

**JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU:  
BETWEEN AUTONOMY AND  
AUTHENTICITY**

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## Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Between Autonomy and Authenticity

This thesis reconsiders some of the major works and themes of Jean-Jacques Rousseau in the light of recent debates centering on forms of subjectivity in liberal modernity. Rousseau is not a liberal thinker in the sense that he invests full political agency in the individual. However, he shares common ground with the liberal tradition in his promotion of the self to the exclusion of the social in a number of works. On the other hand, Rousseau's strictly political framework is communitarian in its recognition of the purely public nature of legitimacy – the General Will which all individual citizens are expected to express and conform to.

It is argued that the dichotomy identified in Rousseau's work between the positions of subject and citizen fail to fully realise the potential for a reconstructive view of subjectivity. This reconstructive view is based on the potential for reconciling individuation and socialisation. This reconciliation has two branches. In the first place, the subject loses any idealist or transcendental status, consciousness, cognition, knowledge and other vital parameters of self-definition are decentered. Secondly, subjectivity is reconstructed along relational lines as intersubjectivity. In the process truth is demoted from the plane certainty to a more humble life in the transactional milieu of the social sphere organising and coordinating daily actions, forms and practices.

Rousseau's works do not expressly recognise the intersubjective reorganisation of subjectivity. They do however traverse the field of tensions in the process of attempting to define the subject or social life in terms either of the idealist category of selfhood, or the practical category of community. The reference points of authenticity and autonomy are juxtaposed to suggest that those reconstructive theories guiding some current thinking can be useful in reconsidering Rousseau's notion of subjectivity in a more complete sense. This greater completeness adds a dimension of inconclusiveness since it is achieved by bringing Rousseau's narrative and autobiographical works and his systematic and philosophical works into direct confrontation.

The *Confessions* is reconsidered as a work in which the attempt to describe authenticity is immediately frustrated by the position of the real in language. However, the real cannot appear otherwise than in language. For Rousseau self-identity has the wholeness of substance and is grasped immediately. This immediacy is what language obscures, but it is not recoverable through the reconstruction of the self's presence to self. Rather, the subject must acknowledge its indebtedness to its recognition by the other for its sense of identity. This indebtedness must further be expressed as a recognition of the other, which recognition is identifiable at the core of language and inseparable from intentional consciousness, including self-consciousness

The *Dialogues* is the product of a crisis of the subject held to ransom and objectified by its complete entrapment in the webs of a conspiracy. The subject makes a virtue of its unique status as the sole object of this universal representational system. It is the reality which the conspiracy regards but can never fully capture. The constructive power of the conspiracy can nevertheless not dissolve the authentic self which attempts to define itself non-derivatively as the truth misrepresented by lies. The text promises to deliver the subject as presence – as truth – but fails. This failure is productive insofar as it advances a model of understanding more finely tuned both to its own experience of the conspired against subject unable to ultimately identify either the conspirators or the subject which that discourse has constructed. The subject's attempts to test the conspiracy and to present themselves as the only fully examined subject can never be exhausted. What follows is endless examination, revelation and interpretation, the relocation of truth away from ontology, and the decentering of the subject from presence to time, or multiple temporal frameworks.

For Rousseau autonomy under the law means the freedom to bind oneself to the norms of the social formation by participating in the formation of those norms. What is not considered in this idealism of the freely negotiated contract and the novel social agreement is the sense in which subjects clash with the given nature of norms, their existence as conditions which one enters involuntarily. At best, simple reconciliation with those norms represents the acceptance of the social role as the authentic self. However, this neglects the fact that the cause is not objective in the sense that it exists prior to discourse but only in the sense in which it assumes priority in discourse. Clearly, under the law, oedipal narratives structure self-understanding and the range and nature of lawful positions available to the self. However, autobiography, insofar as it is a narrative of the representation of guiding imperatives, or a confession of pathos laden distortions of authenticity offers the opportunity to produce self-interpretations which actively reinscribe the cause with agency of some type.

*Emile* broaches but contains the framework for intersubjective selfhood. The education is driven by a model of autonomy which view relatedness in terms of compromise and sacrifice. The form of selfhood is modelled on the real as object world, on the assumption that a scientific understanding of nature is disenchanted and referential rather than semantic and merely another, competing fable amongst others. However, the education resolves the tensions it itself produces by disguising the subject's relation to forms of otherness as the potential crisis against which its own theory guided genesis of the individual guards.

# INTRODUCTION

## BETWEEN AUTONOMY AND AUTHENTICITY: A RESPONSE TO MODERNITY

Ethical modernity arose in the context of attempts to secure the norms of culture from the conditions of culture itself rather than from a transcendental viewpoint.<sup>1</sup> The Enlightenment has frequently been identified, by both proponents and critics, as the source of this project to oust sacred foundations, examine processes of formation of subjects and societies and critique standards based on learning processes without rational criteria.<sup>2</sup> A prominent example of and tendency within the liberal ethical viewpoint in this respect is the device of rational goods construction and moral choice of the social contract.<sup>3</sup> In its most recent manifestation in Rawls' *Theory of Justice*<sup>4</sup> it draws on the premise of autonomous individuals making free choices for the sake of ordering a society founded on principles of justice. Rawls' individuals make decisions from behind a "veil of ignorance".<sup>5</sup> Rawls' 'veil of ignorance' is a device based on tenets of the rational choice game which is central if not tantamount to justice. 'Ignorance' here refers to the state of the participants in that they are permitted no preconceptions regarding the type of society that will emerge from their choice nor their place in it. As the societal type is a reflection and ordering of the goods valued and competed for within it, ignorance ensures that choice cannot be founded on or favour those who hold one set of values over another.<sup>6</sup>

Rawls' work has been criticised as typical of views influenced by the liberal enlightenment based on choices grounded in and justified by free will.<sup>7</sup> Equally, it has

been criticised for its misconception of subjectivity as radically individualistic and as irrational to the extent that it conceives of identity as absolutely torn from the context of the transactional milieu in which all consciousness is formed and is enacted.<sup>8</sup> For Charles Taylor, liberal universalism posits an unrealisable and incoherent ‘unencumbered self’ reflecting abstractly on choices without concrete premises.<sup>9</sup> Individuals, he argues, inhabit particular cultures and occupy distinct and complex positions within them. Taylor argues that agency cannot be separated from context, that “moral frameworks”<sup>10</sup> are fundamental and that any attempt to step outside them and achieve the ‘view from nowhere’<sup>11</sup> is irrational and invites a loss of identity. The meaning and value of the goods constituting identity are socially constructed and change historically.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the neutral language of liberal choice or autonomy is not even a recognisable human language. Natural languages are, argues Taylor, a composite of “qualitative contrasts”<sup>13</sup> which relate intention and consequence, not in a principled (rational) but a fundamentally indeterminate manner. Qualitative contrasts express the essential indeterminacy of historical agency to the extent that individuals do not simply express themselves but are constituted in the process of having their actions interpreted and reflected back to them.<sup>14</sup>

Recent critiques of modernity have focussed on the contradictions inherent in the liberal construction of the subject and the relationship between the individual and society.<sup>15</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, for example, argues that under the conditions of the liberal Enlightenment the dense and concrete moral vocabulary of historical communities was jettisoned in favour of standards of judgment based on the autonomous will of the individual.<sup>16</sup> For MacIntyre, objectivity cannot be the result of a complete transcendence of tradition. Moral reflection is impossible outside

historical understanding. The individual as a free consciousness able to reflect on the social context is a dangerous fiction which endorses an arbitrary assertion disguised as rational choice. It is, first of all, a fiction to the extent that it assumes that an individual without a role in society can effect self-criticism and reflection. For MacIntyre, membership in a community is a precondition of moral choice.<sup>17</sup> The relationship between fact and value, which is a precondition of choice, can only be established historically. It is the product of social practices which have force within a coherent community alone. Secondly, the atomised individual poses a danger to the extent that it seeks to displace forms that have evolved within the history of a particular society with others which, from the point of view of the moral self-understanding of the community, can only appear arbitrary.

Recently, attempts have also been made to realise the emancipatory potential of modernity. The most prominent effort in this respect has been Jürgen Habermas' linguistic reconstruction of the subject in discourse. Habermas dismisses the components (but not the objective) of subject-centered reason – which he identifies as part of the broader project of the philosophy of the subject. The philosophy of the subject conceived of the relation between individuality and universality in terms of self-consciousness.<sup>18</sup> Self-consciousness, under this rubric, identifies with reason and identifies knowledge as that which is. Rationality, therefore, is institutionalised rationality which endorses extant forms and the conditions of formation as they stand. As these conditions do not allow for reflection on formative processes, modernity and enlightenment are largely repressive.<sup>19</sup> Habermas hopes to retain the emancipatory potential of autonomy by defining it as the self-reflective recovery of conditions of subject formation without the transcendental trappings. In other words, he considers it

possible to resolve the issues of self-consciousness through the exercise of a reconceived (and therapeutic) form of self-consciousness. Self-reflexivity, for Habermas, must be reconstructed intersubjectively.

Communitarian critics dismiss the possibility of assuming a transcendent, critical perspective as utopian.<sup>20</sup> The quest for critique is dangerous because it disengages the subject from the traditions and practices of the community in which it is a member, and disengages that subject from the forms, traditions and contexts which alone are responsible for providing the subject with ethical substance. Universalists argue, in response to communitarians, that a critical theory is required to assess which traditions are appropriate to follow, and which are destructive, discriminatory and perverse.<sup>21</sup> If one relies on the standards of the culture in which one is immersed, one will lack standards for judging that society when it is corrupted. Critics of universalism point out that the observer perspective is always already a product of the subject's enculturation by and involvement in formative processes, and that to rise above them is to risk replacing functional values with arbitrary standards derived from the newly freed will of the individual.<sup>22</sup> Habermas agrees with communitarian concerns to the extent that the radical atomization of the individual under the conditions of liberal modernity must be countered by the development of intersubjective strategies of reason and intersubjective formations of identity.<sup>23</sup> It is not the consciousness of the individual investigator that judges norms but the process of debate and argument in intersubjective communication. Taylor too allows for the reflective, judging agent of conscience but only in the intersubjective context which brings to light the discrepancy between what is (facticity) and what ought to be (validity).<sup>24</sup> Self-awareness is the product of partial and overlapping resolutions of



multiple frames of reference. The world cannot simply be reclaimed by consciousness through the raising of validity claims, but discourse between interlocutors can resolve the frustrations of the agent's confrontation with incommensurable values.

Communitarians argue that self-interpretation and therefore reflective subjectivity can only be derived from meanings available in culture. Critics of the communitarian position respond that autonomy must be understood in terms of a relative transcendence of cultural determinism. The subject, then, must be an historicised subject capable of dialogical self-consciousness. For Mead, reflexivity involves the internalisation of meaning produced when subjective behaviour is recognised and acknowledged by others.<sup>25</sup> However, for Habermas, Mead's formulation is incomplete. Mead's account describes conventional role formation but not the formation of an independent ego. The condition of independence is not simple, mechanical reciprocation but consensual communication.<sup>26</sup> Mead could well be describing roles assumed without question or under duress. Autonomy, however, requires communication to include the testing of norms<sup>27</sup> such that the subject acts on the basis of convictions that can withstand rational critique.<sup>28</sup> In other words, the dominant normative perspective must be open to question by the subject assuming their place in society.<sup>29</sup>

In *Emile*, nature is the transcendent term. The process of education, however, reveals subjectivity to be less a recovery of the objective conditions of nature than the need to negotiate an internalised boundary between the I and the Me. The basis for autonomy, then, is less a metaphysics of identity as a language of evaluative contrasts. It is not the ipseity of 'is' which Emile must master, but the anxiety generated by the metaphor 'as' which he needs to overcome. The observer does not obtain a truthful or

scientifically valid position with respect to the object of study (whether nature, society or concrete and particular others) but is revealed as actively involved with them and equally constituted by them.

Normative testing makes the subject in Habermas' view the subject of a truth discourse – that is, a subject who acts and engages with others on the basis of the truth and rightness of applicable standards.<sup>30</sup> However, whether the subject can ever appropriate this idealised ground is open to question. The activity of speaking is shot through with ambiguities, displacements, and deferrals which make it impossible to exhaustively comprehend the other's discourse, or to produce an explicit one oneself. If validity could be produced by or for the subject, subjectivity would return to monadism. Testing only arises in the intersubjective context wherein self-identification is appropriated from the point of view of a participant.<sup>31</sup>

In the *Dialogues* there is no presence to self. Rousseau attempts to recover the truth of the event of the subject's appearance but is left postponing it indefinitely. The subject is not self-identical but always already historicised, or interpreted. The logic of interpretation structuring the text is that of the primal scene which defines the subject as essentially relational – as an effect of the allocation and reallocation of significance between scenes and between texts. This interpretation is not equivalent to the presentation available in the autobiographical text itself – that is, it is not a self-relation – but is achieved in a context infused with external opinions, forms and unassimilable constructions of which the conspiracy is the ultimate sign. Rousseau is unable to uncover the truth in the terms provided either by the text itself or the significant intertexts (Plato's *Apology* or Rousseau's own *Morceau allegorique*).

The primal scene which structures the *Dialogues* is traumatising because it conveys messages which are inherently enigmatic, but which nonetheless remain and are recognisable as messages. Therefore, the message it conveys is the message of exclusion from the inception. The *Dialogues*' analytical mechanism for approaching the origin as one which simultaneously deflects the interpreter from the origin is apparent in other contexts, whether truth is figured as 'self' (as in the *Confessions*) 'nature' (*Emile*), or law. As Laplanche comments, it is significant that Freud never refers to a single particular occasion as the primal scene but to "various" occasions and the desires they give rise to<sup>32</sup>: "different circumstances ... have been able to convey one scenic message and it has been possible for this to be repeated in different ways."<sup>33</sup> With respect to the law, the same event – castration – sets in train the possibility of its being, as Laplanche comments, repeated in different ways. The question then is whether the repetition entrenches the same event across a wider range of phenomena, or whether the repetition represents the dispersal without logocentrism of the foundational event – namely, the possibility for (the reality of) difference. What the event entails, then, is a problematic core of interpretation. What the law becomes, in this context, is an objective enigma demanding a labour of elaboration and re-interpretation from the subjects it forms.

The liberal will is informed by cultural developments which have promoted authenticity and autonomy above membership and political involvement. The works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau have featured frequently in this debate, and have given its central terms much of their substance. Charvet identifies Rousseau's natural man as the exemplar of autonomy, and of its tensions. Charvet is implicitly informed by Sartre.<sup>34</sup> The natural man is defined by the subjective rather than the objective

viewpoint.<sup>35</sup> That is, the natural man is interested only in his own opinions and judgments rather than being dependent on others. Natural man does not reside within a space of reasons, justifications, challenges and responses – that is, a shared intersubjective context. Charvet considers natural man as the product of a rigid demarcation of an objective viewpoint (being for others) from a subjective viewpoint (being for self).<sup>36</sup> The natural man's solution to subjective challenge is to make others conform to the subject's own viewpoint (to objectify others rather than objectify himself). This preserves natural unity, and turns others into instruments of his own subjective self-fulfilment.

The dichotomy is not solved by the social pact which transforms men into citizens. The contractual solution is intended to center on the fact that the community recognises the value of its members. This displaces the recognition of each subject as valuable. Because there should be no competing interest, but only harmony of justice and self-interest Rousseau may preserve the subjectivity of the citizen only at the risk of subjective disunity. Love of self separates men from each other and is incompatible with the general will which unites them.<sup>37</sup> In this, argues Ferrara, Rousseau demonstrates the tensions inherent in a modernity defined in terms of advancing individualism.<sup>38</sup> Under these conditions an ethics of authenticity clashes irreconcilably with an ethics of autonomy.

For Ferrara, then, Rousseau's writings demonstrate the working through of the problems of the impossibility of securely choosing either self or society. The either/or is genuine and complete because determinate criteria do not intervene between the subject and their society or themselves to orient them towards the good, the true or the right. Ferrara argues that Rousseau does no more than indicate the limitations of each

of the ethics that characterised the Enlightenment.<sup>39</sup> In *Emile*, Rousseau advances arguments for the benefits of autonomy, its component characteristics and the means of achieving that state but cannot claim that it is good without exception. The *Nouvelle Heloise* similarly problematises the conditions of modernity by demonstrating authenticity as failing to achieve the resolution between subjective and objective conditions. In both cases, Rousseau advances analyses based on an understanding of the problem of moral choice confronting the subject and suggests either that the either/or remain unresolved, possibly transcended by quasi-Sartrean ‘radical choice’<sup>40</sup> or repressed by the subject’s complete identification with the order contextualising the choice.

Recently, theoretical frameworks have been developed which restate the problem of the subject-context nexus. Extreme versions of this interrelation have been posited. On the one hand, the determinativeness of the structure – variously referred to as the Symbolic<sup>41</sup>, the text<sup>42</sup>, Reason<sup>43</sup>, Spirit<sup>44</sup>, the General Will<sup>45</sup> – is said to be absolute. This development – usually dependent on theories of language or discursive function – have countered the subjective idealisations of the philosophy of consciousness.<sup>46</sup> They have, however, done so at the expense of agency and the means of undertaking effective interventions in a history reconceived as absolute and subject-indifferent.<sup>47</sup> On the other hand, some qualified transcendence of that structure is proposed by means of repositioning the subject in the intersubjective context.<sup>48</sup>

A split dominates Rousseau criticism. Bernstein recognises this as Rousseau’s reflexive understanding of the modern dichotomy between forms of identity and forms of social action resulting in the need for idealised motivations (the categorical imperative) because of the complete withdrawal of the individual from social life –

Rousseau's "double men".<sup>49</sup> However, even Bernstein fails to consider that Rousseau reclaims the subject through and in the subject's formation in the breach. Instead of the suspension (rather than the foundation) of the subject in the gap between the place of the subject and the objectivity of the formal system, even sympathetic critics implicitly or explicitly rationalise Rousseau's conclusions. Ferrara, as stated, artfully and artificially separates autonomy from authenticity. Others, such as Dent, psychologise the subject in order to compartmentalise its defining structures.<sup>50</sup>

Dent recognises, in response to Charvet's critique of Rousseau, that "the self in isolation" plays a significant role in Rousseau's thinking<sup>51</sup> and that Emile is raised to embrace needs and values that make "no essential reference to the existence of others".<sup>52</sup> He goes on to consider how these values are foundational for social values: in other words, how a sense of personal entitlement gives rise to a sense of responsibility.<sup>53</sup> In the process Dent finds a distinction in Rousseau between "primordial *amour de soi*"<sup>54</sup> and "reflexive *amour de soi*".<sup>55</sup> Dent, however, cannot explain how primordial unity can develop into reflexive relatedness. Indeed, his description of a starting point in structures that do not involve the responses of others elides the explanation for identity that takes individuality to be inherently responsive.<sup>56</sup> If there is such a thing as primordial *amour de soi*, it is apparent in *Emile* that its primordality is the product of internalised fantasy structures which make the role of the imagination central to the sense of fundamental unity. Those fantasies are raised on the ground of elided alterity. Dent's formulation of primordial *amour de soi* – "to live in good company with ourselves"<sup>57</sup> – is in fact revealing of the intersubjective requirements of subjectivity.

The point, then, is to recognise in Rousseau a certain discovery, and an attempt to disguise it. That discovery is the breach which itself issues in a call to autonomy, and makes autonomy a paradox. In other words, Rousseau makes the paradox foundational. The law permits autonomy, but only by means of what Žižek refers to as the process of the wound being healed by the sword that dealt it in the first place.<sup>58</sup> The *Confessions* continually reaffirms the subject through its self-distancing, Figures of flight and escape – transcendent conscience, sublime eloquence – serve the subject and permit its self-recognition – but do not permit its foundation in self-recognition. The self always leans on the other (as the young Jean-Jacques, in the foundational discovery of self, leans on Marion) in a way that can never be disclosed, but depends on the support language finds in the absent ‘thing’ it represents. In the *Dialogues*, Rousseau abandons the truth in the process of seeking the truth of a structure – the pan-European conspiracy which he believed was leveled against him – that only promotes a false image of him. *Emile* proposes to construct a fortified protective integument between the world and the autonomous subject. However, the subject is defined by internalising a boundary between self and world, including others, which cannot be admitted to consciousness. This results, contrary to the pedagogical program, in the irretrievable foundations of the subject in the unconscious, and the displacement of knowledge from scientific conditions of reference (‘is’) to metaphoric parameters of signification (‘as’).

Rousseau does not (fails to) solve the problem of the subject in breach. In this sense, readers who find in him two contradictory subjects (man and citizen) are right.<sup>59</sup>

However, the place of the contradiction in Rousseau is equally significant, since the contradiction is not simply symptomatic, in the negative sense, of a programmatic

failure. Rather, the contradiction forms the basis of a reconceptualisation. Rousseau makes the materials for the recovery of the subject available by not providing consistent accounts of formation and by developing conflicting lines of interpretation. Ferrara suggests that the coherence of Rousseau's thought should be examined across both his philosophical and his autobiographical and fictional works.<sup>60</sup> Rousseau indicates that his works would take up his fundamental concern to know "what experiments would be needed in order to come to know natural man; and by what means ... these experiments (can) be performed within society?"<sup>61</sup> and outline a project worthy of "the greatest of Philosophers".<sup>62</sup> The Neuchatel manuscript of the *Confessions* maintains that it "will always be a book precious for philosophers"<sup>63</sup> and so relates Rousseau's autobiographical works directly to his systematic writings. For Rousseau, the explicit object of research, "to know natural man" can only be undertaken by a process of 'disentanglement', separating "what is original from what is artificial in man's present nature".<sup>64</sup> There is no reference to whether this project can ever be completed. Indeed, the name Rousseau gives to the process suggests otherwise since it posits a duplicity without a standard against which to measure and compare the separated deposits. Disentanglement therefore argues for an epistemological process characterised by the articulation of tensions.

Rousseau considers the tensions that characterise the internal self-relation of the monad. His works also consider the contradictions informing the requirement of justice and community and the potential discursive dissolution of the subject within those contexts. The extremes characterising Rousseau's position can be clarified by setting the approaches of two important recent theorists of subjectivity – Jürgen Habermas and Cornelius Castoriadis – in opposition. Habermas is concerned with the



construction of rational criteria as frameworks of subjective interrelations.<sup>65</sup> For Castoriadis, on the other hand, critique is radical and should result in unprecedented forms of expression and conceptualisation.<sup>66</sup> Authenticity requires maintaining independence without complete detachment from the real. Habermas argues that the subject and the objective conditions of social and physical life will be unbroachable without common ground – which he posits in language. Castoriadis proposes the relative independence of the fantasising imaginary as the only source of novel meanings.<sup>67</sup> However, he confronts the problem of a real heterogeneous from consciousness which can make no impact upon it and can have no reference to it. Castoriadis proposes a form of original representation which is essentially hallucinatory, cannot be traced in any way to the real, and a prototype of all future wish fulfillment. The subject operates under the imperative of complete unification since, if the constituting fantasy replaces the ‘lost’ initial object it must do so under the organising assumption of plenitude, that nothing is missing<sup>68</sup>. For Castoriadis, this monadism exerts pressure over the rest of subjective life, resists the assertion of difference in order to carry the other back to the core state, and if it fails to do so, substitutes fantasy satisfactions in its place.

