have been – religiously, socially, professionally, culturally – implies in fact the reigning norm of the society. Rousseau's being a non-conformist from the start, being committed to truth rather than convention, to reason rather than ritual, to nature rather than culture had to be at odds with his environment. And so he was, and so he suffered. The last chapter of the work deals with persecutions. In the next chapter, "Youth", also we get a few glimpses of the kind of society there was in France at the time, and what were the issues of the day in Europe. First, a brief passage about the King: The King, who was fond of appearing a zealous promoter of the catholic faith, took her [Madam de Warens] under his protection, and complemented her with a pension of fifteen hundred livres of Piedmont, which was a considerable appointment for a prince who never had the character of being generous; but finding his liberality caused some conjecture that he had an affection for the lady, he sent her to Annecy escorted by a detachment of his guards, where, under the direction of Michael Gabriel de Bernex, titular bishop of Geneva, she abjured her former religion at the Convent of the Visitation. Here is a reflection about the King, the bishop, the conversion of religion, all the three of which were powerful institutions of the time, which governed the lives of the masses. The stranglehold of religion was greater than that of politics. None was beyond the control of the church. Madam de Warnes, for instance, "could not exhort me [Rousseau's] to return to Geneva, being too well aware that her words were strictly scrutinized, and that such advice would be thought high treason against Catholicism." One had to adopt the religion of the city or country on reaching there, or you would face trouble. Rousseau himself had to undergo such an ordeal. He describes how, along with certain strangers, he had to accept conversion: In this hall of audience were assembled four or five ill-looking banditti, my comrades in instruction, who would rather have been taken for trusty servants of the devil than candidates for the kingdom of heaven. Two of these fellows were Slavonians, but gave out they were African Jews, and (as they assured me) had run through Spain and Italy, embracing the Christian faith, and being baptized wherever they thought it worth their labour. Thus, the racial and religious identities were important passports for entry and accommodation in the small town or village societies. Here, of course, the instance relates to the big city of Paris. While in Geneva, Rousseau was a catholic. Now in Paris, he is converted to Protestantism. He makes a significant remark at this occasion on the importance of religion in the education of children and men: It is understood, I believe, that a child, or even a man, is likely to be most sincere while persevering in that religion in whose belief he was born and educated; we frequently detract from, seldom make any additions to it: dogmatical faith is the effect of education. In addition to this general principle which attached me to the religion of my forefathers, I had that particular aversion our city entertains for Catholicism, which is represented there as the most monstrous ideology, and whose clergy are painted in the blackest colours. This sentiment was so firmly imprinted on my mind, that I never dared to look into their churches – This goes on through several pages as to how his contempt was overcome in Geneva by the enticement for attractive meals offered by the country parishes, and how he felt guilty on conversion for convenience, finally ending in a comparison between the two chief sects of Christianity: "Protestants, in general, are better instructed in the principle of their religion than Catholics; the reason is obvious; the doctrine of the former requires discussion, of the latter a blind submission; the Catholic must content himself with the decisions of others, the Protestant must learn to decide for himself …" The running, and never ending, fued, so to say, between these two sects poses problems of conscience for millions of individuals who have to undergo the ordinals of unwilling conversions if they moved form one place to another, only to buy peace with the dominant group. Rousseau's own ordeal is worth our attention: I was not absolutely resolved to become a Catholic, but, as it was not necessary to declare my intention immediately, I gradually accustomed myself to the idea; hoping, meantime, that some foreseen event would extricate me from my embarrassment. In order to gain time, I resolved to make the best defense I possibly

could in favour of my own opinion; but my vanity soon redered this resolution unnecessary, for on finding I frequently embarrassed those who had the care of my instruction, I wished to height on my triumph by giving then a complete overthrow. I zealously pursued my plan, not without the ridiculous hope of being able to convert my converters; for I was simple enough to believe, that could I convince them of their errors, they would become Protestants; they did not find, therefore, that facility in the work which they had expected, as I differed both in regard to will and knowledge from the opinion they had entertained of me. Thus is contained the picture of the contemporary society in the individual picture of the author. The individual and society here are like the fish and ocean: one contains the other. The individual is shaped by the environment through conformation or defiance of the social codes and conventions, norms and notions. Either way, the interaction has to be an act of the living process; there is no way to escape it. These trials and ordeals of conscience relate to the author's period of youth, all figuring in Book II of the Confessions. The second powerful social force in the age of Rousseau, the eighteenth century, was politics. The author of the Confessions was as much at odds with the politics of the time as he was with the religion of the age. It was so much to his disliking that it compelled his revolutionary response to this force finally resulting in the writing of his radical book, the Social Contract, or Contract Social, which became the guide book for modern democracies of the world. It generated altogether new ideas about individual constitution, social structure, and power pyramid. Some of the reflections of the political life of the age need to be cited to have an adequate idea of what it was like. Rousseau had become painfully aware that the most powerful force in shaping the destiny of a society is politics. Neither any individual nor any group had any escape from it. Therefore, if we wished to change our destiny, we had to change our government. Note, for distance, the following: Of the different works I had upon the stocks, that I had longest resolved in my mind which was most to my taste, to which I destined a certain portion of my life, and which, in my opinion, was to confirm the reputation I had acquired, was my Institutions Poliliques. I had, fourteen years before when at Venice, where I had an opportunity of remarking the defects of that government so much boasted of, conceived the first idea of them. Since that time my ideas had become much more extended by the historical study of morality. I had perceived everything to be radically connected with politics, and that, upon whatever principles these were founded, a people would never be more than that which the nature of the government made them; therefore, the great question of the best government possible appeared to me to be reduced to this: What is the nature of a government the most proper to form the most virtuous and enlightened, the wisest and best people, taking the last epithet in its most extensive meaning? I thought this question was much if not quite of the same nature with that which follows: What government is that which, buy its nature, always maintains itself nearest to the laws, or least deviates from the laws. Hence, what is the law? and a series of questions of similar importance. I perceived these led to great truths, useful to the happiness of man kind, but more especially 29 to that of my country, wherein, in the journey I had just made to it, I had not found notions of laws and liberty either sufficiently just or clear. I had thought this indirect manner of communicating these to my fellow citizens would be least mortifying to their pride, and might obtain me forgiveness of having seen a little further than themselves. No volume of history, with all its wealth of details, can compare with this cryptic account of the conditions that prevailed at the time on the political map of Europe, of which Rousseau was a real citizen. As his own biography covers only the essentials that went into the shaping of his mind and morals, so does he choose to give us the essential picture of politics on the continent. His indirect way of describing it – of making it a matter for comment through an alternate model rather than of giving a detailed direct critique of the existing model – is much more effective than the reformist's account of contemporary political scene. Rousseau's meditations on his times were very thorough which covered all aspects of life – religious, political, social educational, biological, environmental, cultural, literary, etc: – and on all these he brought out books which changed the face of the world, of letters as well as lives. Note, for instance, his meditation on morals: The striking and numerous observations I had collected were beyond all manner of dispute, and by their natural principle seemed proper to furnish an exterior regimen, which varied according to circumstances, might place and support the mind in the state most favourable to virtue. From how many mistakes would reason be preserved, how many vices would be stifled in their birth, were it possible to force economy to favour moral order, which it so frequently disturbs! climate, seasons sounds, colours, light, darkness, the elements, ailments, noise, silence, motion, rest, all act on the animal machine and consequently on the mind: all offer a thousand means, almost certain of directing in their origin the sentiments by which we suffer ourselves to be governed. Such was the fundamental idea of which I had already made a sketch upon paper, and whence I hoped for an effect the more certain, in favour of persons well disposed, who, sincerely loving virtue, were afraid of their own weakness, as it appeared to me, easy to make of it a book as agreeable to read as it was to compose. I have, however, applied myself but very little to this work, the title of which was to have been Morale Sensitive ou le Materialisme du Sage…. Here one can clearly see the foundation for Darwinian Theory of the origin of species; for the effect of environment in shaping the conduct of species is what both Rousseau and Darwin talk about, with the only difference that while Darwin's theory includes all animal species, that of Rousseau includes only the human species. But the germinal idea is very much there in what Rousseau has said in the above observation. Similarly, his preceding observation on politics can be said to be a clear foundation for the Marxist political theory. The latter may be more economics based, but it does endorse Rousseau's idea of the system of governance being the determining factor for the moral and manners of men. The idea is that man's social behaviour is modulated by the system that governs him. Rousseau makes an equally radical observation on the system of education as it prevailed at that time; of course, here again the method adopted is indirect in which an alternate model is framed and presented as a sort of comment on the prevailing. Note, for instance, the following: Besides this, I had for some time meditated a system of education, of which Madam de Chenonceaux, alarmed for son by that of her husband, had desired me to consider. The authority of friendship placed this object, although less in itself to my taste, nearer to my heart than any other. On which account this subject, of all those of which I have just spoken, is the only one I carried to its utmost extent. He speaks of it later at length, in a subsequent chapter of the Confessions. The result was his Emile, which provoked, along with Social Contract, violent reaction from people and parliament. Here is a glimpse of the long narration the author gives us of the violent reception of these books: My tranquility still continued. Roumours increased and soon changed their nature. The public, and especially the parliament, seemed irritated by my composure. In a few days the fermentation became terrible, and the object of the menaces being changed, these were immediately addressed to me. The parliamentarians were heard to declare that burning books was of no effect, the authors also should be burned with them; not a word was said of the booksellers …. Today, we are grateful to Rousseau for the new ideas he gave us on the subject of child education. He based his theory of education on his concept of human nature, and recommended a natural growth of the child fostered by free will and self-expression. The earlier method or system based on "spare the rod and spoil the child" was condemned in his book; and so was the old concept of human nature which, in Pope's words, was considered to be "always the same": Static and standard to be tutored, for there was nothing in it to begin with that was to be allowed expression. In the eighteenth century, these ideas were not less radical than

Copernicus's discovery that "earth moves round the sun," which reversed the earlier belief in the static centrality of the earth. In a subtle way, it undercuts the Biblical theory of the creation of the world in which earth was created by God as the centre of earthly existence and man as the special creationto rule other species. From Copernicus to Rousseau there is a radical erosion of the Biblical theory, which could not be tolerated by the old establishment. Rousseau being a versatile genius, his contributions were not confined to the subjects of religion, politics, and education. He made equally important contributions to the subjects of music and literature. He was a practicing musician as well as a man of letters. His interest was keen in these subjects, as keen as in morals and manners of societies and governments: These different objects offered me subjects of meditation for my walks; for, as I believed I had already observed, I am unable to reflect when I am not walking: the moment I stop, I think no more, and as soon as I am again in motion my head resumes its workings. I had, however, provided myself with a work for the closet upon rainy days. This was my dictionary of music, which my scattered, mutilated, and unshapen materials made it necessary to rewrite almost entirely. He was not only a noted musician of his day, but was also an inventor of a new "note" in music. His dictionary of music was no less a contribution to the subject. More than the music, however, it was literature of ideas, social, moral, or literary, that attracted his attention. His views, however, as in all other areas, were very strong on literature. He would not make any compromise on any account so far as his ideas were concerned. That brought him into conflict with all those who stepped into his life for one reason or another. Some of them turned even vicious, leading to the famous "Conspiracy" against him that plagued him until the end, bringing on him the worst possible man-made misfortunes, never suffered by any other man of letters. Some of the important involvements with his contemporaries include Rousseau's unfortunate confrontation with Voltaire, Hume, Diderot and Grimn. The last two, along with a female writer of sorts, one Madam de Chenonceaux, were the conspirators who, through their most unscrupulous means, brought about meanest occurrences in the life of Rousseau. Inflamed by his unethical opponents, plagued by public fury, he might have been a little less than just to them in his report (or confession) about them. But his observations, all the same, on men of letters and their works are valuable in more ways than one. One of the more important of his comments is the one he made on Voltaire's poem about the Lisbon earthquake. The long piece of criticism runs as under: Struck by seeing this poor man overwhelmed, if I may so speak, with prosperity and honour, bitterly exclaiming against the misries of this life, and finding everything to be wrong, I formed the mad project of making him turn his attention to himself, and of proving to him that everything was right. Voltaire, while he appeared to believe in God, never really believed in anything but the devil; since his pretended deity is a malicious being, who, according to him, had no pleasure but in evil. The glaring absurdity of this doctrine is particularly disgusting from a man enjoying the greatest prosperity; who, from the bosom of happiness, endeavours, by the frightful and cruel image of all the calamities from which he is exempt, to reduce his fellow creatures to despair. I, who had a better right than he to calculate and weigh all the evils of human life, impartially examine them, and proved to him that of all possible evils there was not one to be attributed to Providence, and which had not its source rather in the abusive use man made of his faculties than in nature. Here, one thing apparent is that while Rousseau, like any other romantic, believes in literature being the true voice of its author, Voltaire remains an eighteenth-century neoclassical writer composing, in verse and prose, satirical pieces, taking a philosophic or literary or moral position as a matter of convention, keeping his personal self out of the composed work. Another thing that becomes equally clear is that Rousseau seems to believe firmly that if a rich man writes about poverty, or a happy man finds life miserable, the writer is only being hypocritical. In fact, an obvious inference from his criticism of Voltaire's poem on Lisbon calamity is that only the poor and miserable has the right, or is at least better qualified, to write about poverty and miseries of life. One can see Rousseau's premise, which is typically romantic, but it is difficult to entirely agree with him. Voltaire only uses the Lisbon natural calamity only to draw the attention of those who preached that all is well with the world and that it was the best of all the possible worlds. If he happened to be rich, it does not deny him the sensitivity to feel a human tragedy or to see the absurdity of a philosophic position. One can only understand from Rousseau's personal life why he felt so about Voltaire's position, but it does not necessarily compel us to agree with him. Responding to critical reactions to his novel Heloise, Rousseau not only defends his own work but condemns that of Richardson. "The work is by no means proper for the species of men of wit who have nothing but cunning, who possess no other kind of discernment than that which penetrates evil, and see nothing where good only is to be found." This brings out Rousseau's strong prejudice against the neoclassical writers, whose pessimism or cynicism about the nature and potential of man always irritated him. A romantic like Rousseau, who was far ahead of his times, had to fight a lone battle against the entire establishment of the eighteenth century writers of wit. Defending his novel against the hostile criticism from the line of wit, he makes some very interesting observations: The thing least kept in view, and which will ever distinguish it from every other work, is the simplicity of the subject and the continuation of the interest, which, confined to three persons, is kept up throughout six volumes, without episode, romantic adventure, or anything malicious either in the persons or actions. 