Habermas on the other hand proposes overcoming the problem of autonomous self-regard and social other-regard by linking individuation and socialisation.<sup>69</sup> If society were simply imposed on a psyche in no way inclined towards it, social relations would not only be contradictory, or violent, they would be impossible. However, all that follows from the psyche’s inability to produce social forms is the need for facilitation. Habermas explains the subject as intersubjectively constituted in the context of speech acts. He takes as his basic assumption that the ‘natural telos’ of

language is to communicate, to raise valid claims directed towards others and to which they are invited to respond.<sup>70</sup> This conception is as extreme as Castoriadis' but in the opposite sense. In communicative reason, language subsumes everything into it, including the pre-linguistic elements of desire, the drives, and the whole theatre of the unconscious. Thus, everything would be embedded in the public language of the culture from the start, no matter how elementary.

It is simply not clear, however, that language has the capacity to represent those hallucinatory formations in the form of intentional communications. In fact, framing these primordial constructions within arguments based on propositions testable with respect to their validity is in danger of rendering symbolic significations naturalistic objects. This would give rise to an expectation that the discourse of the other could be neutralised by being assessed as false, or inaccurate. The realist premise conceives an end to interpretation. Meaning, however, includes the nocturnal – the point between obscurity and objectivity, the opacity that makes all attempts at perfect communication deficient.

So, where Castoriadis cannot conceive a figure of mediation, Habermas dissolves everything in the medium. If Castoriadis' individuals do not enter into intersubjective relations, they at least do not disappear as producers of discourses. However, Castoriadis is incorrect to assume that the self and society stand in metaphysical opposition to each other. The idealistic construction of Habermas' relation between language and the world, on the other hand, is too facile. There can be no simple convergence of language and alterity. Language does not transform the world into discourse without remainder, nor does it set out the conditions of fit between

phenomena and propositions which allow explicit representation without obscure implication.

In the *Confessions*, for example, authenticity is already structured by the other in the form of conscience or sympathy. Rousseau understands, in his writing devoted to the state of nature that language has a transcendent moment (silence itself), but also that it mediates.<sup>71</sup> Authenticity, in attempting to recover the former can only ever do so through and as the latter. Authenticity, therefore, is itself a subject of language even if it dwells in autistic silence. More importantly, it is equivocal to the extent that its stillness in time and space is itself an indication of a unity supported by an active synthesis.

The residuum that is left behind after the symbolisation of reality is central to Lacan's understanding of language and the formation of subjectivity in language.<sup>72</sup> It is central to present concerns about the conflicting ethical requirements structuring subjectivity insofar as authenticity emerged as a significant cultural and personal reference point because ethics could not be idealistically conceived as the point of convergence of principle and action. For Lacan, in fact, the subject defines itself through this very point of non-coincidence as lacking. It must indeed find itself as lacking from the order of actions and reasons which define morality. The subject can never coincide with the system because it is not the possessor or master, it belongs to the system – the phallus (the control of signification) does not belong to him.<sup>73</sup> In Lacanian terms, if the child simply accepted castration it would accept the impossibility of never finding itself in the symbolic. So, it defines itself as lacking as a way of sacrificing its lack of coherence with the symbolic. Against absorbance into the system the self defines itself through language as that which it is not yet. In terms of social identity,

authenticity calls into question received and habitual opinion. Every speech act, however, must be supported by a self-conception of the subject (authenticity) as opposed to the role bound speech of sincerity.<sup>74</sup> But this conception is merely an expectation which will be revealed retroactively by what the subject can be said to have meant: “a retroversion of effect by which the subject becomes at each stage what he was before and announces himself – he will have been – only in the future perfect tense.”<sup>75</sup> Every act of enunciation reenacts the founding of the ego – from its emergence in insufficiency, to its completion in anticipation: “the subject is the emergence (*surgissement*) which, just before, as subject, was nothing, but which, scarcely having appeared, congeals into a signifier.”<sup>76</sup>

Autonomy, therefore, can only be completed under conditions of authentic self-relation which, in turn, compromise – if not undermine – autonomous action. For Rousseau, man and citizen are contradictory positions. The contradiction itself strains the concept of the subject. Rousseau’s refusal to bridge subject and society by means of a medium invites extreme conclusions. On the one hand, truth sides with the subject and accepts the loss of society. On the other hand, a third term is raised between and amongst subjects resulting in the totalisation of society and the loss of subjectivity. There are, however, discernable tensions within his formulations which give rise to detectable displacements of either the monad or the transsubjective subject.<sup>77</sup>

Rousseau validates the law by means of an autonomy which requires the subject to reclaim the cause or origin of the law. This origin – castration – must therefore be interpreted and form part of the self-interpretation of the subject. This self-interpretation is realised in autobiographical narrative – wherein the conditions and

effects of autonomy are reconstructed from existential data rather than from the schema required by the institutional doctrine of the citizen under the General Will. The narrative, however, never overcomes the foundation of subjectivity in an external event incapable of being fully subjectivised, reclaimed or disavowed. Ultimately, it must be acknowledged that what limits the autonomy of the subject is equally the source of the subject.<sup>78</sup> The Freudian-Lacanian basis of this interpretation must guard against what Freud identified as the tendency to say that the person is “retrogressively fantasised instead of progressively determined”.<sup>79</sup> In fact, no separation of these temporalities is permissible. This becomes clear in and through the *Confessions* where time is discovered to be the time of the other, and the question of origins is transferred from a source in the subject to a source in the other. Closure, in other words, is not a linear movement (a telos), but a place in a system, essentially a linguistic system, founded on positions and juxtapositions which allows for reinterpretation by allowing its elements to be put into play.

1. See Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (London: Fontana Press, 1985) pp.22-29.
2. The hermeneutics versus critical theory debate has given rise to an extensive literature. See for example, John B Thompson, *Critical Hermeneutics: A Study in the Thought of Paul Ricoeur and Jürgen Habermas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Georgia Warnke, *Justice and Interpretation* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1993); Gianni Vattimo, *Beyond Interpretation: The Meaning of Hermeneutics for Philosophy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Nicholas H Smith, *Strong Hermeneutics: Contingency and Moral Identity* (London: Routledge, 1997); David Rasmussen (ed) *Universalism vs. Communitarianism: Contemporary Debates in Ethics* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1995).
3. On the social contract see J W Gough, *The Social Contract: A Critical Study of its Development* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957); M H Lessnoff, *Social Contract Theory* (London: MacMillan, 1986).
4. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971).
5. Ibid, pp.136-42.
6. Ignorance of personal status and position means that choice cannot simply be a mechanism for favouring one set of class interests in opposition to others. See R Dworkin, 'The Original Position' in N Daniels (ed) *Reading Rawls: Critical Studies of A Theory of Justice* (New York: Basic Books Inc., no date) pp.16-53, p.50. With no knowledge of either, it is argued, the rational choice an individual can make is one ensuring the fair distribution of goods. See R P Wolff, *Understanding Rawls: A Reconstruction and Critique of A Theory of Justice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977) pp.37-8.
7. See R P Wolff, *ibid*, Part Three, pp.103-118, and Part Five, pp.195-210; Thomas Nagel, 'Rawls on Justice', in N Daniels (ed) *ibid* n 6, pp.1-15, and Milton Fisk, 'History and Reason in Rawls' Moral Theory', in N Daniels (ed) *ibid* n 6, pp.52-80.
8. For a discussion of the emergence of subject's in such milieus see Thomas McCarthy, *Ideals and Illusions: On Reconstruction and Deconstruction in Contemporary Critical Theory* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1993) pp.152-80.
9. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) p.29. The term itself is attributed to Michael Sandel, see "The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self" in S Avineri and A de Shalit (eds) *Communitarianism and Individualism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) pp. 12-28.
10. Taylor, *ibid*.
11. Ibid.
12. Alessandro Ferrara, "Universalisms: Procedural, Contextualist and Prudential" in D Rasmussen (ed) *ibid* n 2, pp.11-38, p.20.
13. Charles Taylor, "The Diversity of Goods" in A Sen and B Williams (eds) *Utilitarianism and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) pp.116-45, p.132.
14. Charles Taylor, "Self-Interpreting Animals" in Charles Taylor, *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) pp.45-76.
15. M Sandel in S Avineri and A de Shalit (eds) *ibid* n 9; for the response of 'neo-conservative' critics to modernity see Alessandro Ferrara, *Modernity and Authenticity: A Study of the Social and Ethical Thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993) pp.7-28.
16. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (London: Duckworth, 1985) pp.361-2. See also, Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1988) pp.349-69.
17. See MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, *ibid*, p.362. See also Michael Walzer, "Membership" in Shlomo Avineri and Avner de Shalit (eds) *ibid* n 9, pp.65-84.
18. Jürgen Habermas has characterised the nature of modernist philosophical thought as dominated by the "philosophy of the subject" in a number of major works. For a restatement of this position see, 'Themes in Postmetaphysical Thinking' in *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995) William Mark Hohengarten (trans) pp.28-56.
19. The classic statement is Max Horkheimer and Theodor W Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Seabury Press, 1972) John Cumming (trans). See Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute for Social Research 1923-50* (London: Heinemann, 1973) pp.86-112, 253-80. See also David Cozens Hoy in David Cozens Hoy and Thomas McCarthy, *Critical Theory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1994) pp.103-42.
20. Taylor, *ibid* n 9, p.29.

21. Georgia Warnke, *Justice and Interpretation* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1993) pp.146-50.
22. Charles Taylor, 'Atomism' in Avineri and de Shalit (eds) above n 9, pp.29-50.
23. See generally Habermas, above n 18.
24. Taylor, above n 9, p.36.
25. G H Mead, *Mind, Self and Society* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1934) pp.43-51.
26. Jürgen Habermas, 'The Paradigm Shift in Mead' in Mitchell Aboulafia (ed) *Philosophy, Social Theory and the Thought of George Herbert Mead* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991) pp.137-68; see also Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol.II (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984) Thomas McCarthy (trans) pp.39-46.
27. Jürgen Habermas, 'Individuation Through Socialisation: On George Herbert Mead's Theory of Subjectivity' in *Postmetaphysical Thinking*, above n 18, pp.152-3, 185-6.
28. Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, above n 26, pp.63-5.
29. Habermas, 'Individuation Through Socialisation', above n 27, pp.170-77.
30. Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action Vol 1* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995) Thomas McCarthy (trans) pp.43-66.
31. Jürgen Habermas, *Theory and Practice* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973) p.40; *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979) p.107.
32. On the primal scene see Sigmund Freud, *Studies on Hysteria* in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-74) XVII; and *From the History of an Infantile Neurosis*, XVII.
33. Jean Laplanche, 'Interpretation Between Determinism and Hermeneutics: a Restatement of the Problem' in Jean Laplanche, *Essays on Otherness* (London: Routledge, 1999) pp.138-165, pp.156.
34. John Charvet, *A Critique of Freedom and Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
35. Ibid, p. 60.
36. Ibid, p.62.
37. Ibid, p.63.
38. Ferrara, *Modernity and Authenticity*, above n 15, p. 26
39. Ibid, p.25.
40. Charles Taylor, 'Responsibility for Self' in A O Rorty (ed) *The Identities of Persons* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976) pp.281-300.
41. There are in effect conservative and critical reading of Lacan's concept of the symbolic order on the one hand, and more recent ones that emphasise the role of the symbolic order in the constitution of the subject. See generally Peter Dews, *Logics of Disintegration: Post-Structuralist Thought and the Claims of Critical Theory* (London: Verso, 1987) pp.76-7. For a more recent reading of Lacan see Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).
42. See for example Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981) Barbara Johnson (trans) on dissemination, p.328.
43. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1996) Werner S Pluhar (trans). See also Frederick S Beier, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987).
44. G W F Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971) W Wallace (trans) p.27.
45. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (London: J M Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1973) G D H Cole (trans) II [2], [3].
46. See Habermas, above n 18.
47. Derrida's 'there is nothing outside the text' has been received in this strong formulation by a number of critics, especially materialist critics. Dews argues for this as the correct way to read Derrida in *The Logics of Disintegration*, above n 41. For a modification and less extreme reading of Derrida see Rodolphe Gasche, *The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986) especially pp.121-76.
48. See Habermas, above n 27.
49. J M Bernstein, *Recovering Ethical Life: Jürgen Habermas and the Future of Critical Theory* (London: Routledge, 1995) pp.88-91.
50. N J H Dent, *Rousseau: An Introduction to His Psychological, Social and Political Thought* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988).
51. Ibid, p.88.
52. Ibid, p.89.
53. Ibid, p.95.

54. Ibid, p.92.
55. Ibid, p.93.
56. For an argument that the subject emerges in a space of responses see Jürgen Habermas, 'Individuation Through Socialisation', above n 27, and 'The Paradigm Shift in Mead', above n 26.
57. Dent, *Rousseau*, above n 50, p.99.
58. Slavoj Žižek, "The Wound is Healed Only by the Spear that Smote You" in Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel and the Critique of Ideology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993) pp.165-99.
59. See for example, J Shklar, *Men and Citizens: A Study of Rousseau's Social Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969); L G Crocker, 'Rousseau's Dilemma: Man or Citizen?' *Studies in Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 24 1986, pp.271-84.
60. On the coherence of Rousseau's *oeuvre* see Ferrara, *Modernity and Authenticity*, above n 15, p.25. The only other work to consider the relationship is Christopher Kelly, *Rousseau's Exemplary Life: the Confessions as Political Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).
61. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin and the Foundations of Inequality Among Men* in Victor Gourevitch (ed and trans) *The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 'Preface', p.125 (emphasis in original).
62. Ibid.
63. Quoted Christopher Kelly, *Rousseau's Exemplary Life*, above n 60, p.32.
64. Rousseau, above n 61, p.125.
65. On Habermas' project of 'Universal Pragmatics' see Jürgen Habermas, 'Toward a Theory of Communicative Competence' in Hans Peter Drietzl (ed) *Recent Sociology* 2 (New York: MacMillan, 1970) pp.114-48; 'Some Distinctions in Universal Pragmatics,' *Theory and Society* 3, 1976, pp.155-67; 'What is Universal Pragmatics?' in Jürgen Habermas, *Communication and The Evolution of Society* (London: Heinemann, 1979) Thomas McCarthy (trans) pp.1-68.
66. Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1987) Kathleen Blamey (trans).
67. Ibid, p.300.
68. Ibid, p.311.
69. Habermas, 'Individuation Through Socialisation,' above n 27.
70. See David Rasmussen, *Reading Habermas* (Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 1990) pp.18-36 for what he calls this "rather startling premise for the project of communicative action", p.18.
71. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, above n 61, I [7]-[8]; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1966) John H Moran and Alexander Gode (trans) XVI, p.64
72. For Lacan on the 'real' see Dews, above n 41, pp.103-08; and Fink, above n 41, pp.27-9. See also Anika Lemaire, *Jacques Lacan* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977) p.67.
73. See Dews, above n 41, p.89.
74. Ferrara discusses the difference between authenticity and sincerity, referring to Trilling, at above n 15, pp.86-91.
75. Lacan, quoted Dews, above n 47, p.99.
76. Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (London: Penguin Books, 1991) p.199.
77. Seyla Benhabib uses this term to refer to Hegelian Spirit or Geist. See Seyla Benhabib, *Critique, Norm and Utopia: A Study of the Foundations of Critical Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986) pp.79-80.
78. See Žižek, above n 58.
79. Sigmund Freud, in *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess: 1887-1904* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1985) Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson (trans and ed) p.270.



# AUTHENTICITY AND THE EMBRACE OF CONSCIENCE

## INTRODUCTION

In the *Confessions*<sup>1</sup> Rousseau conceives of an idealist category of subjectivity which posits an imaginary coherence: authenticity as substance.<sup>2</sup> The self is enclosed both upon itself and against others and alterity. The *Confessions* registers a tension between consciousness and language. The self understood in terms of a language is experienced as decentered in language. The language of substance is a language with a dual aspect: the thing that is relinquished in language returns as an absence around which language is formed. The enclosure is, in fact, a fold in which inside and outside are contained within the single figure in the form of an indeterminate demarcation.<sup>3</sup> Rousseau posits the lost dyad of thing-symbol in the first practices of signification – authentic language. This loss (the substance) is revealed in desire – the fantasy of the object (a) or the remainder of the real in language which allows the subject to posit its wholeness against existential dichotomy. The reclaimed wholeness of the subject is figured in the *Confessions* in conscience and eloquence. However, these can only reveal loss despite the conviction of the subject. Levinas is considered as the critic of an ontology or egology in occidental constructions of subjectivity which figure the self as desire, and desire as possession of the other as grounds of identity.

Rousseau's authentic language is appropriative, and reveals, in its move to complete the subject, a relation and separation from alterity. It parades as a complete discourse, or metalanguage. If authenticity sees not through language, but language itself, it posits a demystification. However, even after the demystification of the conditions of

discourse, language still conceals – authentic language hides the fact of concealment. To comprehend the relation within the framework of identity logic produces a paradox. For Levinas, on the other hand, the other is prior to discourse, and does not appear in discourse. Exercising vigilance against the confidence in a completely explicit discourse gives rise to an awareness of alterity, that is the otherness of the other. The other is the source of responsibility as immanent in consciousness. What ensues, then, is a sublime ethics. Responsibility precedes the subject, producing a sense of dislocation, of incomplete representation in self-consciousness.

### AUTHENTICITY

With the development of a modernity which increasingly cut individuals adrift of sources of identity and legitimacy in tradition, the potential developed for incommensurables to structure experience and subjectivity.<sup>4</sup> If authenticity demands that the individual make life choices and embrace values based on truth to self rather than the place those goods occupied in an established order, the scope for the individual to find themselves increasingly and irreconcilably at odds with society expanded. To some extent an outlook based on the pathos of accepting that the individual's acknowledgment of social life or celebration of uniqueness in their moral choices characterised the emerging modern self.<sup>5</sup>

Ferrara identifies an ethic of authenticity in Rousseau's *Nouvelle Heloise*.<sup>6</sup> There, the character's existential immersion in the compelling contexts of family life confronted a growing recognition of conflicting desire – inner nature and objective circumstances failed to mesh, moral choices proved immune to the Hegelian shaping of desire by reason (*Bildung*).<sup>7</sup> To the extent that, in the *Confessions*, Rousseau intended to present

himself as a natural man whilst bracketing off the distorting effects of social involvement, the subject of the autobiography is not authentic. Taylor argues that Rousseau's rediscovery of nature as it relates to the self constructs a position siding with the rational enlightenment against an earlier and still contemporaneous religious skepticism.<sup>8</sup> That skepticism was represented by Pascal for whom 'man' mediated between two absolutes – that of the divine, and that of the person – both of which were essential, and whose incompatibility explained human fallibility.<sup>9</sup> For Rousseau, the reform of human conduct through the rediscovery of intention in natural feeling rather than social motivation drew the species closer to the divine. Conscience was the voice of the divinity – the pure mediation of self-relation. However, it was also a language and therefore admitted mediation.

For Rousseau, authentic identity is a “strong, simple, uniform whole.”<sup>10</sup> Rousseau takes the monad as a starting point wherein all that is ever encountered is the flow of internal representations failing to engage with the social world. Seen in these terms, the authentic self is satisfied only by a fulfillment of desire that can be achieved wishfully, and is opposed to opening onto the external world. Enveloped in this narcissistic disavowal of reality, socialisation can only be provoked by a shock to the homeostatic system from which it does not essentially recover. The natural self is “too simple to be capable of description ... true happiness is quite indescribable; it can only be felt ... because it is not the result of a collection of facts but a permanent state.”<sup>11</sup> Under these highly specified conditions a disruption to the heavily bounded identity is inconceivable. Utter simplicity precludes the appeal of external reasons, the alteration of facts are irrelevant to the preservation of the permanent state, and true happiness appears beyond the appeal of motives emerging from without. Natural

scarcity seems incapable of explaining how socialisation can intervene to reform the identity of a creature satisfied by the internal conditions of imaginary self-satisfaction.

Authenticity's immediacy amounts, in fact, to an appropriation of reality to itself. Natural man defines itself through the immediacy of being able to take and use whatever 'comes to hand'.<sup>12</sup> Explaining why natural man had no need to enter relations under the conditions that pertained in the first state of nature, Rousseau says: "Fruit does not shrink from our hands. One can take nourishment without speaking. One stalks in silence."<sup>13</sup> Natural man is self-formed to the extent of this capacity for appropriation. For Rousseau, language is only a part of post-appropriation subjectivity because it is disappropriative, or dispossessive. What it dispossesses man of is the real – fruit disappears in language. However, the "silence" natural man dwells in is not the state of the world in the absence of language, but language in its absence: the silence of language which realises the unspeakable presence of the object.<sup>14</sup> Objects themselves are said to bear a "mute eloquence"<sup>15</sup> and an ideal language says everything before one "actually speaks".<sup>16</sup>

In the act of appropriation, the I itself recedes. In Meadean terms, the authentic self is the Me which the I reflects on and appropriates.<sup>17</sup> That is, it is the condition of its own appearance and disappearance in language. From Rousseau's consideration of authentic existence in the state of nature it is necessary to conclude that language is itself this act of signification trapped between revealing and concealing. Derrida proceeds from the discovery of the impossibility of a science of the origin of presence to a subject that is no more than the effects of the movement of the signifier.<sup>18</sup> These alternatives are based on the assumption that the subject must be either an absolutely centered and transcendent point or nothing at all. It is a false inference to conclude

from this absolutist premise that there can be no possibility of a subject that is not self-centered. As Adorno argues, from materialist premises, the subject without an object “would be literally nothing”.<sup>19</sup> Subjects are inseparable from the world they inhabit and the relation between subject and object is one of mediation. The subject experiences the world as something both given, and distanced – that is, as an interplay of mediation in language and material immediacy. Rousseau must be read as proceeding (if not assuming) as if authentic representation is not a metalanguage but the discovery of language itself as that which mediates all things yet which is itself immediate. Authenticity, or self, names the most originary experience but only to the extent that the authentic self is lost at the level of (mute) immediate experience in order to return as an object in language. The subject therefore is, like the object (the first fruit) reflected on in language, that which has no possibility of appearing there.

The *Confessions* is the discourse of truth to the extent that being is presented there as the index of itself.<sup>20</sup> Truth requires a language without lack. However, language is the embodiment of a lack, and it is only the localisation of that lack that stops the dissemination of meaning. Authenticity, or nature, in other words, is the index of its own impossibility.<sup>21</sup> Language indicates that there is a fundamental loss in its very presence, which the self embodies in authenticity, where loss attains positivity.

Language is a positivity in that it cannot be negated because it is the embodiment of a lack. The thing or real makes language possible without being in language. The other is a void around which language circles. It is recorded in the passage of language, but never appears in discourse.

Authenticity, cradling a lack, cannot encompass the immediate self-relation, or self-consciousness. The *Confessions* transcends the contradictions of authenticity through conscience, which itself transcends the self, and is at the same time immanent in the self:

Conscience! Conscience! Divine instinct, immortal voice from heaven; sure guide for creatures ignorant and finite indeed, yet intelligent and free; infallible judge of good and evil, making man like to God! In thee consists the excellence of man's nature and the morality of his actions; apart from thee I find nothing but the sad privilege of wandering from one error to another, by the help of an unbridled understanding and reason which knows no principle.<sup>22</sup>

Thus conscience represents the retrieval of authenticity, the human capacity to overcome tensions between the necessity of grounding moral action and the arbitrariness of those grounds. At the same time, conscience is the demand for self-discovery, and self-recovery of the grounds of subjective ethics – that is, an ethics which cannot be given by the other.<sup>23</sup> Paradoxically, it must be capable of recalling what is prior to choice and reason, that is, prior to the subject.