33 Diderot complemented Richardson on the prodigious variety of his portraits and the multiplicity of his persons. In fact, Richardson has the merit of having well characterized them all; but with respect to their number, he has that in common with the most inspired writers of novels who attempt to make up for the sterility of their ideas by multiplying persons and adventures. It is easy to awaken the attention by incessantly presenting unheard of adventures and new faces, which pass before the imagination as the figures in a magic lantern do before the eye; but to keep up that attention to the same objects, and without the aid of the wonderful, is certainly more difficult; and if, everything else being equal, the simplicity of the subject adds to the beauty of the work, the novels of Richardson, superior in so many other respects, cannot in this be compared to mine. I know it is already forgotten, and the cause of its being so; but it will be taken up again. Once again, one can see how Rousseau is pitted against the popular taste of his times. Character and adventure were the key elements of the eighteenth century novel, not the element of thought. Its chief interests sprung from the variety of characters and novelty of incidents. Novel of ideas, of serious probing of an idea, theme, or character came later in the nineteenth century, that too in America with Hawthorne, Melville, and James, not in England. In Rousseau's own country, too, it appears a century after him with Flaubert, extending right up to Sartre. Here again, Rousseau was ahead of his times, and was sailing against the powerful tide of the popular taste. In the midst of this popular distaste for Rousseau's novel, Helois, there was something exciting that encouraged the author. It was the Princess of Talmont's response to his new novel, and similar enthusiasm from majority of female readers (who were, of course, not many compared to male readers), that Rousseau found heartening in his otherwise depressing days. The account of the princess that Rousseau gives reads like fiction; it is so well narrated: It [Heloise] appeared at the beginning of a carnival; a hawker carried it to the Princess of Talmont on the evening of a ball night at the opera. After supper the princess dressed herself for the ball, and until the hour of going there, took up the new novel. At midnight she ordered the horses to be put into the carriage, and continued to read. The servant returned to tell her the horses were put to; she made no answer. Her people perceiving she forgot herself, came to tell her it was two o'clock. 'There is yet no hurry,' replied the princess, still

reading on. Some time afterwards, her watch having stopped, she rang to know the hour. She was told it was four o'clock. 'That being the case', she said, 'it is too late to go to the ball; let the horses be taken off.' She undressed herself and passed the rest of the time in reading. 34 Ever since I came to the knowledge of this circumstance, I have had a constant desire to see the lady, not only to know from herself whether or not what I have related be exactly true, but because I have always thought it impossible to be interested in so lively a manner in the happiness of Julia, without having that sixth and moral sense with which so few hearts are endowed, and without which no person whatever can understand the sentiments of mine. Here, one can see an instance of romantic egotism. A romantic is a rare, an uncommon being, a person with superior sensibility, and as such beyond the reach of those with inferior or no sensibility. Rousseau is making here a similar case for himself as do most romantics when it comes to their works not being appreciated by the common reader. Decidedly, romantic art is not conceived to be a popular art. It is an expression of deeply felt emotions and seriously meditated thoughts. As such, obviously, it cannot receive popular appreciation. Only the female readers like the Princess would get attracted to emotional art but surely for wrong reasons. Rousseau knew it as well, but he did not mind (common human weakness with writers) being misunderstood so long as he received appreciation, that too, from women: What rendered the women so favourable to me was, their being persuaded that I had written my own history, and was myself the hero of the romance. This opinion was so firmly established.… Everybody thought it was impossible so strongly to express sentiments without having felt them, or thus to describe the transports of love, unless immediately from the feeling of the heart. This was true, and I certainly wrote the novel during the time my imagination was inflamed to ecstasy; but they who thought real objects necessary to this effect were deceived, and far from conceiving to what a degree I can at will produce it for imaginary beings.… I was unwilling to confirm or destroy an error which was advantageous to me. Romantic literature, being more emotional in its tenor, has always had special appeal with women, especially the young. Rousseau's own life having been full of affairs with women was also responsible for this extraordinary female curiosity in his private life. Thus through the personal life history, or autobiography, of Rousseau we get to know a good deal about the age in which he lived and wrote. A fairly wide variety of the various aspects of eighteenth century European world are brought home to the reader in their essential characteristics. It is decidedly not the kind of picture one finds in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, or in Thackeray's or Dickens's novels. There, the picture drawn is in terms of width and variety of characters and incidents both being representative in social terms. Here in Rousseau, as well as elsewhere in any romantic work such as Wordsworth's The 35 Prelude or Hawthorne's The Scarlet letter, the picture is presented to us in terms of the essentials of that life rather than in terms of width and variety of the social spectrum. Here, just an instance, a glimpse, a gesture, a comment, can do what long descriptions in a realistic work may not achieve. In other words, the level of presentation is different and deeper; it is more on the spiritual, rather than social, plain. We can conclude our discussion of the Confessions showing a mirror to its age despite its being an autobiography of an individual with a short citation which reveals as much of the conservative bigotry of the age as the radical humanism of the author: After the departure of Madam de Verdelin the fermentation increased, and, notwithstanding the reiterated rescripts of the King, the frequent orders of the council of state, and the cares of the chatelain and magistrates of the place, the people, seriously considering me as anarchist, and perceiving all their clamours to be of no effect, seemed at length determined to proceed to violence; stones were already thrown after me in the roads, but I was however in general at too great a distance to receive any harm from them. At last, in the night of the fair of the Motiers, which is in the beginning of September, I was attacked in my habitation in such a manner as to endanger the lives of everybody in the house. Thus, the age depicted here in its essentials is done through characters, who stand for certain ideas or beliefs, and incidents, which reflect those beliefs and ideas. In that sense, the Confessions can be considered more a reflection of the beliefs and ideas of its times than a social history giving a wide range of social reality. Here, this autobiography of Rousseau has the same difference with the ordinary realistic biography as the romance has with the novel. The difference comes across quite clearly through this comparison. The personal history of the author's spiritual life and the impersonal history of the period's beliefs and ideas are inextricably interwoven into the fabric of the Confessions; neither can be comprehended in full without simultaneously taking into account the other.