Conscience tests but is not derived from extant social conditions. It must therefore form the basis for normative interaction in the first instance – and therefore what it means to be inseparable from the world of others.<sup>24</sup> Rousseau contrasts the basis of his own morality (“the vigorous and repeated flights which any sensitive heart must take outside itself”<sup>25</sup>) with that of Frederic-Melchior Grimm’s (“the sole duty of a man is to follow all the inclinations of his heart”<sup>26</sup>). Here, the association of transcendence with decentered identity rather than egoistic self-absorption is constitutive of self-consciousness.<sup>27</sup> Grimm’s ersatz morality is no more than a strategic self-determination grounded in the objectification of concrete others – summoning his valet “with a ‘Heh!’, as if the great man had so many servants that he

did not know who was on duty ... In fact he completely forgot that the valet was a man.”<sup>28</sup> In forgetting the other, Grimm forgets himself (as his elaborate toilette which shows him donning a cosmetic mask indicates). In the *Confessions* Rousseau contends that it is possible to concentrate on the monadic core of identity without obliterating the other, or the moral sentiments. The external flight is not a passage through intersubjectivity. The *Confessions* concentrates on the relation of difference between self and society, presenting contrasting possibilities of a private life threatening social order (Grimm), and an authentic interiority available to morality despite the constructedness of social relations.

In the metaphysical tradition, conscience is an ontology (or anamnesis) because what is (*onta*) could be represented before a perceiving subject who could experience the representation in the mode of recollection. The good and recollection are intrinsically connected For Plato, recollection – the return of the Form/Idea by way of an imprint, is an *eidos* of beauty and the good, or supreme truth, coming from beyond.<sup>29</sup>

Metaphysics is concerned with the appropriation of presence into self-presence - with that which brings to presence in the first place. The self, however, does not occupy the first place. The initial impetus towards (‘love’ of) the good is independent of reason or the subject.<sup>30</sup>

If there was any man so wretched as never to have done anything, all his life long which he could remember with pleasure, and which would make him glad to have lived, that man would be incapable of self-knowledge, and for want of knowledge of goodness, of which his nature is capable, he would be constrained to remain in his wickedness and would forever be miserable.<sup>31</sup>

This love of the good, or ‘conscience’ is a transcendent (natural or divine) voice which has already ordered the good that self-knowledge comes upon subsequently. Identity is therefore determined by a relation to the good which cannot be grasped,

negated or transcended. The involuntary nature of memory, its independence from intentionality suggests that deep within the self there is another self, and that therein lies the basis for the notion of the soul. Nietzsche describes the metaphysical primal scene of memory in this way:

One must revise one's ideas about memory: here lies the chief temptation to assume a 'soul', which, outside time, reproduces, recognizes etc. But that which is experienced lives on 'in the memory'; I cannot help it if it 'comes back', the will is inactive in this case, as in the coming of any thought. Something happens of which I become conscious: now something similar comes – who called it? Roused it?<sup>32</sup>

Only narcissism, appropriated to what Nietzsche calls the 'fiction of the subject'<sup>33</sup>, bars the presupposition that there is a subjectivity within the self – an other.

Levinas reads the history of ontology critically and ethically.<sup>34</sup> For Levinas, the aporia that structures conscience requires it to be rephrased as a call from the other rather than an inner voice. It is a command to act responsibly with respect to the self and the other; and a sign that the other's claim on the self is unqualified. Moral responsibility is not in addition to some ontology or knowledge of the world. Obligation is prior to agreement or contract. Conceptualising contract as some common framework of understanding on which morality is added fails to grasp the ethical relation with the other:

The consciousness is affected, then, before forming an image of what is coming to it, affected in spite of itself. In these traits we recognise a persecution; being called into question prior to questioning, responsibility over and beyond the logos of response.<sup>35</sup>

The bond is also infinite in the sense that responsibility has nothing to do with guilt, or the relative position of self and other. The contract, which relates self and other, is unable to embody or structure ethics. The infiniteness of responsibility articulated in the uncontainable prior existence of the other calls into question the subject's right to



identify themselves as an I, a self-consciousness. The self is unique, self-identical, not in its relation to self, but in its relation to the other Responsibility for the other constitutes my uniqueness – since I am responsible for the other to the extent that no-one can take my place.

## MEMORY

Memory is displaced as the basis of identity both because it is subject to empirical failure<sup>36</sup> and because the effort to perfect memory is an accusation of the spontaneous ground of being. The remembering subject is divided between the heterogeneity of the remembered objects and their representation to the subject.<sup>37</sup> Les Charmetes is associated with Rousseau's rare experience of happiness, but memories of it constitute only a "fugitive reality".<sup>38</sup> Access to the original *qua* original is only possible when the objects of representation are not objects but sentiments. Self-consciousness is not, then, a species of 'consciousness of'; rather, consciousness establishes the form of the memory itself.

What shall I do to prolong this touching and simple tale as I should like to; endlessly to repeat the same words, and no more to weary my readers by their repetition than I should weary myself by beginning them forever afresh? Indeed, if all consisted of facts, deeds and words, I could describe it and in a sense convey its meaning. But how can I tell what was neither said, nor done, nor even thought, but only relished and felt, when I cannot adduce any other cause for my happiness but just this feeling? I rose with the sun and I was happy; happiness followed me everywhere; it lay in no definable object; it was entirely within me; it would not leave me for a single moment.<sup>39</sup>

Where self-consciousness establishes the truth of the narrative by embedding it in the immediacy of feeling or a "chain of sentiments,"<sup>40</sup> conscience idealises a prior ground as the immemorial. Narrative time is contained outside consciousness in the narrative chain to avoid the paradox of the past which leaves something unassimilable – the

immemorial. Making the past opaque to consciousness brings it forward and denatures its essential irreversibility. The past can never be possessed as an object of knowledge or be controlled by an act of will.

This opacity is revealed in an episode wherein Rousseau unexpectedly re-encounters Mlle de Vulson. Rowing on a lake with his father, he notices some ladies nearby and asks who they are. His father responds:

‘Why doesn’t your heart tell you? Its your old love, Mme Cristin – Mlle de Vulson she was.’ I started at the almost forgotten name; but I told the boatman to change course. It was not worthwhile breaking my vow, and renewing a twenty-year old quarrel with a woman of forty, though then I was in very good position to take my revenge.<sup>41</sup>

Because consciousness implies memory – opposing discontinuity (“I started ...”) with synthesis (“my vow”) – it challenges alterity.<sup>42</sup> ‘Presence’ – the instant which interrupts the chaos of history and, according to both Levinas and Lyotard, simply calls out that ‘there is’ (*il y a*) – is there even before that which is has any signification (“‘Why, doesn’t your heart tell you? ...’”).<sup>43</sup> Being has a total personality in revealing itself instantaneously. For Heidegger, Being announces itself imperatively<sup>44</sup> and is not defined in terms of an end.<sup>45</sup> It completes an ontological task in completing a chronological task (being is time). Lyotard contends that letting occurrence be (*il y a*) must be accomplished every time (and never finalised). Being is only potential in that it announces the openness of the subject to renewal and reform by the other. Renewal cannot be consciously avoided: even before Rousseau can ‘decide’ to change course he has been caught in the past of the other. Time cannot be mastered by memory, rather the subject emerges in memory’s production in time.

Time cannot be mastered by memory because time is not exhausted by the past, but is equally of the future. Rousseau's encounter with Mlle de Vulson is not only an encounter with his own past, but an encounter with an other having its own future. Indeed, Rousseau is dispossessed of his "old love" precisely because becoming Mme Cristin, and a woman of forty, was the other's future alone. The future is not subject to the self's will, choice or assertion – it belongs ultimately to the other. The other dwells in possibilities forever closed to the self, and has a relationship with time unrelated to the self.

This moment reveals for Rousseau that subjectivity occurs in time rather than the other way around. For Deleuze, there can be no self-identical, singular subject because time is the interiority which the subject is interior to.<sup>46</sup> For the Rousseau punting on the lake, the flashback prompted by his father gives rise to a pronouncement that restores time to linearity rather than expropriating and defining the subject through exteriority and disruption. However, the characterisation of time as ineluctable confronts time as immemorial to the extent that the subject foregoes its possession, and thereby the ontology of time. Time, as such, originates in the other, since it is only in the presence of the other that the present of the subject can be disrupted. So, for Rousseau to construct the subject in relation to the other would only underline the fact that the subject at this point stands revealed as indeterminate. The real time of the subject is, as Deleuze maintains, 'indiscernible'<sup>47</sup> because the subject interpenetrated by the recognition by, or time of, the other questions the self-sameness of that subject.

## SUBLIME DISBELIEF

The Levinasian critique of Heidegger is relevant to the constitutive role of otherness implied in Rousseau's attempts to isolate an authentic self from the conflicting data of social relations. Rousseau shares a phenomenological concern recognised by Heidegger in his discussion of angst. Rousseau's sentiment of existence – which cannot be thought (conceptualised) but can be felt is echoed in Heidegger's understanding of the disclosure of totality through moods such as boredom, joy and angst.<sup>48</sup> The whole may be incomprehensible, but it can be experienced. The fundamental mood (angst) consists in being brought face to face with the real within the symbolic, which is the disclosure of nothingness.<sup>49</sup>

Nothing brings consciousness into immediate contact with being.<sup>50</sup> The effect of this is to repel the subject – to throw the subject into acts of symbolisation. The subject is transcendent to the extent that it overcomes determination by what is (nothing) in this way. The subject's freedom is radical; freedom individualises the subject to the extent that the subject slips out from under the effect of determination by the other.<sup>51</sup> This freedom, or individuality, however, is only available in solitude. As Heidegger says, it is (at last) revealed by death because one dies alone.<sup>52</sup> Death, however, is an act of dispossessive realisation – a destructive cause. Rousseau's 'strong, simple, uniform whole' is an impersonal state of being inherently related, and the precursor, to the facticity of death. Death is the 'brute fact' of life which, in its placement and simplicity, deprives the subject of consciousness of itself.

Levinas contends that there is a fear of Being as primal as the fear of death. In other words, the absolutely other is not the impersonal alterity of death – which, in bringing

to a head one's finitude is a non-relation (a non-relation with nothing). The meaning of subjective being is founded in the other. The subject (even if it is, as Heidegger says, horror) is produced by something. This horror implies an experience – or the possibility of an experience since the horror is produced by something. Angst, on the other hand, is the non-relation with nothing – the absence symbolised in language. Subjectivity is the product of something, not nothing. Consciousness is produced in the subjective comprehension of something, not nothingness.

The shock Rousseau experiences at the sight of Zulietta's malformed nipple measures the extent to which the symbolic never completely transforms the real – there is always a residuum, a remainder. His amazed stare articulates a traumatic fixation.<sup>53</sup> In fixation the real cannot be adequately transformed into symbols which can be substituted and displaced. The real is everything that is yet to be symbolised – it is the material, the object.

However, the real object signifies nothing.<sup>54</sup> The real 'returns' as a centre of gravity around which the symbolic circles. The symbolic can never absorb or translate this real – it skirts it. Indeed, one cannot represent nothing (or the thing) because it is uncontainable.<sup>55</sup> It can, however, be grasped as allusion, or in evocation. That is, as a 'negative representation'. Essentially, representation articulates the paradox that it represents nothing.

In Heidegger, this nothing gives rise to anxiety (angst).<sup>56</sup> The yet to be symbolised appears as the negativity of waiting. For Heidegger, the response of 'astonishment' indicates that revelation has occurred.<sup>57</sup> "We step back, as it were, from being, from the fact that it is as it is and not otherwise."<sup>58</sup> In other words, consciousness is the

process of being thrown away from 'there is' – from authenticity, into language – because 'there is' has no subject.<sup>59</sup> For Levinas, this waiting is charged with positive value: it is pleasure since it is the means of welcoming the stranger, the unknown. It is at least a tension in waiting suspended between pleasure and pain. The welcoming is the very means of sensing the occurrence – making the subject ask, 'is it happening?' in reference, obviously, to the real.

The autobiography strikes the ambivalent contour of the absent centre at the time of revelation presaging greatest pleasure. The subject is caught between taking a step towards pleasure, subjectivation, and meaning and excluding the unrecognisable materiality making such a deep impact on it. If all the subject sees is an absence, then meaning must occur, as Freud says, as the refinding of an assumed but lost object: "the finding of an object is the refinding of it".<sup>60</sup> Freud explains that object choice after the latency period repeats the child's first object choice – the breast. For Lacan, however, the object was always already lost – in never was, but was only retrospectively constituted as 'lost'.<sup>61</sup> The subject, then, is essentially phantasmatic and does not correspond to a remembered experience of satisfaction.

Lacan's reconstruction of Freud benefits from a reading mutually reliant on both Heidegger and Levinas. Subjectivity is raised on the ground of what establishes and threatens – what compels and repels us at the same time. Consciousness begins as a retreat from that towards which we draw near, an averting of attention from the object of epistemic desire. As the breast, or object, is constituted in those moments of deprivation when the mother is absent or refuses the child, the child experiences the anxiety of losing control of the means of satisfaction, and the imaginary pleasure of bringing it under his control in fantasy. However, control in fantasy is equivalent to

lack of control in fact. What follows is appropriation – mastery through the concept, or ontology.<sup>62</sup> Once symbolised, the child can never again refind the breast as experienced the first time – as not separate – extending the child’s ambivalent response. Actual objects found thereafter, Zulietta for instance, are simply not it. They are something else, the reminder that something is missing. They are – as Zulietta tells Rousseau by advising him that he would be better off as a mathematician than a lover<sup>63</sup> – products of a symbolising mentality.

The symbol has in fact concealed, or masked, the object which is not there. Ontology makes the partner the object (a), not the woman as such. It is, says Lacan, not her that attracts him but something he gets from her.<sup>64</sup> However, what he gets is only something already deposited there (and refound). Zulietta has been invested with the desire reserved for Mme de Warens – whose breast had previously been exposed and admired for its perfection.<sup>65</sup>

That threat of being contains the potential for its own overcoming is realised in the experience of the sublime. Sublimity is a neurotic form of pleasure in that, in it, delight consists of the removal of the threat of pain.<sup>66</sup> The sublime is not an unalloyed, but a painful, pleasure, wherein we fail to present the absolute and consequently experience displeasure. Nonetheless, the imagination is prevailed upon to present it – to present the sensible in an image. However, because the real is infinite and cannot be represented it must be relativised, contextualised and conditioned – in a word, misrepresented. The paradox is overcome negatively, through symbolisation of the presence of the absolute to consciousness, and the recognition of the impossibility

of representation. This type of negative representation articulates the labour of a dispossessive language recalling the conditions of authentic language.

Certain objects and sensations announce the possibility that life will soon cease,<sup>67</sup> that there will be no more occurrence for the subject – no more *il y a* (there is). For Rousseau, the waterfalls of Chailles and Chambéry are such objects. Chailles is experienced as the possibility of destruction through a fall. Nevertheless, Rousseau is tempted to scale the falls: “For the amazing thing about my taste for precipitous places is that they make my head spin; and I am very fond of this giddy feeling so long as I am in safety.”<sup>68</sup> Rousseau thus creates the conditions of sublimity but withdraws from the consequences of negation.<sup>69</sup> He does so under conditions where the self is incapable of taking possession of, and exercising control over, phenomena. Indeed, he seeks security in the form of “a little river which would appear to have spent thousands of centuries excavating its bed.”<sup>70</sup>

In these contrasting realities Rousseau admits that he cannot face presence since presence would disable the mind. Chailles is the pure manifold which the subject cannot passively be carried along by since that would allow nothing to appear to consciousness, to take place. Rousseau’s safe perch at the top of the falls is the place from which apprehension, making apparent, can occur. In other words, the subject is a synthetic and synthesising subject. It is the subject of repetition or it is no subject at all. The little river reveals a trace inscribed over the landscape,<sup>71</sup> a figure of continuous time but one emphasising the containment (the deeply excavated bed) that allows continuity to flow, the immobility (place) that makes movement apparent, and the possibility of representation. Consciousness depends on memory, on the least



instant of retention, or it would remain unconstituted. There is always already reproduction if the present is to occur.<sup>72</sup>

However, the deep river bed is itself a figure of the conditions of experience and self-consciousness. It internalises the contradiction and necessity of motion within an apparently enclosed system. Closure is only an artificial synthesis serving to make movement apparent.<sup>73</sup> As with the river the more firmly entrenched the more swiftly to flow, what has bitten deeply into matter unravels in time. Self-consciousness is no more than the translation between these dimensions. At Chambery, misjudgment in walking behind the falls can result in being “soaked in a moment”.<sup>74</sup> This ‘moment’ is an event beyond conscious control. The possibility of ‘something happening’ disappropriates the mind and exposes the non-self-mastery and non-self-presence of the self. The moment is something poised on the edge of happening: it is about to – and it is enough that it ‘can’ occur. This condition of possibility is identical with the subject’s relation to authenticity. The sublime is the feeling that something will happen (the pregnant pause) – despite everything, despite the threatening void, there is something there, that will take place and announce that everything is not over, that *il y a* has not been obliterated. Sublimity is thwarted finality; the ‘not yet’; the suspended resolution.

## DESIRE

The subject is constructed on the ground of desire. It occurs, according to Lacan, when something ordinary is raised to the level of object of desire, of ‘it’, by chance.<sup>75</sup> Object choice is less important than the entering of an object into the space opened by desire. In fact, desire has no object properly speaking, but only a cause (the object

(a)<sup>76</sup>). Sophie d'Houdetot's comic-romantic arrival at the Hermitage<sup>77</sup> is followed by another which just happens, says Rousseau, to coincide with his feeling "intoxicated with love that lacked an object"<sup>78</sup> – and fixes on her as its object. Despite her unwillingness to be seduced, Rousseau describes how they nonetheless shared a related satisfaction:

We were both intoxicated with love – her for her lover and mine for her; our sighs and our delicious tears mingled together. We confided tenderly in one another, and our feelings were so closely in tune that it was impossible for them not to have united in something.<sup>79</sup>

What arouses the subject's desire is the other's desire. It is not necessary for subject and other to relate as beloved and beloved. The other's desire may be pure desirousness completely cathected in something or someone else.<sup>80</sup> The causes of desire, argues Lacan, are difficult to symbolise<sup>81</sup>. Rousseau can only say that desire "united in something", however it is essentially related to the movement of signifiers – the "mingl(ing) together" of tears and sighs, for example – opposing fixation and demand. These partial and detached objects – sighs and tears – are signs of the lost object – "something".

The movement of signifiers elevates the subject from consciousness to self-consciousness:

It was in that wood with her on a grass bank beneath an acacia in full flower, that I found a language really able to express the emotion of my heart. It was the first and only time in my life, but I was sublime, if such a word can describe all the sympathy and seductive charm that the most tender and ardent love can breathe into the heart of a man. What intoxicating tears I shed at her knees! What tears I drew from her in spite of herself!<sup>82</sup>

The incentive to speak, for Rousseau – which cannot be confused with the occurrence of language 'itself' – is found in the common effort to recoup a common loss in the transition to society.<sup>83</sup> The relation of desire harbours a lack, because desire can never

be satisfied. Desire is purified of the threat of dissatisfaction it poses by not being satisfied in the relation itself: “The duty of self-denial had exalted my soul. The light of every virtue adorned in my eyes the idol of my heart; to have soiled that divine image would have been to destroy it.”<sup>84</sup> As Lacan explains, *jouissance* is the pleasure the body is permitted to enjoy before becoming written over by the interdicts of the symbolic order. The authentic wholeness of the self shattered by the presence of the other is partially transferred to language.<sup>85</sup> Rousseau’s eloquence is the state of language absorbing some ‘illicit’ *jouissance* to itself – refusing to fully sacrifice desire, and giving in to the drive to put into words what cannot be articulated. At the same time as maintaining his commitment to self-denial and the protection of the idol, Rousseau enjoys manipulating Sophie against her will. In other words, he reveals the full implications of the presence of the other: the coexistence of desire, which cannot be expressed, and responsibility, which is not represented. Therefore, Rousseau’s eloquence reveals the subject’s state of being in excess of itself.<sup>86</sup> Rousseau is eager to absolve himself of any need for shame, or any tincture of guilt because that would reveal the existence of something that distances the subject from itself, undermines its authenticity – unconscious desire. Therefore, he tells us: “I sighed and was silent. I embraced her. What an embrace! But that was all!”<sup>87</sup> In this Rousseau declares that he still has a conscience – which is an embrace of the other which is in itself nothing at all.

Rousseau’s embrace continues his technique of subjective appropriation. In it the other is taken up as being for the subject.<sup>88</sup> For Levinas, on the other hand, eros is not figured as grasping, but as a caress. The caress is aimed at what is ‘not yet’. Its object is mysteriously absent: it is not nothing, it simply cannot be possessed.<sup>89</sup> In

demonstrating that erotic love is the failure of possessiveness, Levinas demonstrates that the otherness of the other is irreducible and absolute. The other is desired but cannot be possessed without destroying their freedom and agency. The only basis of the relationship is one which preserves rather than neutralises the alterity of the other. Eros, therefore, is the relationship of intersubjectivity without fusion wherein the beloved can appear in their otherness, without having to fit the ontological pre-understanding (the embrace of conscience) of the subject.<sup>90</sup> Overcoming the ontology of language means allowing the other its extradiscursive reality – that is, allowing for the other in representation. For Levinas, “the pathos of voluptuousness lies in the fact of being two. The other is not there as an object that becomes ours or becomes us; to the contrary, it withdraws into its mystery.”<sup>91</sup>

Because the subject is defined by alterity, it is a site of exit from itself.<sup>92</sup> The dialectic of the same inherent in the Rousseauian gaze is opposed by Levinas who announces that the self does not become authentic except in the ‘eyes of the other’.<sup>93</sup> The face to face encounter disrupts the egology of ontology by means of an exposure to alterity. Rousseau’s eloquence is such an ontology in that in it desire aims to capture the consciousness of the other. The task of letting the other appear to the same is based on a subjectivity incapable of closing itself off, or withdrawing into itself. Mutual interdependence, on the other hand, makes the other’s freedom inseparable from the subject’s.

Levinas’ subject is structured by transcendence. In other words, subjectivity is inseparable from the other which precedes the subject. The form of subjectivity is therefore an intersubjectivity from which emerges a responsibility that the subject assumes without assent.<sup>94</sup> In Levinas, the traumatic sudden appearance of the other is

a signal for ethics. For Rousseau, the traumatic revelation of Zuleika motivated egological withdrawal, and rejection. Levinas would critique Rousseau's irresponsible reaction as inauthentic. Rousseau was not free to reject the other because subject and other are bound prior to free commitment, or intention to commit. The subject feels alienated to the extent that this responsibility "has slipped into me unbeknownst to me".<sup>95</sup> The subject is founded on responsibility, and is thus a stranger to itself, indebted to the other for something that was never done. This marks the subject as essentially passive, as determined by the other, and free only to be responsible.<sup>96</sup>

For Levinas, then, authentic being has an essential relation to the other. Heidegger, however, defines Being primarily in terms of the letting-be of the other. In other words, freedom is prior to responsibility, since the relation to the other is disposed of once and for all after the subject has let the other be. Letting be is primarily a concern for the preservation of the self's own freedom, without responsibility. For Rousseau, authenticity is a relation of self to self, not to the other; it is a rediscovery of the real in language hence a relation to the thing (which is nothing). As this is true for all selves, the other may orient itself to the thing without entering into relations with the subject – just as it was not necessary for Sophie d'Houdetot's desire to have any bearing on Rousseau's. In the *Confessions*, self is an abstract category (a "strong, simple, uniform whole") resulting in depersonalised being and ethics. Indeed, to the extent that authenticity is a relation of the subject to the truth in conscience, the other is a source of distortion or obstruction except as an object of consciousness allowing the realisation of self-consciousness. The *Confessions* specifically denies that self-consciousness is not more than the awareness of a division, a self-displacement, and that conscience is triggered by a guilt which one is accountable for, without causing,

or recalling the subject's relation to it. The *Confessions* proposes that identity may be fashioned in a space beyond repression – where standing alone is neither conducted in suffering nor articulated as pathos.

For Rousseau desire is the motivation towards ontology and knowing. For Levinas, on the other hand, the relation of desire must be one of non-adequation – the other disrupts the intentionality of consciousness, and questions freedom (as the identification of will and reason, where reason is the neutralisation of existents under the common concept). Rousseau's *Social Contract*, on the other hand, posits an ontology of coexistence requiring a comprehensive knowledge of the other.<sup>97</sup>

Coexistence requires comprehending the other's intentions. The social pact also marginalises incomprehensible intentions, forcing intentions to display the features of a common intention (the General Will).<sup>98</sup> Rousseau sets out to defend the subjectivity of interiority, the inner life – but his methodology cannot allow for difference.- it must neutralise difference using the same conceptual strategy as the general will.<sup>99</sup>

For Levinas, the self's freedom requires taking responsibility for the other “even to the point of substitution.”<sup>100</sup> Consequently, subjectivity is inadequate to ethics. For Rousseau, on the other hand, sympathy is only putting oneself in the same place as the other, and then “we do not become what they must be, but remain ourselves modified.”<sup>101</sup> Sympathy, in Levinas' analysis, still forms part of the ontological project of comprehension. For Levinas, responsibility is a precognitive disposition towards the other solicited in the face to face encounter. For Rousseau the self (in freedom) constitutes the meaning of the other's existence (letting others be).<sup>102</sup>

Levinas posits subjectivity in precisely the opposite terms – that is subjectivity constituted in and through alterity. The subjectivity of ethics is therefore called into

question. Indeed, ethics requires an externalisation (*ek-stasis*) of the self for the others sake.<sup>103</sup>

The problem with the conception of responsibility as the absolute command of the other is the difficulty of conceiving how the subject can act otherwise. This has both a prescriptive and a descriptive component. Firstly, it must be asked what it means under this definition for the subject to act in freedom. If subjects are homogenised by their formation upon the template of otherness they should not presumably experience conflicting needs and desires. Secondly, how could a subject choose not to hear the voice of conscience? Under Levinas' conception of non-derogable responsibility to the other it is impossible for cognition to be directed anywhere else but to the other. In his non-dialogic conception of self-other relations, conscience would speak and bear the same meaning for all. The overwhelming conclusion is that the subject acts self-contradictorily (by definition, in-humanly) when it chooses and acts contrary to the other, because one cannot be oriented towards the other and act irresponsibly at the same time.

By conceiving of an 'erotic' ethics which avoids the danger of possession, Levinas proposes that the subject stand in passive toleration towards the other. The subject can never truly embrace the other because the forms under which it does so retain the residue of the ontology of appropriation. The subject's openness to the other can never be a form of approach, or intervention but consists of vigilance and awaiting. Ethics, subjectivity, and otherness posited prior to the social make it impossible for anything (certainly not these categories) to support and induce socialisation.

Ricoeur is wary of ontology but identifies 'desire' as that "which is at the origin of language and prior to language."<sup>104</sup> Desire is unidentifiable in its generality and

priority, it hovers between being unsymbolisable and the uncontainable consumer of symbols. Desire is that within language that presumes a moment of unavoidable transcendence.<sup>105</sup> It is, in other words, the tension in silence (itself, affirms Rousseau, a form of 'mute eloquence') which is "turned from the very outset towards language."<sup>106</sup>

## MARION

The paradigmatic confessional moment for Rousseau centers on a failure of self-knowledge and destructive action / desire. Rousseau accuses a fellow servant, Marion, of stealing a ribbon which he himself had stolen intending, he says, to give it to her.<sup>107</sup> The incident has attracted significant commentary.<sup>108</sup> These interpretations implicitly promote an understanding of the subject in self-centered and self-invented terms alone by basing themselves on the declarations, and an interpretation of the intentions and the actions, of the subject Jean-Jacques, or the narrator Rousseau. Their approach therefore continues the effect of marginalising Marion. The other's voice within the text directs us to Rousseau's concern with unrealised identity. Rousseau describes Marion's immediate response to his accusation:

The poor girl started to cry, but all she said to me was, 'Oh, Rousseau, I thought you were a good fellow. You make me very sad, but I should not like to be in your place.' That is all.<sup>109</sup>

In this paradigmatic moment, truth is the discourse of, and the imperative issued by, the other.<sup>110</sup> Marion tells Rousseau, and demonstrates through the text, what the narrator cannot reveal to the reader. Her reference to not wanting to occupy the deviant's 'place' despite his immunity from punishment identifies the incident as a scene of the failure of sympathy.<sup>111</sup> Unable to make the imaginative identification



with the other required of him, Marion demonstrates that she both understands the requirement for, and has, what he lacks. The stranger carries the self's response with it. However, authenticating conscience conceives of the self-other relation through a transcendent term – a third term, truth – which the authentic subject appropriates, making the shared concept of reality asymmetrical in favour of the self. Because the ethical situation in conscience requires the other to appear to the subject as a comprehensible representation, there can be no actual address or relation to the other.<sup>112</sup>

De Man has argued that Rousseau, in declaring that, in naming Marion, he literally “excused [him]self on the first thing that offered itself” (*Je m’excusai sur le premier objet qui s’offrit*) includes her as nothing more than a contingent fragment in an otherwise causal chain explaining his strange behaviour. As a result, her presence in the rhetoric of ‘excuses’ that structures autobiography is only coincidence.<sup>113</sup> De Man quotes Marcel Raymond approvingly when he says of Rousseau’s strange explanation for his accusation of Marion: “He accuses her as if he leaned on a piece of furniture to avoid falling.”<sup>114</sup> That Rousseau would ‘lean on’ the name Marion as he would any other object indicates the arbitrariness of their relation, the non-specificity of desire and “the estrangement between subject and utterance” because, in this case, ‘Marion’ is not a name but a mere “sound”.<sup>115</sup> For de Man, the ‘rhetoric of excuses’ deconstructs the relation between the cognitive and the linguistic, and the correspondence of meaning to language that it implies because Rousseau demonstrates how his attempts at self-understanding and self-explanation do no more than introduce “a foreign element that disrupts the meaning, the readability of the

apologetic discourse, and reopens what the excuse seemed to have closed off.”<sup>116</sup> This foreign element is the cause of desire.

Rousseau wishes to close off desire – as a relation to the concrete other – in order to conceive of himself in terms of simple wholeness. De Man therefore identifies the undermining of Rousseau’s synthesis, and the constitution of subjectivity in division. He considers the confessional act a source of epistemic confusion. Examining Rousseau’s repetition of the confession in the *Reveries* de Man refers to the lacuna introduced into the text by the disjunction between ‘performative’ excuses and ‘cognitive’ guilt.<sup>117</sup> Language is disappropriative, but not to the extent of a dichotomy between cognition and being. Rousseau does not retreat into a subjectivity centered on a constitutive fantasy not supported by discourse.

In this, de Man resembles Castoriadis who argues for a schemata prior to language which is released in language and which desire (fantasy) ‘returns to’.<sup>118</sup> Lacan too recognises desire as the opportunity to complete the self in fantasy.<sup>119</sup> However, he argues that fantasy is the divided subject’s relation to the object (a). The object (a) is a remainder from the real, a reminder of the subject’s former unity. It cannot be ‘found’, only rediscovered elsewhere because its condition is to be always already lost. It is lost after the fact, constructed as lost, discovered to be lost: or, rather, it never was.

In fact, it is not possible to constitute an object under conditions of unity, because that is an undifferentiated condition, where there is neither subject nor object. However, the felt absence of that condition constitutes what the original condition must have been for this condition of experience to be what it is. Under the experience of

absence, the object is symbolised. Symbolisation differentiates, makes the real in its image, and makes it impossible to return to a prior state. Innocence is lost, and knowledge is an unending symbolisation and resymbolisation of the real. Indeed, what de Man refers to as the impossibility of an intentional consciousness depends on an idealisation of the concept of intention such that its disruption undermines the possibility of all coherent subjective expression. What Rousseau experiences, on the other hand, is the impossibility of self-reflection ever rendering the subject explicit to itself. What is brought to light does not simply complete a project of self-knowledge, it both confirms and disappoints.

De Man's appraisal of Rousseau's idealist intentions extends to his dismissal of Marion as a sound rather than a name. She too succumbs to the extreme formulation that if the subject cannot be recognised fully, there is nothing there. However, the other's voice confronts this analysis with another – that of the subjective identity as the entwinement of subjects that goes, in this instance, by the name of sympathy. Rousseau, in leaning on Marion, reveals the other not to be an object for the self to substitute for some original lost object. In the same movement the other is designated as not simply what the self is not, but constitutive: the means by which the self relates to itself. In identifying Marion as a 'sound' rather than a 'name', de Man accredits subjectivity to only one side of the relation. However, Rousseau argues that sounds are the means by which language relates to itself, and this identifies the ultimate unappropriability of the other, or object for the subject.<sup>120</sup> Not only are sounds rendered fit to be heard by translating them into symbols, but so is language. Indeed, Raymond's reference to 'leaning on' must be seen in the light of the development of the term in the psychoanalytic literature. Laplanche coined it in preference to

Strachey's English translation of Freud's *Anlehnung* as "anaclisis". Laplanche's literal translation is meant to suggest that the sexual instinct props itself against the instinctual apparatus prior to detaching itself and becoming autonomous. The simultaneity of separation and involvement in the term and its imagery suggests the contingency of the aim of the subject.<sup>121</sup>

Wade argues that the ribbon Rousseau says he accused Marion of stealing because he wanted to give it to her functions as the Lacanian object (a) – the cause of desire, an object alienated in the real, and therefore inaccessible to the subject.<sup>122</sup> In positing the object (a), Wade implicitly argues against de Man's deconstruction of confession, which identifies arbitrariness as Rousseau's mode of decision making and narrative reconstruction. Wade's identification of Mme de Warens as the truth 'behind' the ribbon, on the other hand, installs an ontology of desire based on a 'truly' desirable object, rather than an inextinguishable dialectic of unrepresentable lost object (cause) and unsatisfying identification and libidinal investment.

The narrative pattern associated with the ribbon is therefore one of repeated acquisition and loss, satisfaction and disappointment. The ribbon – associated with an earlier, lost one given to Rousseau by Mme de Warens – signifies unfulfilled desire, and results in repeated frustration. Frustration enjoins the logic of teleology since it posits a goal, the real, which the subject's efforts at symbolisation repeatedly fall short of. Frustration, however, is essential, because the real is not constituted in fantasy after it is lost, but is already fantasmatic at the origin,<sup>123</sup> in that it was never an object. Frustration signifies the presence of a destructive cause, a threatening origin through which the subject emerges and is disappropriated. The ribbon does not correspond to truth, it points to the inadequacies of a correspondence theory of truth

which aims to anchor subjectivity in memory (representation to event), and masks the revelation of inadequacy. There can be no recovery of unity, if synthesis refers to a heterogeneous event, object or other. The subject cannot, as Castoriadis argues, signal a return to natural quiescence since it would have to do so through the schema of a constitutive fantasy untraceable to the real, prior to the emergence of difference.<sup>124</sup>

### THE NAME

De Man has not only deprived Marion of her name, he has made both it and her less than a signifier – a mere sound. For Rousseau, sounds do not signify. They must, he says, be made to ‘speak’ in order to be heard, and have no effect unless they are understood.<sup>125</sup> If, as de Man says, Marion is no more than a sound, she is subject to the ontological pre-understanding that structures linguistic regimes. In this sense, the arbitrariness of the excuse would be correctly identified since both name and sound are to be brought under the rubric of the same, translated into the consciousness of the subject.

Kripke argues that a name is an invariable designator of identity, indicating in its repetition the presence of the same thing.<sup>126</sup> If the name is a mere ‘sound’ designation ceases, and meaningful language gives way to the free play of propositions. The self escapes determination by the name of the other that precedes it. In fact, the self is unitary only to the extent that it avoids determination. However, the name is not a sound, but already meaningful. Without a meaningful origin meaning would fail to follow. Marion therefore is a name. Only in remaining at the level of the literal can originary displacement be perceived. In bearing meaning, what comes to mind spontaneously, without previous denotation (by the subject’s desire), is displaced

from the origin, and from itself. Marion's voice does not simply swell out of conscience, nor simply speak the truth. It is propositional and fully symbolic when it comes to mind. It does not 'offer itself' for the purpose of 'excusing,' it 'offers itself' to interpretation – as a signifier, and therefore a subject; and not as a sound and unrepresentably or pre-symbolically 'real'.

However, the real and the symbolic are related in that the real structures the symbolic by its very absence. In this construction the name is a fragment of the real as a positive condition of the restoration of the symbolic relation, and figures the paradox that nature is what the symbolic leans on for ordering – averting collapse into indeterminate difference without meaning. A totally contingent materiality establishes the symbolic pact. Some fragment of the real therefore disrupts the indifferent stasis that reigns between subjects (who 'excuse' themselves rather than taking responsibility). By suddenly erupting in consciousness it structures the imaginary whole into a symbolic organisation. The shock of the real, like the encounter with being, is a destructive cause – the paradoxical condition of possibility for both subject and object.

It is the other, therefore, who specifies what forms and positions the subject can take. The other also mediates the subject's self-relation, through which the subject observes the other. As Levinas says:

The consciousness is affected, then, before forming an image of what is coming to it, affected in spite of itself. In these traits we recognise persecution; being called into question prior to questioning, responsibility over and beyond the logos of response.<sup>127</sup>

Marion's voice invites no response. She states her case against Rousseau and the narrative isolates the other's voice from the subject's: "all she said to me was ... That

is all.” There is no question and response, no dialogue and communication in ethics. For Levinas, the affect must be direct because it must question conscience itself – that is, it must interrogate the inherited structures of ontology and language which mutely (authentically) dominate the other.<sup>128</sup> Goodness is alterity itself, which calls into question the capacity of subjective freedom to orient itself towards the other, and displaces rationality from ethics by unveiling the violence of its comprehension of alterity.

It is revealing that Rousseau excuses himself from entering discourse at all. Levinas cannot explain how an alterity prior to discourse can raise the issue of validity. The silent call to responsibility in the face to face encounter can hardly hope to disrupt the power of self-justification inherent in conscience. Levinas conceives of the relation to the other in terms which maintain the separation of the same and the other, object and subject. An ethics which insists on the absolute separation of self and other reinstates monadism. Levinas moves from the extreme of complete heterogeneity of self and other, to having to posit an immanent alterity within subjectivity. However, it is false to infer from the fact that the subject is not a priori social that it is incapable of socialisation. An immanence less absolute than Levinas’ alterity will facilitate discourse, ethical relations and social forms.

At the same time, Levinas cannot be dismissed entirely because his is a timely reminder that drives, wishes and other forms of creativity cannot simply be translated into language. The sound of the name and the name are not one and the same. The entwining of sound and name suggests that something elementary, nocturnal and unstructured eludes meaning, or, rather, is retained as an obscurity within meaning. Thought continues to lean on the thing which it cannot readily translate into symbols.

There is no pre-established harmony between language and substance. The Freudian concept of *Anlehung* ('leaning on') is a quasi-ontological category which indicates that others are not simply available to subjects in object choice, but marks the space of separation as a condition of relatedness.<sup>129</sup> The condition of subjectivity involves reciprocation between the anticipation of meanings to come, as well as retroactive designations revealing things to be first only after they have given rise to effects.

The scene of sympathy Rousseau constructs is divided between image and intersubjective symbol. Marion is both thing and subject; the ribbon is both a symbol and an object. The presence of both voice and ribbon in the narrative indicate that the form of explanation is to be dialectical – as signifiers are meaningful not ontologically but only once they enter relationships. Rousseau cannot be equated with the Levinasian form. The other helps the subject heal the breach in subjectivity, but not by closing the other into a loop, embracing it to itself in the search for objective selfhood. Satisfaction is to be sought in the intersubjectively constituted world, in mediation. The ribbon, therefore, must be translated into an expression of desire, as Ricoeur would argue, for a shared code – a decoding of private meanings and their rearticulation in discourse. The backward movement into the monad, into desire, becomes the means for establishing the ethical relation – as when a wave of sympathy engulfs the subject so that suffering propels them across unbridged sites of individuation.<sup>130</sup>

At the same time, the subject is always in a position of receptivity, or desire. New meanings do not arise spontaneously from a private, constitutive fantasy, but are possible because self and other are not heterogeneous. In discussing the formation of simple ideas Rousseau states that:



As a new object strikes us we want to know it, and we look for relations between it and the objects we do know, that is how we learn to observe what is before us and how what is foreign to us leads us to examine what touches us.<sup>131</sup>

The subject's desire to know orients perception, structures relations and propels learning processes. In the first confession, on the other hand, the subject encounters something prior to itself ("the first thing"), which spontaneously comes to mind to determine it. In 'offering itself' the other's passivity indicates the subject's indifference to its obligation to recognise the other.

Marion is both the region of the real on which the subject finds material support (leans on) to structure subjectivity, and the other of the subject. If neither Rousseau nor de Man recognise this it is because one had failed to hear Marion, and the other has continued to silence her discourse. For de Man, the fragmentary "sound" is the true discourse of the other, but it is uninterpretable for not being symbolised. In the *Confessions*, however, Marion is the site of a coherent voice. The problem for Rousseau is that, in declaring her independence she threatens his integrity, which is based on a standing negation.

Rousseau does, however, indicate an alternative resolution to the subject's orientation to the other. When, having fallen asleep at the theatre of San Crisostimo, he reawakens in the midst of a concert he remarks: "my first thought was that I was in Paradise."<sup>132</sup> Return to consciousness and transcendence of the conditions of immediate experience concur. The experience depends on a fusion and doubling of the senses and their relation to self-consciousness: "What an awakening, what ecstasy when I opened my ears and my eyes together!"<sup>133</sup> Here the languages of appropriation and disappropriation meld. The openness to discourse (ears), and to the absence of the

real (eyes) represent the state of awareness. The return to the senses is sanctioned by their capacity to act as means of their own transcendence. The verse Rousseau hears on waking is equally telling: "My lovely one will save me / For, see, my hearts on fire".<sup>134</sup> Here, the divided subject announces that it is closed over, its split resolved, in desire; and that desire becomes the means of overcoming subjective division. The object (a), the contingent fragment of the real which disperses meaning through discourse by being unlocatable is itself the foundation of discourse.

1. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1953) J M Cohen (trans).
2. On authenticity in subjectivity and in Rousseau see generally Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) p.39; A Hartle, *The Modern Self In Rousseau's Confessions: A Reply to Saint Augustine* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1983); H Gutman, 'Rousseau's *Confessions*: A Technology of the Self' in L H Martin, H Gutman and P H Hutton (eds) *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* (London: Tavistock, 1988) pp.99-120.
3. See Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992) Tom Conley (trans). For commentary see Alain Badiou 'Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*' in Constantin V Boundas and Dorothea Olkowski (eds) *Gilles Deleuze and the Theatre of Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 1994) pp.51-69.
4. On modern subjectivity see Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, above n 2; Alessandro Ferrara, *Modernity and Authenticity: A Study of the Social and Ethical Thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993); Anthony J Cascardi, *The Subject of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Shlomo Avineri and Avner de Shalit (eds); *Communitarianism and Individualism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Louis Dumont, *Essays on Individualism: Modern Ideology in Anthropological Perspective* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); David Rasmussen (ed) *Universalism vs. Communitarianism: Contemporary Debates in Ethics* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1995); Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (London: Duckworth, 1985).
5. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, above n 2, pp.356-63.
6. Alessandro Ferrara, *Modernity and Authenticity*, above n 4, pp.93-109.
7. G W F Hegel, *The Philosophy of Spirit* p.27 cited Seyla Benhabib, *Critique, Norm and Utopia: A Study of the Foundations of Critical Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986) p.53.
8. Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, above n 4, 356-70.
9. See Blaise Pascal, *Pensees* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 1984) Section II, para. 72, "Man's Disproportion", pp.181-84. Rousseau's prayer to God (*Confessions*, above n 1, p.225) avoids the contradiction between divine and human levels, maintaining the stringent compatibility of self and ground of identity. See also his comments on Mme de Warens: "If Christian morality had not existed, I think she would have followed its principles, so completely did they coincide with her character. She did all that was prescribed; but she would have done it all the same if it had not been prescribed" (C 219). Thus, in prayer, God is a listening position as well as (as in conscience) a speaking voice. In offering God the writing of his subjective history, Rousseau completes the exchange whereby the divine initiates the moral subject (C 17).
10. Rousseau, *Confessions*, above n 1, p.28.
11. Ibid, pp.224-5.
12. See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1962) pp.67-9; see Christopher Fynsk, *Heidegger: Thought and Historicity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993) pp.78-80.
13. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin and the Foundations of Inequality Among Men* in Victor Gourevitch (trans and ed) *The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) II [12], p.164.
14. Ibid, I [7], p.136.
15. Ibid, I [8], pp.136-7.
16. Ibid, I [7], p.136.
17. G H Mead, *Mind, Self and Society* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1934). See also John Charvet, *A Critique of Freedom and Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) on the "objective individualist" (p.63) – taking reality from his point of view alone rather than testing propositions in the space of raising claims and giving reasons.
18. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976) Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (trans) p.63.
19. Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979) E B Ashton (trans) p.186.
20. See Giorgio Agamben, 'The Thing Itself' in Giorgio Agamben, *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999) pp.27-38.
21. Slavoj Zizek, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel and the Critique of Ideology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993) pp.156-7.
22. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile or On Education* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979) Allan Bloom (trans) p.254.