ROUSSEAU ON LOVE AND WOMEN

As Rousseau himself says in the Confessions, for him living meant loving; life without love was meaningless for him. Also, the love he talks about is the love of women. He was naturally, and automatically, attracted to women. He was extremely sensual right from childhood. His hunger for women's love, in whatever form, may have stemmed from the death of his mother just when he was born. May be what he missed as a child, he kept seeking all his life. All of these women whom he loved at different stages of his life contributed towards his mental and spiritual growth. His concept of love as well as his relationship with women are both quite complex in nature. Only through our close reading of his narrations of his love affairs can help us understand both these as well the true personality of the author. Rousseau's experience with women begins as early as 1720 when he was only eight years of age. Now under the care of his uncle he is sent to Bossey, a village, to board with the Minister Lambercier for learning Latin. Here he comes in contact with the Minister's wife, Mademoiselle Lambercier, who, as she "felt a mother's affection, sometimes exerted a mother's authority.… All this affection, aided by my natural mildness, was scarcely sufficient to prevent my seeking, by fresh offences, a return of the same chastisement; for a degree of sensuality had mingled with the smart and shame, which left more desire than fear of a repetition.… Benevolence, aided by the passions, has ever maintained an empire over me which has given law to my heart." The touch of the female personality, which begins with chastisement, finally effects an incalculable influence on his growth. Rousseau gives us a graphic account of his complex response to this woman of his mother's age: This event, which, though desirable, I had not endeavoured to accelerate, arrived without my fault; I should say without my seeking; and I profited by it with a safe conscience; but this second, was also the last time, for Mademoiselle Lambercier who doubtless had some reason to imagine this chastisement did not produce the desired effect, declared I was too fatiguing, and that she renounced it for the future. Till now we had slept in her chamber and during the winter in her bed; but two days after another room was prepared for us, and from that moment I had the honour (which I could very well have dispensed with) of being treated by her as a great boy. Who would believe this childish discipline, received at eight years old, from the hands of a woman of thirty, should influence my propensities, my desires, my passions, for the rest of my life and that in quite a contrary sense from what might naturally have been expected? The very incident that inflamed my senses, gave my desires such an extraordinary turn, that, confined to what I had already experienced, I sought no further, and, with blood boiling with sensuality, almost from my birth, preserved my purity beyond the age when the coldest constitutions lose their insensibility; long tormented, without knowing by what, I gazed on every handsome woman with delight; imagination

incessantly brought their charms to my remembrance, only to transform them into so many Mademoiselle Lambercier. Although vulnerable to female attraction, and amenable to female influence, Rousseau was never very enterprising with women. His natural timidity would not permit him to easily disclose his wishes. He would pass days in languishing in silence for those he most admired, and would not dare ask the overwhelming question. One is reminded of Eliot's Prufrock. He would, in fact, love to "fall at the feet of an imperious mistress, obey her mandates, or implore pardon." These 37 remained his most exquisite enjoyments. Hence, "the senses, in concurrence with a mind equally timid and romantic" preserved his "morals chaste, and feelings uncorrupted." This always prevented him from excesses to which he could otherwise be vulnerable. Rousseau's next encounter with a woman takes place at the age of eleven. While at school, he comes in contact with his mistress named Madam de Vulson, who loaded him with caresses, and whose daughter made him her gallant. The girl, too, was twice his age. With Mademoiselle Vulson, he felt "flattered by the circumstance and went into it with my whole heart, or rather my whole head, for this passion certainly reached no further, though it transported me almost to madness, and frequently produced scenes sufficient to make even a cynic expire with laughter." At the same school, he came into contact with another mistress named Mademoiselle Goton. Although he "was so absolutely in the power of both these mistresses, that when in the presence of either [he] never thought of her who was absent," his regard for the former was much greater: "if Mademoiselle Vulson was ill, I suffered with her; would willingly have given up my own health to establish hers…. I loved her with a brother's affection only, but experienced all the jealousy of a lover." But even this innocent attachment to these mistresses was not without a danger: "I would not have offended Mademoiselle Vulson for the world; but if Mademoiselle Goton had commended me to throw into the flames, I think I should have instantly obeyed her. Happily, both for her and myself, our amours, or rather rendezous, were not of long duration: and though my connection with Mademoiselle Vulson was less dangerous, after a continuance of some greater length, that likewise had its catastrophe; indeed the termination of a love affair is good for noting, unless it partakes of the romantic, and can furnish out at least an exclamation." Rousseau's much longer and more serious affair appears at the age of sixteen and goes on for eleven years, taking a strange course from the woman as mother to woman as mistress. In Rousseau's own words, "Louisa- Eleanora de Warnes was of the noble and ancient family…. She was married very young to a Monsieur de Warnes… there were no children by this marriage, which was far from being a happy one. Some domestic uneasiness made Madam de Warnes take the resolution of crossing the lake, and throwing herself at the feet of Victor Amadeus… thus abandoning her husband, family, and country by a giddiness similar to mine, which precipitation she, too, has found sufficient time and reason to lament." When Rousseau joins her, as a sort of orphan, at Annecy, just six years after her arrival there, she is twenty-eight, and he is only sixteen. At their very first meeting, he is struck by her beauty, presenting his letter of introduction "with a trembling hand," and she speaking "in a tone of voice which made every nerve vibrate." To Rousseau, "Her beauty, consisting more in the expressive animation of the countenance, than a set of features, was in its meridian; her manner soothing and tender; an angelic smile played about hermouth, which was small and delicate; she wore her hair (which was of a ash colour, and uncommonly beautiful) with an air of negligence that made her appear still more interesting; she was short, and rather thick for her height, though by no means disagreeably so; but there could not be a more lovely face, a finer neck, or hands and arms more exquisitely formed." Rousseau seems to believe in the philosophy of 'love at first sight'. He challenges those who do not accept it as a fact of life: "let those who deny the existence of a sympathy of souls, explain, if they know how, why the first glance, the first word of Madam de Warnes inspired me, not only with a lively attachment, but with the most unbounded confidence, which has since known no abatement. Say this was love… how could this passion be attended with sentiments which scarce ever accompany its commencement, such as peace, serenity, security, and confidence…. Is it possible to posses love, I will not say without desires, for I certainly had them, but without inquietude, without jealousy? … there was, certainly, something extraordinary in my attachment to this charming woman and it will be found in the sequel, that some extravagances, which can not be foreseen, attended it." Here is, then, a relationship which is love not without desire, and yet more than love. It borders devotion along with desire; it is spiritual as well as sensual. It is based on attraction of beauty, and yet transcends the domain of physical beauty. It is a relation also between a soul and a soul, as well as between a body and a body, even though unspeaking. Made as he is by nature to fall for a woman at first sight even his highest regard and deepest love for Madam de Warnes does not come in his way of getting passionately involved with another woman, when he is on a short visit to Italy. The woman this time is Madam Basile. "Though an Italian, and too pretty to the entirely devoid of coquetry, she had so much modesty, and I so great a share of timidity, that our adventure was not likely to be brought to a very speedy conclusion, nor did they give us time to make any good of it. I can not recall the few short moments I passed with this lovely woman without being sensible of an inexpressible charm, and can yet say, it was there I tasted in there utmost perfection the most delightful, as well as the purest pleasures of love." All this just on a casual visit to Italy. Somehow, he finds any good-looking woman irresistible, provided she shows an inclination to oblige him, to respond to his uninterrupted hungry gaze. Madam Basile is a married woman, her husband considerable older than herself, who "has consigned her, during his absence, to the care of a clerk, too disagreeable to be thought dangerous." Rousseau falls for her at first sight, follows her helplessly, irresistibly. He does not completely forget Madam de Warnes. She does occur to him for comparison, but is not cause enough to prevent him from his present pursuit: I did not feel the same real and tender respect for her as I did for Madam de Warnes: I was embarrassed, agitated, feared to look, and hardly dared to breathe in her presence, yet to have left her would have been worse than death: How fondly did my eyes devour whatever they could gaze on without being perceived! The flowers on her gown, the point of her pretty foot, the interval of round white arm that appeared between her glove and ruffle, the least part of her neck, each object increased the force of all the rest, and added to the infatuation. Gazing thus on what was to be seen, and even more than was to be seen, my sight became confused, my chest seemed contracted, respiration was every moment more painful. I had the utmost difficulty to hide my agitation, to prevent my sighs from being heard, and this difficulty was increased by the silence in which we were frequently plunged. Several more such opportunities come his way, he prepares himself to seize every opportunity, suspense is built up, climax is reached, and just when he is about to "go into it", the anti-climax follows, and the scene terminates in freezing the emotion at the boiling point. And yet whatever remains as a fringe benefit of a touch or a look undoes him wholly: "'get up! Here's Rosina!' Rising hastily I seized one of her hands, which she held out to me, and gave it two eager kisses; at the second I felt this charming hand press gently on my lips. Never in my life did I enjoy so sweet a moment; but the occasion I had lost returned no more, this being the conclusion of our amours." He may not have experienced consummation of love, but the memories are nonetheless sweeter, perhaps for that very reason: "Never did I taste with any other woman pleasures equal to those two minutes which I passed at the feet of Madam Basile without even daring to touch her gown. I am convinced no satisfaction compares to that we feel with a virtuous woman we esteem; all is transport! – A sign with the finger, a hand lightly pressed against my lips, were the only favours I ever received from madam Basile, yet the bare remembrance of these trifling condescensions continues