- 23 Ibid, p.178.
- 24 See Robert Alexy, 'A Theory of Practical Discourse' in Seyla Benhabib and Fred Dallmayr (eds) *The Communicative Ethics Controversy* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1990) pp.151-92, especially p.160.
- 25 See Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). For Kant, conscience is the voice of the community, abstracted above the level of empirical society. Conscience is a drama of internalised personae, but unified into a single voice by the subject of conscience – albeit, as “the bidding of another” (p.244). This voice is inseparable, but not of the self: it “follows him like a shadow” (p.233) and is “distinct from us yet present in our inmost being” (p.235).
- 26 Rousseau, *Confessions*, above n 1, p.435.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Ibid, p.434.
- 29 See Plato, *Complete Works* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997) John M Cooper (ed): *Phaedo*, pp.49-100, 72e-77b, and *Meno*, pp.879-886, 80d-86c.
- 30 Rousseau, *Emile*, above n 20, p.67.
- 31 Ibid, p.254.
- 32 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* (New York: Random House, 1967) Walter Kaufman and R J Hollingdale (trans) p.274.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Emmanuel Levinas, “Ethics as First Philosophy” in *The Levinas Reader* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1989) Sean Hand (ed) pp.80-3.
- 35 Ibid, p.92.
- 36 See for example Rousseau, *Confessions*, above n 1, pp.379, 560.
- 37 See Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, above n 2, pp.49-51; Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992) Kathleen Blamey (trans) pp.125-6.
- 38 Rousseau, *Confessions*, above n1, p.215.
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Ibid, p.128.
- 41 Ibid, p.38.
- 42 On time and synthesis see Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991) Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (trans) p.60.
- 43 On Being as the ‘il y a’ see ibid, p.87; and Emmanuel Levinas, *Existence and Existents* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1988) Alphonso Lingis (trans) pp.58-60, 68.
- 44 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, above n 12, p.104 on ‘Being’ as ‘pure occurrentness’.
- 45 See Lyotard, *The Inhuman*. above n 42, p.88.
- 46 Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989) Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (trans) p.82.
- 47 Ibid, p.46.
- 48 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, above n 12, p.230-1.
- 49 Emmanuel Levinas, ‘No Identity’ in *Emmanuel Levinas: Collected Philosophical Papers* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987) Alphonso Lingis (trans) pp.141-51, p.148.
- 50 Emmanuel Levinas, *Of God Who Comes to Mind* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) Bettina Bergo (trans) p.212.
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, above n 12, p.291.
- 53 See Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995) pp.26-8.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 Lyotard, *The Inhuman*, above n 42, p.85.
- 56 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, above n 12, p.104.
- 57 Martin Heidegger, *What is Philosophy?* (New Haven, Conn.: College and University Press, no date) Jean Wilde and William Kluback (trans) p.81.
- 58 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, above n 12, p.171.
- 59 Ibid, p.104.
- 60 Sigmund Freud, ‘Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality’, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1953-74) James Strachey (trans) VII, p.222.
- 61 Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: A Selection* (New York: W W Norton & Company, 1977) Alan Sheridan (trans) p.289; see Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, above n 53, p.94.

- 62 Emmanuel Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, above n 43, pp.58-60 on the depersonalisation of consciousness.
- 63 Rousseau, *Confessions*, above n 1, p.300.
- 64 Lacan, *Ecrits*, above n 61, p.219; see Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, above n 53, p.59; Anika Lemaire, *Jacques Lacan* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977) David Macey (trans) p.163.
- 65 Rousseau, *Confessions*, above n 1, p.185.
- 66 Lyotard, *The Inhuman*, above n 42, p.84.
- 67 Lyotard, *The Inhuman*, above n 42, p.84 referring to Burke's definition of the sublime; see also, Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987) W S Pluhar (trans) Bk II 'Analytic of the Sublime, section B, 'On the Dynamically Sublime in Nature', pp.119-40, especially Section 28, 'On Nature as Might' pp.119-23.
- 68 Rousseau, *Confessions*, above n 1, p.167.
- 69 Ibid, p.300.
- 70 Ibid, p. 167.
- 71 Lyotard, *The Inhuman*, above n 42, pp.157, 159.
- 72 Ibid, p.159.
- 73 Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (trans) pp.19-20.
- 74 Rousseau, *Confessions*, above n 1, p.168.
- 75 Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, above n 53, p.90.
- 76 Lacan, *Ecrits*, above n 61, p.29, see Lemaire, *Jacques Lacan*, above n 64, p.175, and Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, above n 53, p. 91.
- 77 Rousseau, *Confessions*, above n 1, p.402.
- 78 Ibid, p.408.
- 79 Ibid, p.413.
- 80 Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, above n 53, p.91.
- 81 See Lemaire, *Jacques Lacan*, above n 64, pp.162-3; and Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, above n 53, p.92.
- 82 Rousseau, *Confessions*, above n 1, p.414.
- 83 Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, above n 13, [I], pp.39-40; see also the emergence of the passions amongst the sexes at the waterhole which explains love as a shared lack: "In trying to make oneself understood, one learns to explain oneself" ([I], p.45).
- 84 Rousseau, *Confessions*, above n 1, p.413.
- 85 Lacan, *Ecrits*, above n 61, p.324.
- 86 Zizek, *Tarrying with the Negative*, above n 21, p.180.
- 87 Rousseau, *Confessions*, above n 1, p.414.
- 88 Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1979) Alphonso Lingis (trans) p.258. The caress as shaping, as causing the other to be realised as flesh for me is compared with Sartre's caress as "contact" or as 'grasping' in a manner akin to Rousseau's appropriation of externality for the purposes of self-realisation.
- 89 Brian Schroeder, *Altared Ground: Levinas, History and Violence* (New York: Routledge, 1996) explains that for Levinas desire is transcendence in the form of a "celebration of difference and radical separation" (p.104).
- 90 Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, above n 88, p.115-21.
- 91 Emanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other* (Pittsburgh, Duquesne University Press, 1987) p.86.
- 92 Ibid.
- 93 Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, above n 88, p.266. See also Cathryn Vasseleu, *Textures of Light: Vision and Touch in Irigaray, Levinas and Merleau-Ponty* (London: Routledge, 1998) pp.98-108 who follows Levinas in seeing an ethics of intersubjectivity which requires relocating communication in the erotic, or recognising the embodiedness of communication.
- 94 Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, above n 88, p.259.
- 95 Levinas, above n 49, p.145.
- 96 Ibid, p.149.
- 97 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract in The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) Victor Gourevitch (ed and trans) Bk II, ch. III.
- 98 The General Will is ostensibly rejected by the natural man as 'the will of no one'. Similarly, Levinas says of Heidegger's 'Being': it is the "verb of no one". See Schroeder, *Altared Ground*, above n 89, p.100.

- 99 For a discussion of Heidegger's 'they' and Levinas' response based on a consideration of metaphysics' obsession with immanence see Dwight Furrow, *Against Theory: Continental and Analytical Challenges in Moral Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1995) p.144.
- 100 Schroeder, *Altared Ground*, above n 89, p.101.
- 101 Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, above n 13, [I], p.49 maintains that even in sympathy we are incapable of putting ourselves in the other's place: "we do not become what they must be, but remain ourselves, modified."
- 102 See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, above n 12, p.331; on Heidegger see Fynsk, *Heidegger*, above n 12, pp.74-7.
- 103 See Schroeder, *Altared Ground*, above n 89, p.102.
- 104 See Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970) Denis Savage (trans) pp.455-7.
- 105 See Giorgio Agamben, 'The Idea of Language' in *Potentialities*, above n 20, pp.39-47.
- 106 Joel Whitebook, *Perversion and Utopia: A Study in Psychoanalysis and Critical Theory* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1996) p.197 cites Kant's 'lucky accident' (*gluclichter Zufall*) in this respect; this should be compared with Rousseau's speculative remark that the origin of language is so inconceivable that God may well have taught men to speak, *Discourse on Inequality*, above n 13, I [IV], p.14.
- 107 Rousseau, *Confessions*, above n 1, pp.86-7.
- 108 But by no means voluminous. See Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke and Proust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979) pp.278-301; and G Wade, "A Lacunian Study: de Man and Rousseau" *Eighteenth-Century Studies* vol.12, 1978-9 pp.504-13.
- 109 Rousseau, *Confessions*, above n 1, p.87.
- 110 See Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, above n 53, pp.139-41.
- 111 This failure of sympathy is also a feature of the third and last confession in which Rousseau abandons the musician Le Maistre on the streets of Lyon during an epileptic seizure in order to return to Mme de Warens (*Confessions*, p.127) and is the central and unacknowledged content of the confessional paradigm.
- 112 But compare with the *Reveries of a Solitary Walker* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979) Peter France (trans) 'Fifth Walk', pp.81-90. In the *Reveries* Rousseau addresses the issue of confessing in order to draw attention to his capacity to sympathise with others despite his own suffering. The failure of sympathy invokes the voice of the other and generates an infinite orientation towards the other – an infinite responsibility. Rousseau declares that a day can no longer pass without his recalling Marion or imagining her dreadful fate. In other words, it is only subsequently that he is open to the other – only retroactively that identity is configured.
- 113 De Man, *Allegories of Reading*, above n 108, pp.288-9.
- 114 *Ibid*, p.288.
- 115 *Ibid*, p.289.
- 116 *Ibid*, pp.289-90.
- 117 *Ibid*, p.278.
- 118 See Whitebook, *Perversion and Utopia*, above n 106, pp.200-06; Axel Honneth, *The Fragmented World of the Social: Essays in Social and Political Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995) Charles W Wright (ed) pp.168-83.
- 119 Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, above n 53, pp.59-60.
- 120 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages which Treats of Melody and Musical Imitation in The Origin of Language: Two Essays by Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Johann Gottfried Herder* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1966) John H. Moran (trans) p.21.
- 121 Jean Laplanche, *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976) Jeffrey Mehlman (trans).
- 122 Wade, 'A Lacunian Study', above n 108, p.506.
- 123 See Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, above n 53, p.94.
- 124 Castoriadis reasons that this is so because the discovery of the absence of the breast can only be based on the requirement that nothing is to be absent (Whitebook, above n 106, p.184-5). Narrativisation, is motivated by the desire for unity. In arguing that narrative is "the effort to restore what is lacking" Wade, above n 108, (p.509) follows de Man, above n 108. What is lacking for autobiography to be complete is full referentiality (truth). Wade identifies the effort of restoration (of fulfilling the promise inherent in truth) with Rousseau's continued desire for Mme de Warens. For Wade, the ribbon's significance depends less on the fact that it signifies desire than on its having its own meaning (truth), because it coincides with the origin (Mme de Warens)

(p.506).The theft of the ribbon signals castration and Rousseau steals another at the next opportunity to restore his sexuality (truth). For Rousseau as for Hegel erotic relations are essentially explained by lack. They are, however, considered in terms of separation by Levinas, who describes them as non-possessive in form.

125 Rousseau, *Origin of Languages*, above n 120, p.57.

126 Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980) p.57.

127 Emmanuel Levinas, *The Levinas Reader* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1989) Sean Hand (ed.) p.92.

128 Ibid, p.83: on interrogating the structure of language itself, thus ethics being prior to discourse.

129 For Castoriadis' use of the Freudian concept see, Cornelius Castoriadis, *Crossroads in the Labyrinth* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1984) Kate Soper and Martin H Ryle (trans.) p.217; see also J Laplanche and J B Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac Books, 1988) pp.29-32.

130 Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, above n 13, I [35], pp.151-2.

131 Ibid, I [14], p.146.

132 Rousseau, *Confessions*, above n 1, pp.294-5.

133 Ibid, p.294.

134 Ibid, p.295.

# ROUSSEAU'S 'SOCRATIC' *DIALOGUES*

## INTRODUCTION

The intention of the *Dialogues* is to contrast true and false images of the subject with the aim of restoring the former. The false image is critiqued as founded on unverifiable and demonstrably untrue premises. In other words, the subject's public image is the product of a heterogeneous cause. The false image is to be replaced by a truthful account, itself a prelude to the subject's full presence. However, the *Dialogues* cannot fully separate fantasy from representational logic. The three dialogues construct separate but interlocking scenes. Identity is not located in any one of these scenes rather than another but in the logic of the discourses connecting them through equivalence and difference. The original subject, as opposed to the misleading representations, is no longer founded in ontological certainty, but in the mode in which transference between scenes is accomplished.

The psychoanalytical category for this constructive logic is the 'primal scene'.<sup>1</sup> In the primal scene, a presumed cause is ostensibly retranslated into symbols which are subsequently interpreted and reinterpreted. Subjectivity arises not because the cause can be traced, but because symbolisation has enabled causality to be presumed without localisation. Indeed, the co-existence of proximate (memory) scene, transference scene and original (event) scene means that subjectivity hovers over the displacements and arrangements that these scenes enter.<sup>2</sup> Establishing particular (essentially provisional) relations at any one time is establishing identity. In other words, identity is an act of translation unmastered by intention: analysis does not mesh with a cause in any 'real' sense, and symbolisation is only the recognition of an



absence, the acknowledgment of the effects of another scene, an elsewhere and another time. The subject is therefore dominated by a sense of remove and remoteness, an unresolved conflict that issues in disavowals and characteristic acts of aversion, of looking aside from what it cannot resolve. Similarly, the intentional component of the text is inconceivable without foregoing the search for an objective identity – a metaphysics of meaning – in favour of an intertextual sense of signification.

### TRUTH AND METHOD

It is necessary to pose the question of the precise nature of Rousseau's constructions, the process of construction, and the indeterminacy of the finished product. The *Dialogues* is a tripartite text in which one speaking subject ('Rousseau') engages with another ('The Frenchman') about a third who never engages in dialogue ('J.-J.'). Rousseau aims to convince the Frenchman that he has been mistakenly persuaded by a universal conspiracy to abhor J.-J., and that he should adopt his own, independent view of him – one similar to Rousseau's own. The Frenchman is to read the works which have been held up as evidence of J.-J.'s abominable character prior to meeting him. This final meeting – which is to be the culminating proof of his error, and revelation of the truth known by Rousseau – never takes place.

The few critics who have examined Rousseau's text have concentrated either on the historical 'reality' of the conspiracy or the author's state of mind.<sup>3</sup> Huntington Williams is typical of the failure of exegesis in this respect. In an otherwise scrupulous psychoanalytically informed analysis of Rousseau's autobiographical project he succumbs to the reduction of the *Dialogues* to documentation of the

author's mental state.<sup>4</sup> More to the point is the relation of reality to fantasy. The isolation of Rousseau's paranoid inability to tell the difference between reality and fantasy fails to consider how those fantasies are related to the real. Rousseau calls the reliability and significance of the thing to which the event draws our attention into question by means of two complementary approaches. First, by use of the 'counterfactual' method, wherein the Frenchman becomes willing to speculate on thoughts "which", as Freud says of psychoanalysis, "merely ha(ve) a *possibility* of existing".<sup>5</sup> Second, by means of the relentless problematisation of the historicity of the event.

Rousseau's 'Preface' to the *Dialogues* explains his reason for writing them. Referring elsewhere to the *Confessions* as "a book precious for philosophers"<sup>6</sup> he criticises its readers for having dismissed it so lightly. He deliberately makes the *Dialogues* a difficult text – a text "for philosophers." The *Dialogues* is 'philosophical' in at least one important respect – it refers generally and constantly to the *Apology* of Socrates wherein the philosopher answers two principle questions: 'Who is Socrates?' and, relatedly and inseparably, 'What is Philosophy?'<sup>7</sup> Therefore, like the *Apology*, the *Dialogues* relates person to praxis and attempts to establish a common ground for both.

The question, 'Who is Socrates?' can be traced to the relationship between Socrates and the Delphic oracle.<sup>8</sup> The oracle's mode of imparting wisdom is described by Heraclitus: "The lord whose oracle is in Delphi neither speaks out nor conceals but gives a sign."<sup>9</sup> These signs are not a form of speech to be heard immediately and grasped as truth, but are to be interpreted. They are signs which have the characteristics both of disclosing and obstructing. The second question is answered by

Socrates when he describes his own praxis. Socrates recalls in the *Apology* how, when he first set out to examine being (*onta*) he was careful to avoid the danger of looking directly into the sun for fear of being blinded: “I thought of that danger, and I was afraid my soul would be blinded if I looked at things with my own eyes and tried to grasp them with any of my senses. So I thought I must have recourse to *logoi* and examine in them the truth of beings.”<sup>10</sup>

These *logoi* – interpretations or representation – articulate the same doublet of revelation and concealment which structures the logic of the primal scene. Like the sun the primal scene cannot be looked at directly, but is that which makes it possible for things to be seen. The only way to investigate the sun, says Socrates, is to “look at its image in water”, or study it during an eclipse – that is, when it is ‘covered over’. The object of interest – the light itself – is unavailable to be seen. In a sense it is necessary to be oblivious to the source in order to acquire knowledge.

Inquiry is always accompanied by the threat of blindness. In fact, the movement of concealment and revelation is necessarily present because light only emerges from and beside shadow. Similarly, knowledge requires an awakening to the ignorance internal to the knower<sup>11</sup> – a constitutive darkness which distances the subject from itself and its origin. For Socrates, philosophy is the revelation of the logic and medium of this internal difference which permits things to become manifest. The aim of philosophy and his praxis is to explain the conditions of access to knowledge for a creature for whom ignorance is intrinsic.

Rousseau provides his own foundational epistemic myth. The *Morceau allegorique*<sup>12</sup> describes a veiled statue standing on a smoke and incense shrouded altar at the centre

of a temple, worshiped by the initiates of a cult who “painted her in their imaginations in accordance with their own characters and passions”.<sup>13</sup> Three attempts are made to shatter the power of the idol. In the first a man restores the sight of some initiates by shifting the blindfolds they are forced to wear. In the second an old man whom Starobinski identifies “as Socrates”<sup>14</sup> unveils the statue expecting the revelation of its ugliness to break the spell it has over “the assembly”. Although it has the intended effect on the philosophers present, it only renews the ardour of the ordinary spectators. The final, successful attempt is made by Christ whose mere presence awakens those who see him to the truth, but who nonetheless affirms his seizure of power by breaking the icon “and, calmly climbing onto the pedestal ... seems to be assuming his rightful place rather than usurping another’s.”<sup>15</sup>

Rousseau here appears to critique the Socratic technique as necessary but limited. Identifying the *aporias* of human consciousness (constitutive ignorance) not only fails to enlighten in general, it provokes<sup>16</sup> renewed ignorance. In this allegory of naturalist epistemology<sup>17</sup> Rousseau presents himself as the heir of a metaphysical tradition – one that believes that representation can grasp what is (*onta*), and that what is could be represented before a perceiving subject who could experience the representation as a mode of recollection. The *Dialogues*, on the other hand, foregoes the possibility of presence – the making present figured by the actions of Jesus who, in taking up his position on the pedestal, is a self-presenting presence. Rousseau undermines the conspiratorial structure directed at J.-J., but fails to bring the Frenchman into the promised face to face relation with him.

The *Dialogues* shadows the Platonic-Socratic text both in a general sense and in specific instances.<sup>18</sup> In particular Rousseau reproduces Socrates’ distrust of a direct

perception of being – or knowledge of the cause. In the first part of the *Apology* Socrates refers to a set of accusers who precede those currently assembled in the court.<sup>19</sup> They are so pervasive as to be elusive<sup>20</sup> so that it is not even possible to name them – except for one who is a writer of comedies and accuses Socrates of being one “who makes the weaker logos the stronger”.<sup>21</sup> Two interrelated factors are addressed in this speech: the inaccessibility of ‘the first’ to reflection, and the dependence of the current accusations and their interpretation on the first. Socrates connects the “later accusations” with the “first false accusations”<sup>22</sup> – the corruption of the youth of the city. The first false accusations are the basis of the later accusations – they are an established prejudice which designs the contours of the judge’s ethos. Logic contends that, by removing the first false accusations the latter will collapse for lack of foundation – to refute all the accusations is to remove all the false images that are presented as legitimate representations and accusations against Socrates. In the *Dialogues* Rousseau follows this same procedure: “To spare the difficulty of so many proofs, I ask only for one, but I want it authentic, invincible and according to all forms. It is proof of the first offence which gave credibility to all the others”.<sup>23</sup>

The Frenchman says the Gentlemen did not attend to J.-J.’s crimes but to “his awful character”<sup>24</sup> – which is a *petitio principii*, a conclusion masquerading as a fundamental premise, and lacking the status of a ‘first’. Rousseau here analyses the lack of primary foundations of the conspiracy – much as Socrates analyses the motives of his prosecutors in the *Apology*. He does not mean to suggest for the apogee of the *Morceau* to remain elusive to the protagonists of the *Dialogues*. However, the intertextual presence of the *Apology* and *Morceau* in the *Dialogues* is suggestive of a strategy in which textual relations at least partly provide the basis for the mimetic

relation between the event (the conspiracy) and the verisimilitude of its representation. The *Dialogues* suggest a move away from ideal mimeticism – the notion that “the being of something that is, is being imitated”.<sup>25</sup> The mimeticism at work here is in the zone of undecideability – between obscurity and concealment. Like Socrates’ *logoi*, and Heraclitus’ sign, it reveals and conceals the referred to event by situating it between construction and recollection.<sup>26</sup>

The presence of an intertextual event displaces ‘event’ from the ground of ontology. The conspiracy’s relation to the real is thereby thrown into question. However, what is true of the conspiracy is equally true of the counter-argument. If Rousseau cannot reveal the basis and workings of the conspiracy he cannot affirm his method.

Similarly, if he cannot displace the influence of the conspiracy by a radical undermining of its terms and preoccupations, his status as subject cannot be promoted to a basis in truth. The question of the ontological grounding of the self is not a question of non-existence per se, or of unjustifiable belief but of the unavoidably unsolvable question of origins which materialises when evidence points to an origin, cause, or first but it remains unverifiable. The conspiracy is not an object of observation – it is the sign of an ontologically undecideable intertextual event situated in the space between historical memory and imaginative reconstruction – between archival verification and free play.

As long as the identity of the conspiracy remains unrevealed, an ambiguity in the relation between self and other – and therefore a fundamental indeterminacy of the self – prevails. Under the conditions for ontological research prescribed by Socrates and followed by Rousseau, the dialogic situation is incapable of generating truth, since truth is subject neither to one interlocutor’s authority nor the other’s subjective

recollection. As a result, the aim to provide subject and method with a common ground akin to the Socratic convergence of praxis and persona is threatened. For Lacan<sup>27</sup> the truth is in an ‘impossible situation’ in dialogue precisely because of the difficulty of generating a notion of recollection that is neither properly subjective nor objective. As the patient parts with the notion of recollection as self-presence truth is displaced from consciousness to discourse. Interpretation is exercised in a zone between subject and object – where truth is differential – and constituted somewhere between pure construction and historicity.<sup>28</sup> The event remains (in Nietzschean terms) ‘incalculable’.<sup>29</sup> In other words recollection precedes the subject at the level of the structure of the signifier. It is:

Not Platonic reminiscence – it is not the return of a form, an imprint, an *eidos* of beauty and good, a supreme truth, coming to us from the beyond. It is something that comes to us from the structural necessities, something humble.<sup>30</sup>

Rousseau’s method is dialogic, but follows the form of Socratic anamnesis in which ‘dialogue’ means ‘inner dialogue’. Presence is self-presence in terms familiarly Rousseauian from the actions of Jesus in the *Morceau allegorique*. Socratic anamnesis places truth within the field of subjective recollection. Rousseau presents a structuring myth in the attempt to overcome the problem of dispossessive language which points to the real in the very act of establishing its inaccessibility. The First Dialogue describes a mythical place where people know what they say before saying it.

It is a characteristic sign by which initiates recognise one another; and what gives great value to a sign so little known and even less used is that it cannot be counterfeit, it can never act except at the level of its source, and when it does not come from the heart of those who imitate it, it does not reach those hearts capable of distinguishing it. But as soon as it reaches them, it cannot be mistaken; it is true as soon as it is felt.<sup>31</sup>

Wanting to reproduce this economy of effortless signs requiring no labour of explication Rousseau informs the Frenchman: “Everything I say to you can be understood only by those to whom there is no need to say it.”<sup>32</sup> A place without (necessary) speech is a place with a voice that is everywhere and nowhere.

Communing through the universally dispersed logos – the medium that is everywhere, always already spoken – the voice of reason does not have to be made material through speech. The voice of reason is an echo within the self of an earlier incarnation. It is the logos through which the origin of the self remains present to the self. Again, dialogical structure follows the form of inner dialogue; knowledge and recollection are bound to the subject in its inwardness – its ability to bring the *logos* to presence within itself. Thinking, speaking and reasoning are all modes of recollection in that anything outside the subject is secondary and incidental to what has been interiorised through recollection. The truth is synonymous with this form of (voiceless) speech or dialogue – that is, recollection. Truth is founded on inwardness to the extent that the subject is founded on the forgetting of its externality, its non-self-presence, its divided (dialogical-dialectical) origin.

Psychoanalysis challenges the subject’s origin in recollection through the constructive discourse of the primal scene. Rousseau’s myth of absolute interiority is incompatible with his theory of language. There is therefore a significant convergence between Freud’s discovery of psychoanalytical method and Rousseau’s discovery of the basis of signification. Freud’s primal scene is foreshadowed by Rousseau’s analysis of the emergence of language as figurative, not literal, in the first instance.<sup>33</sup> For Freud psychoanalysis centres on entertaining the possibility that the therapeutic effect of “recollected ideas” may have nothing to do with their historical reality.<sup>34</sup> In the



process he jettisons his seduction theory of the mid-1890s which had given credence to the authenticity of the scenes of childhood trauma recounted by his patients. Then, recollected scenes had been accepted as fitting into an “associative and logical structure”.<sup>35</sup> Freud concluded after some revision of this thesis that the work of unconscious fantasy meant that it was “impossible to say anything about ... the state which the pathogenic material was in before the analysis”.<sup>36</sup> He therefore challenges the capacity of the patient to say anything coherent about the scene they claim to recollect.<sup>37</sup> In other words, the resistance constructed by unconscious fantasy is primordial.

Fantasy and reality, according to Freud, are bound together in an “intricate meshwork”.<sup>38</sup> They are so inseparable that the structure of unconscious fantasy provides the only access to the real represented in the scene.<sup>39</sup> Rousseau similarly rejects those analyses of figuration which sees it as derivative of, and a deviation from, the literal, as the product of a referential relation between the word and the object.<sup>40</sup> Rousseau concludes that the original condition of language was metaphorical and that the promotion of referential language to primacy in time and explanatory power represents a forgetting of the figurative origins of signification. Man, on encountering another such as himself in the state of nature fears the other and calls them, first of all, ‘giants’. Only eventually, after a number of encounters, does he learn to see them as like himself and to give them their proper name, ‘man’.<sup>41</sup> The word ‘giant’ is equally divided between a supposed reference to an exterior reality and the registering of an internal state. Significantly, the choice of the word both is conditioned if not determined by fear and does not correspond to reality.

Temporal spacing and difference (figuration, Rousseau would say) have always been present in the process of recollection. The recollection is not of what is (*onta*, Socrates would say) because the subject, necessarily in the midst of it then and now observing it from a privileged position, cannot repeat the event. As the event has necessarily been ‘worked over’ (*Überarbeitung*, Freud would say) and revised original impressions are only significatory as deferred actions.<sup>42</sup> Figuration is available to the speaker, argues Rousseau, when he uses a word with reference to a passion without believing that it designates anything beyond his subjective condition. Indeed, the word ‘giant’ retains only its mythical dimension, as a word without an objective referent. Because we “substitute the idea that the passion presents to us for the word that we transpose”<sup>43</sup> it remains in our vocabulary as a pure subjective referent, made up of an “idea” interlaced with fear.

In the Wolf Man case Freud observed that “the dream seemed to point to an occurrence the reality of which was very strongly emphasised as being in marked contrast to the unreality of the fairy tales.”<sup>44</sup> The task of interpretation is to determine the nature of “occurrence”, but this occurrence cannot be placed directly in relation to reality. It can only be placed in contradiction to unreality. At the origin, fantasy conceals the origin. Like Rousseau’s primal scene of subjectivity founded in figuration, competing and irreconcilable levels of signification can be identified. At one level the pretense of having grasped (or having to grasp) the real is alive. At another it is relinquished so that an artificial, non-subjective memory replaces that previously attributed to consciousness.

According to Laplanche and Pontalis:

The original fantasy is first and foremost fantasy: it lies beyond the history of the subject but nevertheless in history: a kind of language and symbolic sequence, but loaded with elements of imagination; a structure, but activated by certain contingent elements. As such it is characterised by certain contingent traits which make it difficult to assimilate to a purely transcendental schema, even if it provides the possibility of experience.<sup>45</sup>

Laplanche and Pontalis argue that Freud wanted to know what kind of event the dream “seemed to point to.”<sup>46</sup> Lacan interprets Freud’s approach as indicating “that it is in relation to the real that the level of fantasy functions. The real supports the fantasy, the fantasy protects the real.”<sup>47</sup> Analysis must remember that the relation of the object of interpretation to the real has been forgotten. The primal scene is what is ‘unknown’ and ‘forgotten’. For Rousseau, the ‘opinion’ of the public is a dream which frequently points to a forgotten origin. The conspiracy thereby functions as the primal scene. However, ‘the’ primal scene cannot be singularised, reduced to a single or unitary function or event. Primal scenes are indeterminate, and therefore multiple – hence the need to raise and interrelate the structuring input of the conspiracy, the Socrates of the *Apology*, and Rousseau’s own *Morceau allegorique*. Furthermore, the event and its symbolisation consist of two temporal frames of reference without a stable relation between them. The unfolding of the scene, therefore, will consist of multiple temporalities, or “the originary role of non-originary temporal difference.”<sup>48</sup>

Because the explanatory framework is constructed at the intersection of different times and scenes interpretation produces conviction outside recollection. Dialogue is the joint work of interlocutors each criticising the historicity of the other’s reconstructions. At the limits of recollection the analysis cannot produce conviction because what is remembered is the fundamental nature of forgetting – of looking into the oblivion (non-self-presence) of the origin. The time for understanding is always ‘another time’. In the *Dialogues*, it is the open future of the third part alone which can

produce conviction as the projective repetition of the origin experienced in the transference – a past towards which one is constantly moving.<sup>49</sup> The Frenchman's conviction will be produced in time as he comes to believe that the symptoms have a cause that can be located in time.<sup>50</sup> Rousseau's counterfactual method pervades his reconstruction. He claims that because he has located an 'event' without which the symptoms could not have developed he has identified an explanatory mechanism. The subject therefore produces in himself the conviction that he has located a cause. At the same time he does not position it directly in subjective recollection – but he does position it within interpretive authority. What he demonstrates in the process, however, is its incalculability.

#### FALSE ECONOMY

The subject of the First Dialogue appears to be the 'veiled' J.J with an undeserved public reputation for heinousness. Public opinion here is a distorted will and, as such, the public is not the subject it presumes it is – just as J.J is not the subject he presumes he is. The public is no more than "a tally of voices"<sup>51</sup> – an empirical collective, rather than a consensus. The public constructs an opinion on the basis of the representation of an original to which it does not have access and to which it presumes access is unnecessary. The public subject's blindness is expressed through an ironic reference to knowledge of J.-J ("... once he was well known ..."<sup>52</sup>), whereas all it has and has had access to is a veiled object. The gap between the subject and its appearance in public opinion is a measure of the public's acceptance of the interpretation foisted upon it by the "pledge"<sup>53</sup> contracted between the conspirators and the experts they import to guide the public's perception of the subject.<sup>54</sup> This gap represents the

opportunity for a deductive, circumstantially based construction put together in the interstices between the mental images or symptoms of subjects.

The conspirators who malign J.-J are said to have their “reasons”.<sup>55</sup> However, the conspiracy is not a form under rational control, but a machine with a life of its own.<sup>56</sup> The figure of the self-moving conspiratorial mechanism is a figure of Rousseau’s own theory and his belief in the mechanism (the theory, and, what is not a completely different thing, the conspiracy) he has just invented. His desire to discover the origin of the other’s unconscious desire becomes a compulsion. His quest for the origin can appear as compulsive as the conspirator’s drive to obscure their actions. To set the stage for the self-imploding logical contradictions of the conspiracy, Rousseau is driven to assume the scenario which reveals his understanding of the fate he is subjected to. The demands of theory enable Rousseau to articulate the workings of the mechanism, but only to the extent that the mechanism affirms the validity of questioning which aims to reveal it. The *Dialogues* is itself Rousseau’s mechanism for celebrating his ability to raise the question – that is, his ability to articulate the difference between reality and fantasy, scene and origin without ultimately locating the necessary opposites of the bipolarity.

The structuring naturalist belief of the *Dialogues* is articulated in the danger of appearances assuming an independent reality. The conspirators organise J.-J.’s habitation and physical surroundings to satisfy his desires.<sup>57</sup> The economy is the symbol of a machine-like force which reproduces the realm of appearances. The master conspirators enjoin the people to supply him with better quality goods for the price of ordinary stock and make up the difference in price themselves.<sup>58</sup> A fundamental concealment of value occurs which bears the logic of the primal scene.

Rousseau refers to the conspiratorial forgery of value in the bourgeois economy because of the commensurability between the reinscription within the commodity of a value that is not properly its own and the impossibility of commanding the event or cause that underpins the interpretation in the primal scene.

In making ‘opposites meet’<sup>59</sup> the false economy echoes the *Apology* where Socrates is accused of convincing ordinary Athenians that the weaker *logos* is the stronger.<sup>60</sup> In the *Dialogues* the public cannot “reconcile” just ends and unjust means or “virtue through fraud”.<sup>61</sup> The equivalence of antitheticals promoting the realm of appearances over that of truth means that interpretation is reified because value as such cannot be located. The event and its significant reworking are interdependent, but the structure they form is indeterminate. Indeed ‘event’ and ‘symbol’ are positions occupied by elements that can be reversed. The subject emerges as a result of these differences and indeterminacies such that formulations of subjectivity bear out the emphasis: “while he is different than he appeared then because the illusion has vanished, he is the same as he always was”.<sup>62</sup>

Rousseau undertakes to lead the Frenchman from his false beliefs forged under the influence of the reign of appearances to a founding principle capable of stabilising the disorderly arrangement of object and false signals. The solution is Platonic in that it registers a disgust for illusions.<sup>63</sup> However, the Frenchman must continue to approach an image which he finds horrifying (but only and precisely because the image is false) before it is or can be revealed.<sup>64</sup> Rousseau turns the domination of appearances against itself by adopting a rule of inversion which is central to the conspiracy itself. To defeat the appeal of the idol Rousseau must break its spell by revealing the contradictions on which the conspirators depend. Wanting to ‘unveil’ J.-J the

conspirators veil both the object and themselves.<sup>65</sup> Unveiling J.-J would reveal that there is ‘nothing’ there.<sup>66</sup> Neither the conspirators nor the public understands the mechanism of the plot to which they are both subject: the public does not see what it enacts<sup>67</sup> and the condition of the public becomes that of the conspirators because “they resolved to see what they sought.”<sup>68</sup>

If observation is always already speculative, and everything in analysis is discovered through the medium of construction, then Rousseau’s discovery of the conspiracy ‘already at work’ in the ‘origin’ (as Socrates discovers it working prior to his birth), is rediscovering the dividedness of the origin. The dichotomy of illusion and reference points to a complete and impossible recovery of the origin such that simply countering the logic of the conspiracy will entrench the same logic. Instances of this logic occur where the *Dialogues* reveals how the conspiracy merely converts J.-J.’s attributes into attributes of the system itself – his ‘strength’, for example, becoming their ‘benevolence’.<sup>69</sup>

The strength of the analysis lies in the capacity to maintain the internal difference of identity on both sides of the moral divide. Under the conspiracy, critique is impossible: “that ... benevolence is too bizarre which, making its unfortunate object carry all the disgrace of derision along with all the burden of hate, strives only to deprive him of all means of escape whether he is innocent or guilty.”<sup>70</sup> Because this hermeneutic produces ‘bizarre’ results, Rousseau seeks ‘natural causes’<sup>71</sup>: “Let’s set aside all the facts for a moment, let’s suppose that the only thing known is the temperament I described to you; and let’s see what would naturally result from that in a fictional being about whom we could have no other idea.”<sup>72</sup> Rousseau’s ‘paranoia’ therefore represents a refusal to be barred from learning the secret – a refusal to forget

ontology. The *Morceau* articulates the refusal to be barred from the real – the belief that truth is not buried beneath impenetrable layers but is all over the surface of that which comes to presence. Jesus' appearance – presence secured in the present – is a forgetting of the production of meaning by the relation and coextensivity of all scenes resulting in the simultaneous presence and absence of the subject 'here' and 'elsewhere'.<sup>73</sup> The subject is the product of and produces both presence and absence without being reducible to either. Representational thought exhausts itself trying to secure presence, and has no reserves for thinking absence. Evidence of this is located in the indeterminate conclusion of the *Dialogues* which reveals Rousseau's 'exhaustive' and exhausted analysis of the conspiracy as an attempt to represent it as (or reduce it to) presence. In the process it forgets concealment. The constant, nocturnal presence of the conspiracy, however, is precisely the reminder of the forgetting of concealment; and that concealment bears within itself the only form of disclosure available to an interpretation barred from the real.

Rousseau will come to realise that no test will be able to establish in principle the status of a recollection.<sup>74</sup> This is simply because at one level the scene was never perceived by the subject<sup>75</sup> but is the result of imaginary working over. What matters is the role it plays in articulating temporal difference in the narrative work of analysis. It is immaterial whether the scene (conspiracy) actually happened – what is important is the way unconscious fantasy structures the scene. It is no longer presupposed that what is can be represented before a subject. The primal scene shifts the site of interpretation from the univocal perspective of the subject of the scene to the subject's displacement in the scene.



## THE WHOLE TRUTH?

The text consistently offers objects for judgment which are grounded in a correspondence theory of truth, in which poor reproductions wither before the force of the original. The original must be apprehended before judgment can be passed. If judgment is the search for truth, then it will fail when offered representations for which only an aesthetic judgment can be provided. Jones argues that the *Dialogues* is rooted in an argument for ontology<sup>76</sup>, and thereby fails to identify the aesthetic mode of judgment. The Frenchman is asked to exercise aesthetic judgment, rather than to assess the truth of the representation. In his being required to have insight into his own subjective representations Rousseau is making room for two conclusions. The first is the Cartesian mode of self-representation stressing the method of doubt above which the *cogito* rises to self-contained certainty. The second is Socratic – that is, that the Frenchman is being led to consider the constitutive ignorance of consciousness.

The intertextual logic of the *Dialogues* points to the constructive dominance of the latter. Rousseau removes the transcendental grounds of truth from the discourse of the *Dialogues* by projecting them onto the idealised conditions of “a better order of things”.<sup>77</sup> However, Rousseau does not rest easily satisfied with discovering the aporias of consciousness, or an hermeneutical solution to the objects of judgment. Therefore, the *Morceau allegorique* ranges beyond the aporia to the installation of presence – Jesus – securing certainty. The logic of the *Dialogues* follows a similar pattern, dismantling false images before confronting the object of representation. The

structure of the text, however – wherein one character ('Rousseau') defends the absent other ('J.-J' or 'Jean-Jacques') to a third ('The Frenchman' – *la Francois*) – according to Foucault<sup>78</sup>, undermines the humanist project of realising an integrated identity through its vain attempts to protect the fragmented subject from its confrontation with the externality of its conditions of formation.

Rousseau finds the hermeneutical approach inadequate, and provides for the possibility of critique. Rousseau learned, when intending to deposit the manuscript of the *Dialogues* on the altar of the cathedral of Notre Dame he found his way barred by a previously unseen grille, that there can be no inhuman, perfect and wholly other recipient of the message<sup>79</sup>, and that the event or cause which would guarantee the interpretation of the text is in itself inaccessible. He subsequently turns his efforts to composing and publicly distributing a letter “to all Frenchmen who still love justice and truth”<sup>80</sup> but is met with universal rejection and the refusal to be read. Foucault, in this respect, refers to “silence” as “*l’expérience première des Dialogues*”.<sup>81</sup> Denied access to the site of the confirmation of meaning – God – Rousseau is forced to accept uncertainty whilst continuing to posit certainty.

Rousseau’s traumatic discovery – the barred door at the altar of self-justification – means that all messages, whether to or from the recipient, remain enigmatic. The primal scene is an objective enigma at the heart of every trauma to the extent that it is a message of exclusion from inception. The episode in Notre Dame is itself the discovery of such an exclusion of the subject, leaving them looking into something that sends a message that cannot be understood. In the same way, the primal scene, says Laplanche, retains something of the abandoned seduction theory.<sup>82</sup> That is to say, insofar as seduction represents a message from the other the primal scene remains a

sign offered to the child from the adult. The primal scene places a demand on the child to interpret the sign.<sup>83</sup> The communication is both an invitation to respond and an imperative because the offer of the sign is also a display – not just an invitation to see, but a forcing to see.

Rousseau has already figured this sense of the primal scene in his myth of the other world where the transactions of language are suspended in perfect silence. The idealisation of that scene's perfect transparency of gestures could not deny the initiation of the subject in a communication, a demand to interpret. Silence, as Laplanche explains, is not a transcendence of the material conditions of language, but the form of the message anticipating its assumption of a position in complex figurations of language. Silence refers equally to the monolithic conspiracy which Rousseau cannot dialecticise – a massive obstruction that bars insight into its own origins, his relation to it, and his current condition. As a result he is forced to posit a utopian future in which “there will be found someone who listens to me” and by whom “the truth would shine through to the eyes of the public”.<sup>84</sup> This ‘someone’ is figured in the Jesus of the *Morceau allegorique*, whose splendour becomes the focus of worship. Herein lies the promise of meaning recoverable by an intentional consciousness, the logical basis of which is that it is not absolutely other. Caught between the silence of inaccessible truth, and the impossible dream of silencing his critics, Rousseau is forced to acknowledge a relatively but not absolutely decentered consciousness.

In the preface to his defence Socrates anticipates his defence as a whole. It will be based on a consideration of his relation to logos, or speech. It will therefore be a speech about speech, which contrasts with the speech of his accusers. Rousseau, as we

have seen with reference to the myth, centralises language. The *Morceau* itself is an attempt to find a language that brings the subject to presence. The gulf between Socrates' and his accuser's speech is indicated by the dedication of his logos to truth: "Now they, as I say, have said little or nothing true; but you shall hear from me the whole truth."<sup>85</sup> To speak the truth is to reveal – or at least to not allow the things that he speaks about be hidden. Socrates marries logos to praxis by identifying himself as the subject of truth, and presenting himself through his representation in the defence. The whole truth is the answer to the question, 'Who is Socrates?' Like Socrates, Rousseau is taking a stand against letting things remain hidden: "I have said just about everything I had to say. It is drowned in chaos and disorder, but it is there."<sup>86</sup> Rousseau alludes to the structuring of the discourse on a naturalist belief in the objectivity of the subject. It is there as 'it' – not as something to be constructed in procedure, or existing as the compound set of equivalences between propositions produced by the interpretation. The logic of the primal scene is alluded to powerfully. However, the belief in demystification falls short of a praxis for truth since obscurity remains even in revelation.

The Frenchman claims that the counterfactual method cannot give rise to a positive claim of truth, but merely to a competing claim "made deliberately in opposition to the other".<sup>87</sup> The presence of competing claims can only draw attention to "error or lying on one of the two sides".<sup>88</sup> On the other hand Rousseau claims the necessity "to unravel truth with certainty".<sup>89</sup> In the comedy in which Socrates is represented as the purveyor of the weaker logos in place of the stronger, he is also identified as undertaking inquiries which assault the gods<sup>90</sup>, a form of a hubris. He is, like the idol, the symbol of a false religion, an assault against the gods. The logic is understood and

taken up in *Morceau* where the only way forward is to destroy the false image, and replace it with the true. Socrates, on the other hand, as in the *Apology*, stops short of replacing the image with a true representation – he only refutes and indicates the inappropriateness of those images to himself.<sup>91</sup> He asks: “Do you think you are accusing Anaxagoras, my dear Meletus?”<sup>92</sup> Socrates proceeds by denying and distinguishing himself and never answers the question ‘Who is Socrates?’ by reference to foundations in an ontological sense.

#### DEMONSTRATION

In the *Dialogues* the myth of the voiceless other place<sup>93</sup> is the paradigmatic primal scene of the legitimate society (and the antithesis of the conspiracy). The ghostly nature of the voiceless dialogue masks the presence of the speech of the dead, heard in the echo of Socrates’ accusations against his judges from the *Apology*. The *Dialogues*’ discourse of truth - its myth of the other place<sup>94</sup> – has concerned itself with presence, but places what brings to presence under an interdiction: “Visibility – should not be visible”.<sup>95</sup> The primal scene is an event outside the grasp of metaphysics (the science of presence). In fact it is the preexistent trace underlying the possibility of the distinction between presence and absence, subject and object. The *Dialogues* is concerned with the conspiracy to the extent that it both enables seeing and figures the interdiction against looking into the conditions of seeing. The primal scene is an attempt to overcome that interdiction against what brings to presence – it is concerned with what is there in the first place. The conspiracy figures the primal scene because it is the point where representation (the conspiracy) gives way to (becomes / figures) concealment.

Painted on its face were expressions of ecstasy mixed with rage. It trampled on a figure representing mankind, but its eyes turned tenderly toward heaven ... This vision made the philosopher tremble, but the spectators, far from being repelled, saw not a look of cruelty but only heavenly ardour, and felt even more zealous toward the uncovered statue than they had before its true face was revealed.<sup>96</sup>

The gesture of ‘unveiling’ reveals naturalistic premises. First, that the object is single, unitary and real. Second, that the origin is an event that occurred in the past as such. And lastly, that recovering it the way it was will explain the causative ground of the present independently of interpretations. The gesture therefore presumes ontology as ground and revelation as method.

The Second Dialogue is dedicated to a rehabilitation of the ontology of vision. It is dominated by the mode of simple demonstration: the complete relation of origin and interpretation – or, the revelation of an origin prior to interpretation. To make the Frenchman “feel all at once, through a simple and immediate impression” the “idea ... imprinted in my mind after a long examination of the original”<sup>97</sup> Rousseau must base his method on naturalistic premises. Demonstration is related to mathematical proof, and its success entirely independent of whether it is believed or not. The *Dialogues*, at this point appears to make too great an investment in the ‘scientific’ disenchantment of modernity. It reifies the impossible fusion of object and interpretation, seeking a method to avoid the pitfalls of those through which “one sees what one believes and not what one sees”.<sup>98</sup> Rousseau complains that “the biased man sees what he believes ... the passionate man sees what he desires”.<sup>99</sup> The Frenchman, however, argues for an approach in which the subject “is regarded with less indifference”.<sup>100</sup>

Visual evidence fails to accord with veracity. The Ramsay portrait is displayed and reproduced not in order to promote a truthful representation but represents “a secret that had to be confided to the entire public without ever reaching the one who was its subject”.<sup>101</sup> The portrait posits a fold at the heart of identity – the public interpretation which is the cause the subject is barred from. The fold, in fact, is double since not only can the subject not see itself in public representation, but the public is not expressed in public opinion.