to transport me." This was only an interlude on his tour of Italy. But it was not the end of his adventures in Italy. He runs into another woman, named Madamoiselle de Breil, who was about his "own age, tolerably handsome, and very fair complexioned, with black hair, which notwithstanding, gave her features that air of softness so natural to the flaxen, and which my heart could never resist." Being just a domestic in her establishment, he could not afford to forget his status, but his desire for her remains: " … my ambition, confined to a desire of waiting on her, never exceeded its just rights. At table I was ever attentive to make the most of them; if her footman quitted her chair, I instantly supplied his place; in default of this I stood facing her, seeking in her eyes what she was about to ask for, and watching the moment to change her plate. What would I not have given her to hear her command, to have her look at, or speak the smallest word to me but no, I had the mortification to be beneath her regard; she did not even perceive I was there." As can be seen from this relationship, Rousseau just cannot resist a pretty woman, whatever her position, and 40 whatever his own station; his sensuality makes him stick around whatever woman happens to come in his way. If nothing more, even a sight of beauty would be a gratification. Somehow, there is a certain abjectness in his attraction for women. Be it as it may, we better return to his most important relationship in the world of women – with Madam de Warens. As Rousseau returns from Italy, and approaches the habitation of Madam de Warens, "The first glance of Madam de Warens banished all my fear [of starvation] – my heart leaped at the sound of her voice; I threw myself at her feet, and in transports of the most lively joy, pressed my lips upon her hand …. 'Poor child!' said she, in an affectionate tone, 'art thou her again? I knew you were too young for this journey; I am glad, however, that it did not turn out so bad as I apprehended.'" She gives him a room in here own house, which thrills him. She is heard saying, "they may talk as they please, but since Providence has sent him back, I am determined not to abandon him." On his part, "I dare affirm, that those who only love, do not feel the most charming sensation we are capable of: I am acquainted with another sentiment, less impetuous, but a thousand times more delightful; sometimes joined with love, but frequently separated from it. This feeling is not simple friendship; it is more enchanting, more tender; nor do I imagine it can exist between persons of the same sex; at least I have been truly a friend, if ever a man was, and yet never experienced it in that kind. This distinction is not sufficiently clear, but will become so hereafter: sentiments are only distinguishable by their effects." Here is an instance of how Rousseau tries to understand in full the complex character of sentiments that he experiences in his relation with various women. In the case of Madam de Warens it is the most complex. She is his patroness, shows affection for him, a little indulgence also. He has reverence for her, is infatuated by her charms, regards her as a mother and yet his sensuality draws him to go beyond that feeling. That the relationship is very complex between them becomes clear from the fact that in his long struggle to comprehend and define it Rousseau makes and amends and remakes so many statements, always remaining incomplete one way or another. Some of these statements may be cited here for our own benefit: The sudden sight of her, on our first interview, was the only truly passionate moment she ever inspired me with; and even that was principally the work of surprise. With her I had neither transports nor desires, but remained in a ravishing calm, sensible of a happiness I could not define, and thus could I have passed my whole life, or even eternity, without feeling an instant of uneasiness. But a little later, I know not when I should have done, if I was to enter into a detail of all the follies that affection for my dear Madam de Warens made me commit. When absent from her, how often have I kissed the bed on a supposition that she had slept there; the curtains and all the furniture of my chamber, on recollecting they were hers, and that her charming hands had touched them; nay, the floor itself, when I considered she had walked there. Sometimes, even in her presence, extravagancies escaped me, which only the most violent passions seemed capable of inspiring, in a word, there was but one essential difference to distinguish me from an absolute lover, and that particular renders my situation almost inconceivable. The two quotations show how Rousseau is caught up in his own complex of conflicting emotions, having at different levels different feelings for the same person. How complex this equation between the two is can be gauged from the following: "… absent or present I saw in her a tender mother, an amiable sister, a respected friend, but nothing more; meantime, her image filled my heart, and left room for no other object. The extreme tenderness with which she inspired me excluded every other woman from my consideration, and preserved me from the whole sex: in a word, I was virtuous, because I loved her." We have seen how vulnerable he is to women, given an opportunity of close proximity. His affair in Italy with Madam Basile, if it did not reach the stage of consummation, it was not because of any lack of willingness on his part. Only the time so conspired that it was interrupted at the crucial moments. Here again, his unconscious mind is deeply craving for a physical closeness with his madams he has started calling "mama." When two members of opposite sex are thrown together in close proximity, and if the situation continues for a sufficient period of time, the inevitable has to follow. And it does in this case as well. And just before it happens, he states: "I always loved her as passionately as possible, but I now loved her more for herself and less on my own account; or, at least, I rather sought for happiness than pleasure in her company. She was more to me than a sister, a mother, a friend, or even than a mistress, and for this very reason she was not a mistress; in a word, I loved her too much to desire her." He may not be aware of it, but his love for her, which is "more" than every other love, is the real danger. And it happens, the "more" overtakes all other feelings. The two find themselves in each other's arms: This day, more dreaded than hoped for, at length arrived. I have before observed, that I promised everything that was required of me, and I kept my word: my heart confirmed my engagements without desiring the fruits, though at length I obtained them. Was I happy? No: I felt I know not what invincible sadness which empoisoned my happiness, it seemed that I had committed an incest, and two or three times, pressing her eagerly in my arms, I deluged her bosom with my tears. On her part, as she had sought pleasure, she had not the stings of remorse. Well, it is not less than an incest, and yet a romantic like Rousseau is bound to find it irresistible. Similarly, adultery is another compulsive urge in such figures. In fact, the Romantic concept of love does not accept social institutions, including marriage. It accepts love on its own terms, love for love's sake, not for any other consideration. Rousseau is no exception; he freely enters into sexual relations with several women, without carrying any sense of uneasiness, leave aside sense of sin or guilt. Even in this case, the initial awkwardness is easily overcome, and the intimacy goes on smoothly, sensually as well as sexually: "… we got into the habit, though without design, of being continually with each other, and enjoying in some measure, our whole existence together, feeling reciprocally that we were not only necessary, but entirely sufficient for each other's happiness. Accustomed to think of no subject foreign to ourselves, our happiness and all our desires were confined to that pleasing and singular union, which perhaps had no equal, which is not, as I have before observed, love, but a sentiment impressively more intimate, neither depending on the senses, age, nor figure, but an assemblage of every agreeable sensation that composes our radical existence and which can cease only with our being." Here again Rousseau makes a typically romantic response; for it is a romantic trait to think that there is no equal to your kind of love; that you are an exceptional person and so is your affair. Also, a romantic would always consider his love as something different from the ordinary human love; it is viewed as something higher, something special, something uncommon, something close to the divine. It may be called the Romantic fallacy, which is incorrigibly available in romantic writers as well as their romantic creations. The romantic has to be a hero among men.

Rousseau's conception of his own self also measures up to the same romantic model of the hero: … and myself, by an assemblage of misfortunes of all kinds, was to become a striking example to those who, inspired with a love of justice and the public good, and trusting too implicitly to their own innocence, shall openly dare to assert truth to mankind, unsupported by cabals, or without having previously formed parties to protect them. Undoubtedly, here is the self-portrait of a romantic, who is at odds with the conservative society for the sake of saying the truth as he perceives it. His alienation from society is also an essential trait of the romantic self. Like Wordsworth, his recalling the blissful past is also a way of forgetting the unhappy present. Left disillusioned by the failure of the French Revolution, one great hope for humanity, Wordsworth turns to or returns to his blissful childhood to seek solace. Rousseau finds the same use of imagination now that he, as well as his madam, are facing despondence: … here I remember all as distinctly as if it existed at this moment. Imagination, which in my youth was perpetually anticipating the future, but now takes a retrograde course, makes some amends by these charming recollections for the deprivation of hope, which I have lost for ever. I no longer see anything in the future that can tempt my wishes, it is a recollection of the past alone that can flatter me, and the remembrance of the period I am now describing is so true and lively, that it sometimes makes me happy, even in spite of my misfortunes. And the happiest moment, he recalls, is the one with Madam de Warens: "My dearest friend, this day has long since been promised me: I can see nothing beyond it: my happiness, by your means, is at its height; may it never decrease; may it continue as long as I am sensible of its value – then it can only finish with my life." Rousseau's tendency to live in the present was, at times, a dangerous principle or inclination. As he himself admits, "I have never been so near wisdom as during this period, when I felt no great remorse for the past nor tormenting fear for the future; the reigning sentiment of my soul being the enjoyment of the present." His explanation is that such a pleasure, like that of a child, is another name for paradise. For a child, yes. But not for the adult, whose mind is developed to see implications of the momentary enjoyment, if it relates to humanity, not nature. Just a little while after his movement away from Madam de Warens Rousseau runs into another named Madam de Larnage, who also has a daughter fifteen year old. His feeling in the moment is: "I saw nothing but Madam de Larnage, or what related to her; the whole universe besides was nothing was to me – even Madam de Warens was forgotten!" But soon comes a stage when reflection on the pleasure principle begins – just as it does in the case of Wordsworth when he turns to reason and duty. This is the turning point, I would say, in the life of Rousseau; the child in him is being replaced by the developed mind. He describes this change in detail which need to be noticed and understood – the growth of a writer's mind being the subject of both Wordsworth's Prelude and Rousseau's Confessions: Not thoroughly satisfied in my own mind on the rectitude of this expedition, as I advanced towards the Bridge of St. Esprit … I began to reflect on Madam de Warens, the remembrance of whose letters, though less frequent than those from Madam de Larnage, awakened in my heart a remorse that passion had stifled in the first part of my journey, but which became so lively on my return, that, setting just estimate on the love of pleasure, I found myself in such a situation of mind that I could listen wholly to the voice of reason. Besides, in continuing to act the part of an adventurer, I might be less fortunate than I had been in the beginning; for it was only necessary that in all Saint-Andiol there should be one person who had been in England, or who knew English or anything of their language, to prove me an imposter. The family of Madam de Larnage might not be pleased with me, and would, perhaps, treat 44 me unpolitely; her daughter too made me uneasy, for, in spite of my self, I thought more of her than was necessary. I trembled lest I should fall in love with this girl, and that very fear had already half done the business. Was I going, in return for the mother's kindness, to seek the ruin of the daughter? To sow dissension, dishonour, scandal, and hell itself, in her family? The very idea struck me with horror, and I took the firmest resolution to combat and vanquish this unhappy attachment, should I be so unfortunate as to experience it …. This reproach at length became so keen that it triumphed over every temptation … I formed the resolution to burn my whole magazine of letters from Saint Andiol, and continue my journey right forward to Chambery. I executed this resolution courageously, with some sighs I confess, but with the heart-felt satisfaction, which I enjoyed for the first time in my life, of saying, 'I merit my own esteem, and know how to prefer duty to pleasure.' This was the first real obligation I owed my books, since these had taught me to reflect and compare. … Perhaps, after all, pride had as much share in my resolution as virtue; but if this pride is not virtue itself, its effects are so similar that we are pardonable in deceiving ourselves. … No sooner was my resolution confirmed than I became another man, or rather, I became what I was before I had erred, and saw in its true colours what the intoxication of the moment had either concealed or disguised. This growth of the writer's mind is rightly placed at the centre of the work. What is crucial to remember here is the agent of change. It is his books, not nature or its pleasures, which brought about this change in Rousseau. These books, we may recall, are the ones which he speaks of reading during this period a little earlier in this book 6 of Part I itself, books of western philosophy from Plato to the present, and books of modern science. The books rightly ends Part I, the early phase of the writer's life. The second will begin after this growth that has taken place in his personality. The irony of situation takes place now at this critical point of time in Rousseau's life. Just as he has resolved "to regulate my future conduct by the laws of virtue, and dedicate myself without reserve to that best of friends, to whom I vowed as much fidelity in future as I felt real attachment," just has he contemplate "only innocence and happiness through life," he touches "on the fatal period that was to draw after it the long chain of my misfortunes." Just when he has resolved to be fidel for life to Madam de Warens, he finds on return from this fateful journey that the same Madam has turned infidel to him. Like Hamlet, he gets the shock of his life, gets totally unsettled, knowing not where to go next. But life must go on. You have to learn to cope with its vicissitudes. After his initial violent reaction, he does find his feet and decides 45 upon the future course of action: "I resolved, therefore, to quit the house, mentioned it to her, and she, far from opposing my resolution, approved it. She had an acquaintance at Grenoble, called Madam de Deyhens, whose husband was on terms of friendship with Monsieur Mably, chief Provost of Lyons. Monsieur Deybens proposed my educating Monsieur Mabley's children; I accepted this offer, and departed for Lyons without causing, and almost without feeling, the least regret at a separation, the bare idea of which, a few months before, would have given us both the most excruciating torments." The last meaningful relation with a woman that Rousseau came to have was with Theresa, totally illiterate whose mind was "as nature formed it," who could not count, read or write, would not know even hours and months. But she was the kind of woman Rousseau wanted in the particular situation in which he was placed at the moment. In the place of extinguished ambition, a life of sentiment, which had entire possession of my heart, was necessary to me. In a word, I wanted a successor to mama: since I was never again to live with her, it was necessary some person should live with her pupil, and a person, too, in whom I might find that simplicity and docility of mind and heart, which wanted nothing more than another heart to fill it up. It was apparently quite a mismatch – a man of revolutionary ideas and a woman without intellect and education, a mere body. But, as Rousseau remarks, "With persons whom we love, sentiment fortifies the mind as well as the heart; and they who are thus attached have little need of searching for ideas elsewhere." He produced five children by her, but was not in a position to support them. Hence he sent them to asylum for care: "My third child was therefore carried to the foundling hospital as well as the two former, and the next two