The non-identity of the public is figured when J.-J. is burned “in effigy” by attaching his face to a Swiss man of straw burned annually in the Rue aux Ours.<sup>102</sup> The portrait converges with the figure of the scapegoat. As Girard explains, the scapegoat is not the criminal but the sacrifice which acknowledges both that a crime was committed and that the cause is unknown.<sup>103</sup> The burning of the effigy, like the stoning of the scapegoat, represents destruction of the bearer of presence/absence. The scapegoat which is and is not the cause<sup>104</sup> relieves tension temporarily. The sacrifice is intended to blind the public to the real, which is inaccessible as real, but not so that the real is forgotten as the real. The indeterminable non-centre is still there as something other than absence. The effigy therefore brings us to the real only by staging its concealment and withdrawal. Ultimately, the public – or the conspiracy behind them – represent a castrating agent. The burnt effigy is apotropaic in the sense that it confers protection by giving up some part of the real in order to protect the rest.<sup>105</sup>

In an important sense, the burnt effigy is the most characteristic and appropriate form of representation in the *Dialogues*. It is not simply a symptom of the author’s fear of exposure – Rousseau’s famous paranoia. Rather, as the figure vanishes in the flames it achieves the demand for a demonstration of character which includes the temporal

unfolding of narrative. Rousseau remarks that portraits are essentially lacking in their representational capacity: since no portrait can capture change, they fail to represent time.<sup>106</sup> A portrait will therefore say something as a way of not saying something else. As Rousseau tells the Frenchman, every object must conform to a fundamental law – the law of “all or nothing”<sup>107</sup>: “the same thing cannot be and not be.”<sup>108</sup> These are the requirements of ontology, not of the primal scene. However, if the subject is as much the story of the production of the portrait as the object, then the subject is the product of a relation between propositions – and therefore is neither proven nor disproven.

Consequently, the Second Dialogue moves from a paradigm of sight to one of construction. Hortative rhetoric guides the subject away from the model of vision: “How can you not see how removed your Gentlemen themselves are from this scorn for him they want to inspire in you? How can you not see that the scorn they feign is not real ... .”<sup>109</sup> The power of the analysis (to cure or represent) inheres in its capacity to put temporal difference into play – to initiate a connection between the work of recollection and construction.<sup>110</sup> The subject is in flames as the subject of time hovering between a ‘lost’ origin (past) and a ‘false’ present. Thus, on the one hand, the “summary of the observation ... of his true character ... appear contradictory” but, on the other, Rousseau’s purpose is not to resolve the contradiction but to offer “some explanations ... in order for you to see it in its full light”.<sup>111</sup> The Second Dialogue implicitly accepts displacement, the hovering between past and present – between the time for understanding and ‘another time’ whose ontological status would always be indeterminate. The effigy burnt by the public figures the apprehension of the real as an act of interpretation undertaken in relation to its absence.<sup>112</sup> Time is temporal difference with a mediating and concealing power of its own. In other words, the time



of the representation is inseparable from ‘another time’, another temporal frame of reference, the time of interpretation.

## FACE TO FACE

The procedure which affirms who Socrates is constitutes a refutation of counter images and an assertion over and against them of a truthful image. This procedure is also the concrete exhibition of the practice which defines Socrates.<sup>113</sup> Rousseau’s text refers to the *Apology* as a primal image – but in the very act of reflecting the primacy of the source, it enters the practice of interpretation. The process of dialogue cannot simply present the original object or source, but is immersed in the practice of interpretation.

The Frenchman suggests following a procedure which would “combine prudence with rectitude”.<sup>114</sup> However, this would limit the quest for knowledge to the elimination of falsehood or the avoidance of error – hermeneutic’s constant reinterpretation.

However, the aim of both the Third Dialogue and the third stage of the *Morceau* are “to establish the truth”.<sup>115</sup> The condition of possibility of ontology is the face to face encounter. This argument is circular, for the encounter is itself conditioned by the ontology which enables it. It takes the divine to speak “the language of truth” yet God addresses the essential humanity of his listeners, which is only an image of their own divinity.

“O, my children!” he says, with a tenderness that penetrates the soul, “I come to expiate and heal your errors. Love Him who loves you and know Him who exists.” Then, seizing the statue, he effortlessly topples it, and, calmly climbing onto the pedestal, he seems to be assuming his rightful place rather than usurping that of another ... To hear him once was enough to admire him

always. One sensed that the language of truth cost him nothing because he held its source within himself.”<sup>116</sup>

Jesus combats the crisis of the subject which experiences history as blind force – a process without a subject. The idol had been (or worshipped) a divinity operating according to its own laws and principles, oblivious to the course of human history. Jesus, on the other hand, intersects with the course of human history (through the incarnation, here his appearance) whilst at the same time not being (or becoming) part of it. Jesus figures the embodiment of the divine, the becoming human (becoming comprehensible) of transcendent forces. He appears to be presence itself, acting so as to convince onlookers of propriety, of originality, whilst obscuring strategies of displacement. Jesus replaces, but seems only to be assuming his proper place, just as truth appears to supersede interpretation, and language to coincide with its object. It must so seem since this illusion is constitutive for subjectivity. The interpretation in fact occupies the place of the thing.

We are speaking of Christ, but the cue comes from the Socrates of the *Apology* who promises to speak the ‘whole truth’. Rousseau finds Socrates wanting, but desires to bridge the gap between revelation and construction without revealing the presence of the chasm being spanned. The emptiness remaining after the destruction of the idol is overcome by the fact that Christ’s actions are acts of restoration which annul temporal difference. The idol who tramples on humanity does not share the suffering of his subjects, but Jesus, the man of sorrows, fully coincides with the suffering of humanity. His incarnation represents both his temporal coincidence with humanity, and the guarantee of subjectivity since, through him, temporal divergence is transcended, and the displaced origin returns to its proper place (is at one with itself).

The flaw in (in fact, the impossibility of) the procedure is embodied performatively in the Third Dialogue where direct encounter remains a deferred possibility. Admitting that J.-J. can never be known in his lifetime, Rousseau projects full recognition (presence) into an indefinite future<sup>117</sup> and so undermines it by means of this projective transference of the origin into the future. The future, then, is the origin towards which one is constantly moving. The restorative actions of Jesus extend the past into the future and reconstruct and reenact the forgetfulness of temporal difference. The constructions of the Third Dialogue must remain tentative because knowledge of when its benefits will be received is incalculable<sup>118</sup>. The *Dialogues* operate in the prophetic mode, and in and through them Rousseau presents himself as the philosopher of the incalculable. The time for understanding is the future, the essence of subjectivity is a destination that cannot be known beforehand, and the self is haunted by the possibility that it will never arrive.

Knowledge as revelation requires a condition prior to reason and language – a condition of timelessness. However, the *Dialogues* accepts the pathos of tragic witnessing – the insuperability of the primal scene. Thus, wisdom appreciates the impossibility of ideal self-evidence – what is remembered is the unavoidability of forgetting. A faithful interpretation is one that does not distort the text and that is merely an innocent supplementation to it. It is, however, impossible to say anything about the state the pathogenic material was in before the analysis (there is no ‘before’ in that sense). Socrates has been so affected by his accuser’s speeches that he almost forgot who he was.<sup>119</sup> The forgetting of identity is a condition of identity in accordance with the logic of the primal scene, where identity is thrown into question because it does not exist prior to interpretation. However, Socrates does not entirely

forget, and his answer is his assertion of identity. The First Dialogue opens by echoing the mock bemusement of the *Apology* referring to the prosecution case which makes the defendant unrecognisable even to himself.<sup>120</sup> The conspiracy undermines its own principles. Justification and verification are impossible when the subject is the subject of truth rather than interpretation: so, the failure to provide a final answer (truth) “cannot shatter the direct persuasion my research has produced in me”.<sup>121</sup>

Rousseau considers J.-J.’s texts transparent and intends the Frenchman to read them with the same comprehension. The Frenchman had promised to read them at the end of the First Dialogue, and present his findings after listening to Rousseau throughout the Second Dialogue, but his interpretations are aligned with the conspiracy’s viewpoint.<sup>122</sup> For Rousseau, the Frenchman continues to confuse the veiled and the unveiled. However, the logic of the primal scene demands that both perspectives be incorporated into the formation of understanding and subjectivity. He continues to address the Frenchman in the mode of what he believes is description without commentary but is unable to overcome the aporia of content and category emerging simultaneously. The hope of the dialogues – “I do not seek him as I picture him, I seek him as he is”<sup>123</sup> – only highlights the impossibility of seeking a priori conditions to knowledge. The “frame of mind favourable to truth”<sup>124</sup> by means of which Rousseau proceeds is nevertheless a framework for truth to appear in – the appearance of which will sanction its work as a frame. The ethical demand in the exhortation is to abandon old habits for new ones – but interpretation guides and is guided by what one desires to be. In other words, theory cannot exist outside a domain of normative assessments.

The Frenchman's education begins when his confidence in the conspiracy is shaken forcibly<sup>125</sup> and culminates in the painful recognition of his role in the dissemination of the false image. Full recovery of the conditions of distorted subject formation are expressed as a form of tragic witnessing – “don't remind me of my wrongs”.<sup>126</sup> To say that the past is a memory that can be reconstructed in a new evaluative framework is to say that it is always only an interpretation. The Frenchman finally assents to Rousseau's way of seeing the author's works.<sup>127</sup> This exchange between the like-minded, however, can never find full affirmation in the face to face encounter. The distortion of formative processes is corrected, but it cannot establish the cause or truth of the subject beyond its current interpretation. Consensus merely stamps order on disorder – that is, it stabilises impressions within a sanctioned framework.

Truth never supersedes this convergence of horizons because the sought after object is never present. Interpretation continues without termination. The *Dialogues* remains open, and instantiates a model structured by unfinished inferential conditions in the place of the conspiracy's closure to investigation. Socrates' service to the city is to understand the oracle as imposing on him the task of exposing the ignorance of those (“whether citizen or foreigner”) who presume they are wise – “and show that he is not wise.”<sup>128</sup> Rousseau exposes the Frenchman's lack of wisdom in the same vein as Socrates exposes Meletus's lack of wisdom – by revealing the disparity between his claim to wisdom and his actual condition, involving him in self-contradiction. Essentially, Meletus is involved in the self-contradiction of being ignorant of himself, in that he is ignorant of his own ignorance. That is, false wisdom is the belief in the triumph of demystification. To be ignorant of the continuing obscurity of the source, origin or subject is to invite self-contradiction, and to refuse enlightenment.

Socrates destroys men's claim to wisdom by exposing their ignorance.<sup>129</sup> These same men are encouraged to grasp the insight that only by being made aware of their ignorance can they acquire wisdom. To some extent Rousseau is skeptical of Socrates' practice. Whilst he does not share Socrates' accusers' opinion that it is merely destructive, he questions its adequacy. Socrates' incessant questioning is devoted to awakening Athenians to their own ignorance, and to understanding the place of ignorance in human wisdom.<sup>130</sup> The force of his questioning is accusatory, but only appears arrogant – even criminal – to the extent that it undermines the Athenian's blithe belief in a perfectly explicit wisdom. Rousseau's pronounced skepticism in the *Morceau* does not survive its re-reading in the light of the *Dialogues*. The open text of the latter, the deferred encounter, brings to light the fact that the supposedly naturalistic relation of object to consciousness in the allegory is an illusion cast by the powerful retroactive effects of a displaced origin asserting itself and sanctioning its return in the mode of simple presence. The subject of truth, or as truth – that is to say, the subject in its presence – consequently gives way to a more complex, more elusive, and more provisional identity incapable of making authoritative self-assertions or authenticating statements. Dialogue reveals an opacity within the subjective self-relation and that this essential opacity cannot be articulated outside the structure of a dialogue in which those elocutions can be challenged, qualified, or undermined.

1. The key texts on the primal scene are Sigmund Freud, *Studies on Hysteria* in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-74) XVII; *From the History of an Infantile Neurosis*, XVII, 3-124; *The Interpretation of Dreams* (New York: Avon Books, 1965) James Strachey (trans).
2. See Amelie Rorty, 'Explaining Emotions' in *Explaining Emotions* (London: University of California Press, 1980) A O Rorty (ed) p.110; on 'scenic understanding' see Jürgen Habermas 'On Systematically Distorted Communication', *Inquiry* 13 (1970) pp.205-18, pp.208-9.. See also, J M Bernstein, *Recovering Ethical Life: Jürgen Habermas and the Future of Critical Theory* (London: Routledge, 1995) pp.65-6.
3. The first critical edition of the Dialogues was in *Oeuvres Complete I: Les Confessions, Autres Textes autobiographiques*, edition publiée sous la direction de Bernard Gagnebin et Marcel Raymond (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pleiade, 1959). This was followed by *Rousseau juge de Jean-Jacques, Dialogues*, texte présente par Michel Foucault (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin a Paris, 1962). A recent translation and critical edition is *Rousseau: Judge of Jean-Jacques, Dialogues* in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau* Vol. I. (Hanover: Dartmouth College, 1990) J R Bush, C Kelly and R D Masters (eds). The text itself has attracted little commentary. See C Vance, 'Rousseau's Autobiographical Venture: A Process of Negation' *Genre* 6 1973, pp.98-113; A Pizzorusso, "'I Dialogues'" *Costruzione e Distruzione di una Sistema' Paragone (Letteratura)* 30 1979, pp.5-21; J F Jones, *Rousseau's Dialogues: An Interpretive Essay* (Geneve: Librairie Droz, 1991) is the only full length study and charts the course of the text's critical reception (pp.29-51); J F Jones, 'The *Dialogues* as Autobiographical Truth' *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* vol 14, pp.317-28; M O'Dea, 'Fiction and the Ideal in *Rousseau Juge de Jean-Jacques*' *French Studies* 40 1986, pp.141-50; C Kelly and R D Masters, 'Rousseau on Reading 'Jean-Jacques': *The Dialogues*' *Interpretation* 17 1989-90, pp.239-53.
4. Huntington Williams, *Rousseau and Romantic Autobiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983) refers to the text and its paranoia as "a monument to useless, sustained passion" (p.150). Williams promisingly asserts that "more than any other of his works, they demonstrate the fundamental impossibility of giving an image of full reality, or making personal identity sufficient to itself, of appropriating the process of dialogue" (p.213) but does not sustain the epistemological investigation, reverting to a reading which experiences the text pathologically, likening it to "entering a darkened sickroom of the imagination," and reconstructing the process of writing as "a box of vitamin tablets, collected and administered daily to keep the author healthy in his paranoia" (p.149).
5. Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer, *Studies on Hysteria* (New York: Avon Books, 1966) James Strachey (trans) p.346 (emphasis in original).
6. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Neuchatel Manuscript of the Confessions* quoted in Christopher Kelly, *Rousseau's Exemplary Life: The Confessions as Political Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989) p.32.
7. See John Sallis, *Being and Logos: The Way of Platonic Dialogue* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press International Inc., 1986) pp.25-63; see also generally C D C Reeve, *Socrates in the Apology: An Essay on Plato's Apology of Socrates* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1989).
8. See Sallis, *Being and Logos*, above n 7, p.41; Reeve, *Socrates in the Apology*, above n 7, pp.28-32.
9. Heraclitus, Fragment 93, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962) R Kirk and K Raven (trans) p.211. Socrates relation to the oracle is discussed at Plato, *The Apology* in *The Last Days of Socrates* (London: Penguin Books, 1993) H Treddenick and H Tarrant (trans) 21a-24b.
10. Plato, *ibid*, 29d-e.
11. *Ibid*, 42a.
12. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Morceau allegorique* in *Oeuvres Complete* (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pleiade, 1959-95) pp.1085-93. The translation relied on is that given by Arthur Goldhammer in Jean Starobinski, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988) pp.65-80.
13. Quoted in Starobinski, *Transparency and Obstruction*, above n 12, p.66.
14. *Ibid*, p.67.
15. Quoted *ibid*, p.68.
16. In the *Apology*, the revelation of ignorance rouses anger which the judges turn against Socrates by sentencing him to death. See Plato, *Apology*, above n 9, 34b-36d.
17. See Starobinski, *Transparency and Obstruction*, above n 12, pp.65-80.
18. For instance, Rousseau follows Socrates in referring to his accusers not by their official title, 'judges', but by means of the polite term, "Gentlemen", implying that they are not fit to judge him,

- and that they will in fact be judged. Plato, *Apology*, above n 9, 24e. On the fact that Socrates himself is assuming the role of judge see George Anastaplo, 'Human Being and Citizen: A Beginning to the Study of Plato's *Apology of Socrates*' in *Human Being and Citizen: Essays on Virtue, Freedom and the Common Good* (Chicago: The Swallow Press Inc., 1975) pp.8-33, pp.16-17; see also Sallis, *Being and Logos*, above n 7, p.29; Martin McAvooy, *The Profession of Ignorance With Constant Reference to Socrates* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1999) p.93. The point is not lost on Rousseau who both refers to the conspirators as 'gentlemen' (pp.1-6) and assumes the position of judge explicitly as he makes clear from the title to the text and bringing them to trial in the midst of his own trial.
19. Plato, *Apology*, above n 9, 18a-b.
  20. Ibid, 32.
  21. Ibid, 18b.
  22. Ibid, 18c.
  23. Rousseau, *Dialogues* (1990) above n 3, p.62.
  24. Ibid.
  25. Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981) Barbara Johnson (trans) p.206.
  26. Ibid, 213.
  27. Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: A Selection* (London: Tavistock, 1977) Alan Sheridan (trans) pp.96-7.see pp.28-9
  28. See Ned Lukacher, *Primal Scenes: Literature, Philosophy, Psychoanalysis* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986) p.31.
  29. Ibid.
  30. Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (London: Penguin Books, 1991) p.47.
  31. Rousseau, *Dialogues* (1990) above n 3, p.12.
  32. Ibid, p.9.
  33. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages which Treats of Melody and Musical Imitation in The Origin of Language: Two Essays by Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Johann Gottfried Herder* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1966) John H Moran and Alexander Gode (trans) pp.12-3.
  34. Freud, *Hysteria*, above n 1, p.346. See also Sigmund Freud, 'The Aetiology of Hysteria' in *Early Psychoanalytical Writings* (New York: Collier Books, 1963) Cecil Baines (trans) p.189.
  35. Freud, *Early Psychoanalytical Writings*, above n 34.
  36. Freud, *Hysteria*, above n 34.
  37. Sigmund Freud, 'Screen Memories' in *Early Psychoanalytical Writings*, above n 34, p.248.
  38. Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, above n 1, p.563.
  39. Freud, above n 37.
  40. For example Diderot in *l'Encyclopedie* (Geneva: Pellet, 1778) XIV, p.458 defines 'figure' in terms of a deviation from the pre-existing 'literal'.
  41. Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, above n 33, p.13.
  42. Sigmund Freud, *Studies on Hysteria*, above n 1, pp.288, 291. See also, 'Remembering, Repeating, Working-Through (Further Recommendation on the Technique of Psycho-Analysis, II)' in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-74) XII, pp.147-56.
  43. Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, above n 33, p.13.
  44. Sigmund Freud, *From the History of an Infantile Neurosis*, above n 1, p.33.
  45. J Laplanche and J B Pontalis, 'Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality' *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 49 1968, pp.1-18, p.10.
  46. Ibid.
  47. Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (New York: W W Norton, 1981) Alan Sheridan (trans) p.41.
  48. Lukacher, *Primal Scenes*, above n 28, p.36.
  49. See J M Bernstein, *Recovering Ethical Life: Jürgen Habermas and the Future of Critical Theory* (London: Routledge, 1995) pp.58-87.
  50. On the 'transference' see Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts*, above n 47, p.54. See also Ned Lukacher, *Primal Scenes*, above n 28, pp.26-7.
  51. Rousseau, *Dialogues* (1990) above n 3, p.67.
  52. Ibid, p.37.
  53. Ibid, p.35.



54. Ibid, p.16.
55. Ibid, p.49.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid, p.42.
58. Ibid, p.46.
59. Ibid, p.39.
60. Plato, *Apology* (1990) above n 9, 18b.
61. Rousseau, *Dialogues*, above n 3, p.48.
62. Ibid, p.63.
63. On Plato see Luc Ferry, *Homo Aestheticus: The Invention of Taste in the Democratic Age* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1993) R de Loazia (trans) p.160.
64. The name for this classical technique is 'katharsis' as explained by Aristotle. On katharsis see R Jancko, 'From Catharsis to the Aristotelian Mean' and J Lear, 'Katharsis' in A O Rorty (ed) *Essays on Aristotle's Poetics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992) pp.341-58 and 315-40 respectively.
65. Rousseau, *Dialogues* (1990) above n 3, pp.32-33.
66. On the logic of the mask that hides the absence of identity see Slavoj Zizek, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel and the Critique of Ideology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993) pp.9-44.
67. Rousseau, *Dialogues*, above n 3, p.48.
68. Ibid, p.33.
- 69 Ibid, p.6.
- 70 Ibid, p.68.
- 71 Ibid, p.124.
- 72 Ibid.
- 73 See Heidegger on "the governance of the near" on this point in Martin Heidegger, *Early Greek Thinking* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975) D F Krell and F Capuzzi (trans) p.121.
74. Freud, 'Screen Memories', above n 37.
75. Ibid.
76. See Jones, *Rousseau's Dialogues*, above n 3, p.213. Rousseau consistently associates just politics with forms of eloquence, *Dialogues* (1990) above n 3, p.84. For the ethical as opposed to the aesthetic tradition of eloquence see Thomas Farrell, *Norms of Rhetorical Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993) pp.129, 131. The *locus classicus* is Aristotle, *The Politics* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1984) C Lord (trans) III.16.1287a31-32.
77. Rousseau, *Dialogues* (1990) above n 3, p.54.
78. See Michel Foucault, 'Introduction' to *Rousseau juge de Jean-Jacques*, *Dialogues*, above n 3, pp.vii-xxiv.
79. Rousseau, *Dialogues* (1990) above n 3, pp.246-57.
80. Ibid, p.251.
81. Michel Foucault quoted in Jones, *Rousseau's Dialogues*, above n 3, pp.60-1. See also pp.58-61.
82. Jean Laplanche, 'Seduction, Persecution, Revelation' in *Essays On Otherness* (London: Routledge, 1999) pp.166-96, pp.167-173.
83. Laplanche, 'The Unfinished Copernican Revolution,' in *ibid*, pp.52-84, p.78.
84. Rousseau, *Dialogues* (1990) above n 3, p.254.
85. Plato, *Apology*, above n 9, 17b.
86. Rousseau, *Dialogues* (1990) above n 3, pp.6-7.
87. Ibid, p.166.
88. Ibid, p.167.
89. Ibid, p.167
90. Plato, *Apology*, above n 9, p.35.
91. Ibid, 26d-e.
92. Ibid, 36.
93. Rousseau, *Dialogues* (1990) above n 3, p.9.
94. Ibid.
95. See Lukacher, *Primal Scenes*, above n 28, p.50.
96. Quoted Starobinski, *Transparency and Obstruction*, above n 12, p.67.
97. Rousseau, *Dialogues* (1990) above n 3, p.107.
98. Ibid, p.64.
99. Ibid.
100. Ibid, p.63.
101. Ibid, p.39. The Ramsay portrait is discussed at, pp.92-7.
102. Ibid, p.43.