were disposed of in the same manner; for I have had five children in all." Rousseau's explanation for this act, which his friends-turned-foes used for slander, is worth the mention: "I' will satisfy myself by observing that my error was such that in abandoning my children to public education for want of the means of bringing them up myself; in destining them to become workmen and peasants, rather than adventurers and fortune-hunters, I thought I acted like an honest citizen and a good father, and considered myself as a member of the republic of Plato." At this point of time, when he has had a long life with Theresa, Rousseau makes a terrible confession about his involvement with women: When it will be known, that after having done everything, braved everything, not to separate from her; that after passing with her twenty years in despite of fate and men; I have in old age made her my wife, without the least expectation of solicitation on her part, or promise, or engagement on mine, the world will think that love bordering upon madness, having from the first moment turned my head, led me by degrees to the last act of extravagance…. What, 46 therefore, will the reader think when I shall have told him, with all the truth he has ever found in me, that, from the first moment in which I saw her, until that wherein I write I have never felt the least love for her, that I never desired to process her more than I did to possess Madam de Warens, and that the physical wants which were satisfied with her person were, to me, solely those of the sex, think and by no means proceeding from the individual? He will think that being of a constitution different from that of other men, I was incapable of love, since this was not one of the sentiments which attached me to women the most dear to my heart. Denying that physical love was ever the basis of his affairs with women, especially the closest Madam de Warens, Rousseau goes on to elaborate the reason for his still, and ever, wanting to have intimacy with women, especially the beautiful: "The first of my wants, the greatest, strongest and most insatiable, was wholly in my heart; the want of an intimate connection, and as intimate as it could possibly be: for this reason especially, a woman was more necessary to me than a man, a female rather than a male friend. This singular want was such that the closest corporal union was body, without which I felt a void." Thus, this void drove him from one woman to another. None could fill it completely, but each must be placed there to make it less sensible. As he himself remarks, "Not having it in my power to take in all its plenitude the charms of that intimate connection of which I felt the want, I sought for substitutes which did not fill up the void, yet they made it less sensible." Incorrigibly inclined as he was to fall for women, one of whom he must have all the time to fill his "void", yet another time he falls headlong for one Madam d' Houdetot, who already had a husband and a lover. But once attracted, nothing could easily stop him from falling: "she came; I saw her; I was intoxicated with love without an object…. I saw my Heloise [the heroine of his novel with that title] in Madam d' Houdetot, and I soon saw nothing but Madam d' Houdetot." He tries very hard to resist and restraine and ruin the instinct, but to no avail: "What powerful motive did I not call to mind to stifle it? My morals, sentiments, principles; the shame, the treachery and crime, of abusing what was confided to friendship, and the ridiculousness of burning, of my age, with the most extravagant passion for a object whose heart was pre-engaged…." On her part, she also tried to stay away from such a course: "she pitied my folly without encouraging it, and endeavoured to restore me to reason." Finally, "I became pressing: the step was delicate. It is astonishing, and perhaps without example, that a woman having suffered herself to be brought to hesitate should have got herself off so well. She refused me nothing the most tender friendship could grant; yet she granted me nothing that rendered her unfaithful, and I had the mortification to see that the disorder into which the most trifling favours had thrown all my senses had not the least effect upon her." 47 Thus Rousseau experienced yet another relationship with the opposite sex, and a relation of yet another type. Here was an "intimacy almost without example between two friends of different sexes who contain themselves within the bounds which we never exceeded." In this strange relationship, "yet love was equal on both sides, but not reciprocal." It ends romantically, as usual with Rousseau: It was the first and only time of my life; but I was sublime…. What intoxicating tears did I shed upon her knees! how many did I make her involuntarily! At length in an involuntary transport she exclaimed: 'No, never was a man so amiable, nor ever was there one who loved like you! But your friend Saint Lambert hears us, and my heart is incapable of loving twice.' I exhausted myself with sighs; I embraced her – what an embrace! But this was all. She had lived alone for the last six months, that is absent from her husband and lover; I had seen her almost every day during three months, and love seldom failed to make a third…. We were alone, in the grove by moonlight, and after two hours of most lively and tender conversation she left this grove at mid night, and the arms of her lover, as pure as she had entered it. Thus, Rousseau's relation with women was of a natural attraction, of a natural necessity, and as passionate as it can ever be. Like a true romantic love, it would not admit any social or moral restrictions, remaining completely unselfconscious about questions of social obligations or moral responsibilities. It only looked for purity of emotion, bordering devotion, a necessity of being. It does not remain attached to any one particular woman for a life time. It is not the love of an object so much as it is love without any object; it is love of love, or love for its own sake. Hence not one but several women appear in the single life of our author. Rousseau is the prototype of romantic love which gets its illustrations in Shelley, Keats, and Byron; in Childe Harold and Don Juan. For Rousseau, love was more than love; it was a spiritual experience over and above the sensual and sexual, which too were necessary components of its order; it was through the experience of love that he developed as man and writer. This individual experience, while it offered a model of romantic love, it exposed the shams and hypocrisies of the unromantic love–for-marriage institution of society.

ROUSSEAU'S PROSE STYLE

Since we are dealing with Rousseau in translation, and not in original, it is not possible to speak of some of the aspects of his style, which can be considered only in the original French language in which he wrote the Confessions. However, since style reflects the way of thinking of a writer, his manner of putting things or presenting ideas and emotions, even translation would reflect, at least in part, that manner peculiar to each individual author. It 48 is with this premise in mind that we shall approach the prose of the Confessions as it is available to us in English translation. As Cardinal Newman said in the Victorian age, "style is a thinking out into language." And no translation worth the name would falsify a writer's thinking, nor obliterate it. In this sense of style it is something ingrained in writing and not stuck on top like a veneer. It follows from this view that a man's way of writing will be an expression of his personality and his way of looking at life. This explains the famous and mostquoted definition of style given by Buffon, a French writer and naturalist of the eighteenth century, "style, it is the man himself." Rousseau's prose is not merely representative of the romantic prose, it is the prototype for that sort of writing; he became a model for the romantics that came after him, not merely for his ideas on man and nature, but also for his prose. Since a romantic is an individualist, wanting to explore his own thoughts and experience, not content with the general truths and standardised diction and expression, he follows his own individual resources of language and gives expression to his own experiences of life

in the most expressive language possible. In prose, as well as in poetry, the romantic spirit reflects itself in questioning the authority, in asserting individual freedom, in being natural and spontaneous. Both Coleridge and Hazlitt, two leading prose writers of the English Romantic period, attacked the eighteenth century stalwart, Dr. Johnson, accusing him of the Augustan habit of dressing up trite thoughts in elaborate and grandiloquent language. Note, for example, the following piece from Coleridge: "Style is, of course, nothing else but the art of conveying the meaning appropriately and with perspicuity, whatever that meaning may be, and one criterion of style is that it will not be translatable without injury to the meaning. Johnson's style has pleased many from the very fault of being perpetually translatable; he creates an impression of cleverness by never saying anything in a common way." Here, translatability means availability as formula or trick which can be imitated by anyone and everyone. And since it is trick or formula, it does not belong to any individual. The only difference between one and another writer is that of being or not being or being in more or less degree the master of that trick or formula. Such a style of writing does not reflect what we call the personality of a writer, his own authentic and genuine feelings and thoughts. Thus, in romantic writing, prose or poetry, sincerity and authenticity, simplicity and spontaneity, individuality and emotionality are some of the distinctive features of style. It is an aesthetics of experience, not of rules. Personality of the author permeates every word and sentence, every passage and chapter, giving the composition the unique flavour of the individual self and individual experience which is peculiar only to that personality. And yet, like any other literary movement, romanticism also showed a set of common qualities, habits of mind, and manners of expression, which are characteristic of the writers of that movement. For instance, the romantic habit of considering 49 one's self unique, different from all others, the habit of relying on feeling or emotion as the true expression of one's self as well as of truth, the habit of going ecstatic about things of beauty expressing it in superlative form, the habit of imparting sanctity to the autonomous self as well as to individual experience, for example, making love a divinity by it self. All of these habits get reflected in the prose style of these writers, which would be emotive rather than discursive, spontaneous rather than studied, ecstatic rather than economical, rambling rather than regimented, flowing rather than fabricated, pictorial rather than precise. The greatest emphasis upon the personal is one of the prominent features of the Romantic prose, which is also a conspicuous aspect of Rousseau's prose in the Confessions. Note, for instance, the following: The manner in which I passed my time at Bossey was so agreeable to my disposition, that it only required a longer duration absolutely to have fixed my character, which would have had only peacable, affectionate, benevolent sentiments for its basis. I believe no individual of our kind ever possessed less natural vanity than myself. At intervals, by an extraordinary effort, I arrived at sublime ideas, but presently sunk again into my original languor. To be loved by every one who knew me was my most ardent wish. I was naturally mild, my cousin was equally so, and those who had the care of us were of similar dispositions. Everything contributed to strengthen those propensities which nature had implanted in my breast, and during the two years I was neither the victim nor witness of any violent emotions. Here, we can see how an individual, a highly personal response is made to a life situation. The writer is describing his life at a new place where he has been sent in his early boyhood. We hardly get to know anything about the place or people. We only get to know the feelings of the writer towards the place and people there. Also, what is agreeable or not agreeable about the place and people is again a matter of individual inclinations and personal preferences. All that comes about the places comes only in the form of the narrator's emotional response to his surroundings. Nothing objective is motioned about any thing in the description. Rousseau's prose is highly charged with emotion. Of course, it is emotional when the experience being described is emotional. For, if style is the man, it is also the subject. It has to remain in consonance with the subject it is handling. The subject and style harmonise to form a unified communication. Note, for instance, the following: She came; I saw her; I was intoxicated with the love without an object; this intoxication fascinated my eyes; the object fixed itself upon her. I saw my Heloise in Madam d' Houdetot, and I soon saw nothing but Madam d' Houdetot, but with all the perfections with which I had just adorned the idol of my heart. To complete my delirium she spoke to me of Saint Lambert with a fondness of passionate lover. Contagious force of love! while listening to her and finding myself near her, I was seized with a delirious trembling, which I had never before experienced when near to any person whatsoever. She spoke, and I felt myself affected; I thought I was nothing more than interested in her sentiments, when I perceived I possessed those which were similar; I drank freely of the poisoned cup, of which I yet tasted nothing more than the sweetness. Finally, imperceptibly to us both, she inspired me for herself with all she expressed for her lover. Alas! It was very late in life, and cruel was it to be consumed with a passion not less violent than unfortunate for a woman whose heart was already in the possession of another. Here is the romantic subject, an emotional scene between a man madly in love with a woman married to someone else. And here is typically romantic prose, in which imagination and passion transform a real woman into a perfect beauty of the lover's (the writer's) dream. We have known just a little earlier that "The Countess of d' Houdetot was nearly thirty years of age, and not handsome; her face was marked with the smallpox, her complex-on coarse, she was shortsighted, and her eyes were rather round…." But this description came when the subject was the real woman and the writer was not yet aroused in his fit of passion. Here, the real woman gets transformed into the imaginary Heloise. The prose also becomes panting, throbbing with aroused passion, expressed through exclamations and short phrases, highly charged with delusion. It is a delirium rendered in functional prose style. Rousseau, however, the great writer as he is, modulates his style to tune with the change of subject. It can be matter-of-fact narration when the occasion so requires. Note, for instance, the following: I was born at Geneva, in 1712, son of Isaac Rousseau and Susannah Bernard, citizens. My father's share of a moderate living, which was divided among fifteen children, being very trivial, his business of a watchmaker (in which he had reputation of great ingenuity) was his only income. My mother's circumstances were more affluent; she was daughter of a Monsieur Bernard, minister, and possessed a considerable share of modesty and beauty; indeed, my father experienced some difficulty in obtaining her hand. The affection they entertained for each other was almost as early as their existence; at eight or nine years old they walked together every evening on the banks of the Treille, and before they were ten, could not endure the idea of separation. Here, there is no romantic subject, nor romantic emotion; hence no passionate, panting prose. It is a simple clean narrative without any kind of exaggeration or heightening of expression. No exclamation because no sighs. So, the prose is in tune with the subject. 51 But the prose goes lyrical the moment the writer comes upon the description of beauty in a natural scene or a human figure. It gets loaded with epithets, images, and emotions. The narrative stops in time, gets focused on a spot, human or natural, and attempts only a close-view of the object in sight. The writer's emotional involvement in the scene gives it lyrical qualities of rhythm and alliteration. Note, for example, the following: These were my meditations during the finest season of the year, in the month of June, in cool shades, to the songs of the nightingale, and the warbling of brooks. Everything concurred in plunging me into that too seducing state of indolence for which I was born, and from which my austere manner, proceeding from a long effervescence, should forever have delivered me.… I presently saw myself surrounded by all the objects which, in my youth, had given me emotion.… My blood became inflamed, my head turned, not withstanding my hair was almost grey, and the grave citizen of Geneva, the

austere Jean Jacques, at forty-five years of age, again became the fond shepherd. Or the following: I however wanted a lake, and I concluded by making choice of that which my heart has never ceased to wander. I fixed myself upon that part of the bank of this lake where my wishes have long since placed my residence in the imaginary happiness to which fate has confined me. The native place of my poor mamma had still for me a charm. The contrast of the situations, the richness and variety of the sites, the magnificence, the majesty of the whole, which ravishes the senses, affects the heart, and elevates the mind, determined me to give it the preference, and I placed my young pupils at Verney. In both these citations one can see how for the romantic Rousseau, it is not the object in itself which gets the attention, but the writer's own emotional response to that object. What we get in the prose here is not the actual landscape, but the emotion and associations, memories and recollections attached to that landscape. In other words it is the landscape of the writer's mind and heart which fills the space, not the natural scene. The object acts as merely a peg on which the writer hangs his emotions, memories, recollections. Even the object, thus, becomes an excuse to reveal one's own self. That is what Rousseau has done in these two pieces. Sentimentality is another standard trait of romantic writing, in prose and poetry. The writer's emotionalism, his sentimentality, always outweighs the response required by a scene or a situation. The emotion is always in excess; the sentiment is always sizzling. It always remains much above the normal temperature. There are always sobs and sighs, torrents of tears, expressed freely in any situation demanding slightest expression of emotion. Note, for instance, the following: When absent from her, how often have I kissed the bed on a supposition that she had slept there; the curtains and all the furniture of my chamber, on recollecting they were hers, and that her charming hands had touched them; nay, the floor, when I considered she had walked there. Sometimes even in her presence, extravagancies escaped me, which only the most violent passions seemed capable of inspiring…. Such adolescent conduct, even child-like attachments, are quite common to romantic characters, and the prose of the romantic writers becomes equally sentimental with highly-charged emotional expression, touching images, moving recollections. It becomes drenched with wet words carrying heavy emotional burden. Just like branches bend with the bunches of fruit on them, so do the sentences in romantic prose loaded with cluster of images. The epithet gets the better of the verb. Rousseau's prose is not, of course, monotonous at all; it varies from passage to passage as the subject or the sentiment changes. The same sentimal and lyrical prose can become stately and analytical, even ironical and satirical, if need be. We do have quite a few portions of the Confessions which are analytical or critical, discursive or expository. Note, for instance, the following: My work therefore was to be composed of two parts absolutely distinct: one, to explain, in the manner I have just mentioned, the different projects of the author; in the other, which was not to appear until the first had had its effect, I should have given my opinion upon these projects, which I confess might sometimes have exposed them to the fate of the sonnet of the misanthrope. At the head of the whole was to have been the life of the author. For this I had collected some good materials, and which I flattered myself I should not spoil in making use of them. Now, here, there is no sentimentality, nor superlative expressions; all we have is clean expository prose, without any ornamental epithets or emotional images. It is completely free from all these. Rousseau goes even beyond the expository, and uses sharp irony when it comes to retort to a rival's remarks or composition. Note, for instance, his comments on Voltaire's poem: Struck by seeing this poor man overwhelmed, if I may so speak, with prosperity and honour, bitterly exclaiming against the miseries of this life, and finding everything to be wrong, I formed the mad project of making him turn his attention to himself, and of proving to him that everything was right. Voltaire, while he appeared to believe in God, never really believed in anything but the devil; since his pretended deity is a malicious being, who, according to him, had no pleasure but evil. The glaring absurdity of this doctrine is particularly disgusting from a man enjoying the greatest prosperity; who, from the bosom of happiness, endeavours, by the frightful and cruel image of all the calamities from which he is exempt, to reduce his fellow creatures to despair. Thus, Rousseau can always rise to the occasion a subject, situation, or scene demands, and modulate his prose to bring it in tune with the mood or atmosphere to be created in a given situation, or to make it serviceable to the expository, analytical, lyrical, or narrative purpose or the passage in hand. His Confessions being an autobiographical work carries greater stamp of his personality than any of his other works, although no work of his can be said to be completely free from that stamp of his personality.

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