103. See Rene Girard, 'Generative Scapegoating' in Robert G Hamerton-Kelly (ed) *Violent Origins: Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987) pp.73-106.
104. Ibid.
105. On the 'apotropaic' and its relation to castration see Jacques Derrida, *Glas* (Paris: Galilee, 1974) pp.55a-56a.
106. Rousseau, *Dialogues* (1990) above n 3, p.109.
107. Ibid, p.160.
108. Ibid, p.170.
109. Ibid, p.165.
110. On the work of psychoanalysis especially the means by which the analysis implants an interpretation and overcomes resistances to that interpretation see Sigmund Freud, *Hysteria*, above n 1, pp.288-91; 'Remembering, Repeating and Working Through', above n 42; *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-74) XX, p.159.
111. Rousseau, *Dialogues* (1990) above n 3, p.111.
112. Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (London: Penguin Books, 1991) Alan Sheridan (trans) p.54.
113. See Sallis, *Being and Logos*, above n 7, p.26.
114. Rousseau, *Dialogues* (1990) above n 3, p.239.
115. Ibid, p.215.
116. Quoted Starobinski, *Transparency and Obstruction*, above n 12, p.68.
117. Rousseau, *Dialogues*, above n 3, pp.227-8.
118. The incalculability of the event due to the indeterminateness of causation is discussed in Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* (New York: Random House, 1967) Walter Kaufman and R J Hollingdale (trans) pp.296-304.
119. Plato, *Apology*, above n 9, 28.
120. Compare Rousseau, *Dialogues* (1990) above n 3, pp.1-6 and Plato, *Apology*, above n 9, 17a-18a.
121. Rousseau, *Dialogues* (1990) above n 3, p.183.
122. Ibid, pp.199-204.
123. Ibid, p.80.
124. Ibid, p.81.
125. Ibid, pp.207-14.
126. Ibid, p.237.
127. Ibid, pp.209-212, 225. Achieving society with J.-J. is the culmination of a desire expressed in the 'First Dialogue', p.53.
128. Plato, *Apology*, above n 9, 23b-c.
129. See Sallis, *Being and Logos*, above n 7, p.60 ; see also McAvoy, *The Profession of Ignorance*, above n 18, pp.96-8.
130. See Sallis, *Being and Logos*, above n 7, p.61.

# THE LAW OF EXILE

## INTRODUCTION

Modernity is inaugurated in the era of the state's being purified of sacred origins and transcendent claims to validity.<sup>1</sup> Beliefs relating the individual to the state therefore arise, not at the altar, but in the public sphere: the zone of reasoning, argumentation and will formation.<sup>2</sup> Given these de-transcendentalised conditions, and the rapidly expanding field of claims occupied by individualised subjects, the law's validity was defined by two interrelated conditions. Firstly, it depended on its being embraced autonomously by the subjects who came under it. Second, this required the self to authentically embrace only those norms which it had given itself. The demand made of autonomy by authenticity is based on the dependence of the rationality of beliefs on subject's being able to give an account of how and under what conditions their identities are formed and their relation to those beliefs. Because these accounts are both given and provided in a space of reason and evaluation, these norms will be subject to validity claims. Norms must therefore be acquired through mechanisms which agents explicitly and implicitly recognise. Habermas argues that these mechanisms must permit the identification of deformatory mechanisms which undermine rationality.<sup>3</sup> To hold justifiable beliefs (to be self-understanding) subjects must have access to the grounds and conditions of subject formation.

The account of subjectively valid beliefs reduces to circularity when it is impossible to distinguish between the norms held by the subject and the normatively legitimated means of validity testing and subject formation. Under these conditions, extant norms

are determinative of subjectivity – at least of the subject in its public role. The system, as cause, precedes the subject and subjectification occurs when the subject recognises its place within the system.<sup>4</sup> Deviant positions held by the subject are constructed from the normative viewpoint as a discrepancy between the ideal and real self. The authenticity and autonomy of the subject of law requires it to construct a self-understanding of the motivations and the coherences for which it is aiming. This self-understanding is intended to represent and produce an insight into the subject's essential, as opposed to its contingent, constitution. However, this problematic intention is related to complex motivations, largely unconscious, which an authentically oriented subjectivity seeks to understand and accept rather than suppress or control instrumentally.

For Alasdair MacIntyre acts of self-identification are carried out by the tradition and the culture and confirmed when the self occupies the role designated for it within the personal and cultural narrative.<sup>5</sup> MacIntyre posits a perfect cure in terms of a fit between self and society expressed as identification with the social role. However, his sense of the overcoming of social crisis reveals a condition of incoherence that is structural, not incidental. The germ of alterity has been buried in the values of the tradition which promote reintegration. For Lacan, however, the subject's reaching back into the conditions of belief and self-formation can only occur to the extent that the wound of castration is the condition of its own healing. The split between conscious (other) and unconscious (other's discourse or language) is permanent and defines the subject.<sup>6</sup> The split reveals the subject to be in excess of the structure and not simply a reflection of or in conformity with it. Here, then, lies the source of autonomous legal subjectivity, because the structure is revealed as not merely

determinative of the subject. The split is therefore a condition of possibility of the existence of the subject.

For Rousseau law can only be established in a community of autonomous subjects. The autonomous subject is self-legislating, and therefore chooses the law that is in fact given. In the *Social Contract* Rousseau explains that the central problem of politics is “to find a form of association ... (such that) while uniting himself to all (the citizen) may still obey himself alone and remain as free as before.”<sup>7</sup> In other words, the problem of the valid organisation of society centers on the possibility of the convergence of freedom and the law. Freedom is the “essence”<sup>8</sup> of the social contract in that “a law which we prescribe to ourselves is liberty”.<sup>9</sup> Rousseau therefore posits the question of law and its legitimacy in terms of the subject’s voluntary allegiance to an objective order. The law only has criticisable normative validity when subjects contribute to its construction and ongoing operations and elaborations.

The *Social Contract* therefore contemplates autonomy in terms of the possible re-assignment of the cause of the law to the subject itself. In an extreme formulation – but one with which autonomy is inextricably intertwined – the subject must ‘become the cause’<sup>10</sup> of the norms to which it accedes; and, to the extent that it is a normative being, the cause of its own subjectivity. The Lacanian subject is only possible if the more conventional readings of his theories as forwarding an autopoietically constituted and regulated system – the Symbolic – is reinterpreted to introduce the possibility of self-reflection into the system of meaning in such a way that the subject is allowed some freedom to rescript symbolic codes. However, the Symbolic makes any freedom of intention or signification redundant because the possibility of subjectivity must admit that the prior structure of language constitutes its condition of

possibility: the symbolic “cannot be conceived as constituted by man, but as constituting him.”<sup>11</sup> Lacan therefore abandons an earlier position in which he considered the possibility of the availability of “full speech” to the subject – defined as the subject speaking about himself to the analyst.<sup>12</sup>

The Symbolic determines that meaning cannot be founded on the pre-linguistic intentions of a pre-linguistic consciousness. Because the foundations of signification – the “locus of the treasure of the signifier”<sup>13</sup> is deposited not in the subject but in the Other<sup>14</sup> – a system of operations which is certain but inaccessible – the subject cannot explore the deeper presuppositions of their own constitution. The subject, therefore, can never enter discourse with the capacity for their speech acts to referentially stake out unambiguous territories of subjective desire or belief since these always emerge and ultimately belong to the Other. Lacan concludes that because the self-identity of that which speaks the discourse of the subject is a fabrication, the symbolic is in the last instance determinative.

Rousseau is heir to a repressive theory which identifies the oedipal narrative as the best explanation of the subject’s emergence under the law.<sup>15</sup> The authority of the oedipal model stipulates that the condition for entering the Symbolic is castration, the intervention of the paternal metaphor in the dyadic pre-social relation of mother and child.<sup>16</sup> In this context autonomy can only mean that the oedipal ‘cause’ is modified by the subject’s choice of a self-interpretation.<sup>17</sup> Rousseau identifies the validity of the paternal break in its capacity to recapture subjectivity in a relation of the whole to the whole<sup>18</sup> – the subject and the community. For Rousseau, then, were the subject simply to accept castration it would fail to recognise itself in the symbolic order<sup>19</sup>. This failure of recognition is not to be interpreted as a site of negation, but positively

as the location for the subject's consciousness of missing from the system – recounted below as Rousseau's life in exile.

Lacan argues that the lack of coincidence between self-interpretation and social role requires subjective wholeness to be ultimately founded in fantasy.<sup>20</sup> Because the impossible point of overlap defines the relation of the subject and the constitutive system, the subject is defined as essentially lacking. What it lacks is that which can never appear in but constitutes consciousness. Lacan proposes that the object (a) functions as the excluded remainder, marked by an absence, which the subject identifies imaginarily as the point of coincidence of consciousness, intention and objectivity.<sup>21</sup> If the subject is to claim autonomy in the mode of self-reflection, it must identify itself as starting from a point not of coincidence with the system but as missing from it. The missing subject is both a first step beyond the system, and an irretrievable distance from it.

The subject and the cause can never coincide, nor can the subject fully appropriate the origin. This non-coincidence is conceived dualistically only under realist modes of interpretation of 'cause', which seek the 'truth' of the origin.<sup>22</sup> Under hermeneutic modes of understanding, the loss of the cause (truth) is conceded, and in its place is put competing interpretations which never ultimately or finally resolve the tension between subject and cause, but seek to effect and modify each other through a process of learning and clarification – not ultimate revelation. The cause is then continually reinterpreted and renarrativised. No interpretation stands for the truth of the cause or the subject; and each interpretation proposes a potential reassignment of the significance of narrative components in a subject's history.

However dominant the process of enculturation, in other words, the subject under the law is still a subject, and ultimately a self-interpreting one.<sup>23</sup> The uncoupling of legitimacy from traditional and transcendent sources of validity opens the relation of facticity to validity to reflexive forms of legitimation centered on the socialised subject's interpretive competence. Self-interpretation, however, must be understood in the light of the relation of intention to signification outlined by Lacan which reveals the power of subjective value or desire to promote the preference for one interpretation rather than another. At the same time, because self-conception cannot simply be equated with the intersubjective position, the choice of an interpretation reflects the values and desires of the subject as they develop in a normative context. If the subject is to be self-acquainted, this structuring desire in turn needs to be avowed and understood, although it cannot be made an explicit object. In the process of avowal the subject's desire is not simply discovered, it is contextualised, interpreted and intersubjectively positioned by a subject who is contextualised, in turn, by other's desire.

Subjectivity assumes narrative form to the extent that the subject's inability to make itself an object of consciousness drives the quest for self-representation.<sup>24</sup> For Rousseau autobiography in the form of secular confession was the narrative vehicle par excellence for the self-interpreting subject seeking to articulate "who he is and who, with the will to authenticity, he wants to be."<sup>25</sup> The temporality of the subject is essential and posits a tension between the subject's understanding of itself in time and its inability to recall the origin. The time of the subject in narrative is the time of a subject who retrospectively designates an origin. The act of interpretation itself depends on the recognition of the desire that motivates the act of designation. In fact,



the coincidence of the two necessary times which cannot be grasped – the beginning and the present – is the impulse for the subject’s avowal of ‘my’ time as ‘another’ time. Lacan argues that Freud’s dream text – *Father, cant you see I’m burning* – is both an introduction to “another reality” and “an act of homage to the missed reality”.<sup>26</sup>

The father who dreams of his child in flames in the next room only to find him alight when he inspects misses the event itself – the candle falling – on his arrival. For Lacan the subject is always late on the scene in precisely this way, such that the “cruel point” of the narrative is that the coincidence of the subject with the real (the event) can only occur in a dream.<sup>27</sup> Lacan’s account undermines the possibility of the liberal will choosing its own constitution. In this sense, MacIntyre’s critique of liberal versions of authenticity fail to apply to Rousseau. This is not because they undermine the freedom he espouses, but because they exceed the limits he places on identifying any reliable source or foundation for will formation. In arguing that the only coherent identity is the “narrative unity of a single human life”<sup>28</sup> embedded in the forms of the community, the tribe or the family, MacIntyre idealises the community as foundational. For Lacan, because of the alienation of the signifier in the Other, subjects are always already alienated from the community through the very thing that binds them to it – language. MacIntyre’s argument bears close affinities with Habermas’ reconstruction of the ideal speech situation as the locus of pure communication, or pure intersubjectivity<sup>29</sup> – an argument that concludes with the recognition of lacuna similar to Lacan’s.

For MacIntyre, moral reflection cannot be conducted by a subject with privileged access to their intentions and desires but can only occur from within a tradition – from

social roles acquired at birth which represent commitments: "These constitute the given of my life, my moral starting point. This is in part what gives my life its own moral particularity."<sup>30</sup> Habermas begins his reconstruction of contexts of self-understanding and understanding in general by critiquing the monadological assumptions of Chomskian theories of linguistic competence.<sup>31</sup> He posits instead a priori intersubjective conditions of the validity of speech acts. Whereas Lacan views language as a priori and deterministic because it is a system, for Habermas an a priori language is emancipatory to the extent that it is prior to the subject in isolation, not to subjectivity in the form of intersubjectivity.<sup>32</sup> It would be paradoxical for an individual will to view the legacy of the past as the consequence of choices that can be freely discarded since, in doing so it would be undermining its own basis for choice.<sup>33</sup> The claim of history, for MacIntyre, is that roles impose constraints on our choices, which cannot be treated with indifference without inviting a loss of personal identity, and a sense of alienation from the community. For Habermas, for subjects to enter enunciative roles, they must possess and use these intersubjectively constituted semantic rules. These rules do not describe the forms of speech situations as they occur but are the counterfactually presupposed conditions of there being any speech situation at all, no matter how distorted. Habermas admits, then, that every occasion for real subjective speech is "this unavoidable fiction" of an ideal set of conditions.<sup>34</sup>

For Lacan, this represents the impossible coincidence which is only available in a dream. What distinguishes Habermas and MacIntyre on the one hand, and Lacan on the other is that for the former primordially in the form of linguistic or narrative presuppositions issues in consensus and dependence on the milieu for meaning, whereas for the latter primordially vacates the milieu of meaning. For Lacan, what is

most fundamental is not universal conditions of communication but the difference between the utterance and the subject of the enunciation. More fundamental than speech, in other words, is the difference between what can and cannot be said. For Habermas, on the other hand, because the presuppositions of speech and understanding can be reconstructed through linguistic science, everything is potentially explicit, and the only things that can't be said are the product of intentional obscurity.<sup>35</sup>

Both narrative unity and the ideal speech situation intend to offer independent criteria for assessing the claims of historical subjects. However, MacIntyre bases subjectivity on the inherent power of available social roles, and fixed roles cannot respond to the contingencies of social transformation. The ideal speech situation examines the legitimacy of subject's entrance into conversation by defining a priori the appropriate uses to which utterances can be put. If it does not fix subjects to preconceived roles, it eliminates the legitimacy of subjective self-interpretations which cannot be extended and embraced universally as relevant for all.<sup>36</sup> The truth conditions of the ideal speech situation are as stringently rational as Rousseau's demand for absolute consensus as the basis of legitimacy in the *Social Contract*. Rousseau's autobiographical narrative is not bound to the truth in this sense but is one which reimagines new possibilities for the self through self-interpretation. For Rousseau, the self is oriented to the future at least in the sense of not being a mere product of its past. In its imaginative suspension between origin and anticipation Rousseau's self both relates them and puts them in tension. This tension is in part inherent and in part the product of subjective choices exercised by the unbound subject. For MacIntyre, the future reimagined by the

unbound subject is not in tension with the past but pure contingency. Historical criteria determine and are erected against arbitrary choice.

However, there is nothing in the notion of narrative unity that inherently contradicts the preference for themes other than acceptable goods, the aim of undoing one's ties with the past, and the existence of multiple narratives. For the Rousseau of the *Social Contract*, embeddedness in the community is compatible with critical transcendence of the historical situation. Rousseau, even in the narratives of his subjective choices, accepts and affirms that castration is foundational. However, in the existential narrative of the *Confessions* he indicates that to dialecticise castration is not to remove the foundational event from its place of primacy, but to remove the event from its place in ontology.<sup>37</sup> The subject then accedes to a position with respect to the cause which allows for the subjectivation of language, the other, the given. Autonomy is a self-formative processes in that it is the process of development of a being who possesses the capacity for altering their agency through altering their comprehension of themselves. However, agency cannot be purely guided nor comprehension determined by intention. Rather, self-transformation works through an always already presupposed alterity which conditions the self-possession of the subject.

#### THE PERFECT HAPPINESS OF THE GENEVANS

When Rousseau, in the Epistle Dedicatory to the *Discourse on Inequality*<sup>38</sup> – in which he asks leave to bring the work under the auspices of his native city and its “magnificent, most honoured and sovereign lords”<sup>39</sup> – looks back after a thirty years exile, he describes Geneva as the perfect republic. In terms familiar from the *Social*

*Contract*, the republic reproduces the state of nature in society by securing liberty under the law, and advancing individual interests only through a general will.<sup>40</sup>

Contrasting his own conditions to that of his “Fellow-Citizens” Rousseau reminds the Genevans that their subjectivity, like natural man’s, is appropriative to the extent that they need only seize what is readily available and in this case offered them: “your happiness is complete, you only have to enjoy it; and all you need in order to become perfectly happy is to know how to be content with being so.”<sup>41</sup>

Contentment is compatible with a modest form of knowledge – the “happy ignorance” of the Spartans described in the *First Discourse*.<sup>42</sup> However, Rousseau’s own knowledge, he implies, is incompatible with contentment. As a philosopher his perspective on the republic embraces a knowledge necessarily a degree beyond happiness, unable to achieve the affective investment that completes the well-being by immediate appreciation. The perspective of the philosopher may not be available to the exiled youth; it is, however, ‘fatefully’ inscribed into the episode that the attainment of happiness and the course of full knowledge are divergent.

Earlier in the Epistle, Rousseau compiled the conditions of worldly satisfaction. These include – referring to Geneva – “to be born within your walls”.<sup>43</sup> Clearly, to remain within the walls of Geneva is irrevocably to tie happiness to ignorance. At the time of writing the Epistle, Rousseau – like the sixteen year-old Jean-Jacques of the *Confessions* – finds himself an outsider to his homeland who claims fraternity despite failing to meet his own criterion for citizenship – residency. Given that, “when the state is instituted, residence is consent; to dwell in the territory is to submit to the sovereign,”<sup>44</sup> then if the young Jean-Jacques’ failure to return is not a withdrawal of consent to and reaffirmation of the compact but a “youthful want of prudence,”<sup>45</sup>

Rousseau's continuing absence is, apparently, precisely such a withdrawal of consent to the state's sovereignty. It is not possible for Rousseau to avoid identifying himself as the "anti-social being, incapable of truly loving the laws and justice, and of sacrificing, at need, his life to his duty"<sup>46</sup> and consequently subject to banishment (or death). However, having drawn attention to the need to distinguish between 'expulsion' and 'abdication' in the case of James II<sup>47</sup> Rousseau makes himself – especially in the light of his claim to membership – subject to the same distinction.

Rousseau can show himself to be a truer citizen than the Genevans in accepting permanent exile over –re-integration. If the Epistle Dedicatory identifies a misjudgment in which, free to do as he ought, Jean-Jacques does otherwise, no remorse accompanies a later reassessment which shows the imperative Geneva represents to no longer bind him. Referring to his desire to be with Mme de Warens, Rousseau invokes the imagery of the wall: "I knew that to return to Geneva was to place an almost insurmountable barrier between her and myself; unless, indeed, were I to repeat the action I had just taken."<sup>48</sup> Sustained transgression takes over where once repetitive actions concluded in re-integration. The breach of the wall initiates narrative through which the subject exceeds the forms of universality.

Whereas the Genevan's adherence to the city is secured through a blindspot (their happy 'Spartan' ignorance), Rousseau claims that he is in a position to survey both sides of the barrier. The wall is only insurmountable when it is the law. However, Rousseau suggests that his transgression and exile, rather than disrupting, only reorients the law towards its true form. If the Genevans dwell within their walls, he is the true Spartan because the law is something he "carrie[s] ... in (his) own heart".<sup>49</sup>

MacIntyre argues that traditions come with resources ready to hand to transcend the limitations of their own situations when circumstances demand novel historical responses. His aim is to demonstrate that, although morality is grounded in the historical and cultural conditions that produce it, this does not invite a conclusion of relativism and incommensurability since those traditional resources can resolve internal contradictions. Moral reflection draws, for instance, on the secure and agreed meaning of moral terms which underpins certainty of judgment.<sup>50</sup> In Rousseau's Geneva, referential stability and the judgment it grounds depends on the unambiguous ordering of social roles by authoritative political institutions. The conclusion is self-serving: individuals will reason effectively if the good upon which they reflect are already secured by and reflected in the political community. Non-arbitrary moral justification requires a prior commitment to those institutions. It is only from within a given polis already provided with a hierarchy of specific values, that rational reflection on value and order can be conducted<sup>51</sup>.

The Genevans exist within their law, but Rousseau is the cognisant subject who fully coincides with the law. The wall for Rousseau does not construct the law by exclusion but represents the site where he claims it reflexively, accepting it on the basis of rational criteria. His survey is an analytical suggestion which explicitly revises conceptual frameworks constitutive of self-identity. Redescription has consequences for the subject - since every framework is evaluative of who one is - and hence for what it is to be a (here, legal) subject. When the subject transcends the blindspot and freely chooses the law, however, he is forced to admit that the law does not define the city which he now rejects in order to remain the true citizen. Because this can only be determined by crossing the boundary, the only lawful condition for the citizen is exile.

Also, because the subject cannot reflect on the object without reinterpreting and altering it, Rousseau must suffer exile or risk undermining the law for others.<sup>52</sup>

For Rousseau, then, the polis has only a limited capacity for internal criticism. MacIntyre argues that epistemological crises reveal the cultural traditions for overcoming value incoherence caused by new standards of evaluation confronting established criteria.<sup>53</sup> Rousseau's exile is itself the product of a crisis. As the exile he exposes a gap in the Genevan's experience. In advising them to be happy, he reveals that the conditions of residence and citizenship do not automatically guarantee happiness. He raises doubts as to whether they in fact possess the good they claim. However, he overcomes the potential incoherence that may arise from the relative positions of exile and community by suggesting that the criteria for coherence are those prevailing within the existing community ('knowing how' to be happy). Any potential incommensurability is resolved by judging the external standards of the alternative tradition from within the community in question.

Rousseau's comment on the Genevan's happiness draws attention to the possibility that it may depend on the irrational condition of valuing some goods more highly than explanatory adequacy warrants. At the same time, the imagery suggests that, for the citizens, the republic is a unitary space created by a wall acting as a mirror reflecting the enclosed space as if it were as extensive as their desire. They are free, satisfied and 'happy' to the extent that the city and its walls are the measure of the real. In other words, explanatory adequacy is itself related to the tradition which has formulated the values by which the community lives. Rousseau's identity, on the other hand, exceeds narrative form and twists free of universality. At the same time, it appropriates form and universality to itself, becoming in the case of exile the truth of



one who could not remain within the interpretation offered. Narrative is also productive and acts back on the narrator. In narrating himself Rousseau temporalises his identity and introduces self-consciously recuperable difference. For MacIntyre, on the other hand, traditions are rational enough to preserve a fundamental continuity between the beliefs that resolve crises of value and the beliefs held prior to the crisis.<sup>54</sup> However, demonstrating rational superiority from within a tradition means denying the normative force of community values shaping explanatory criteria. The conflict between the embeddedness of values and the transcendence of communal limits cannot be overcome by reference to given values. Narrative, as Rousseau discovers, seems inevitably to open the possibility of becoming qualitatively different from others and from a prior self. Rousseau's breach of the wall reformulates his (and, effectively, the historical-communal) horizon of understanding.

Rousseau is correct to assert that self-consciousness requires another framework allowing a different attitude and understanding of oneself to be adopted. However, he is dedicated to a realist process which misconstrues the unconscious (the condition of happiness for the Genevans) as a realm of ignorance and reads the therapeutic process in purely epistemological terms (from self-ignorance to self-knowledge). For Freud acts of self-reflection involve more than discovering some previously unnoticed mental item:

It is a long superseded idea, and one derived from superficial appearances, that the patient suffers from a sort of ignorance, and that if one removes the ignorance by giving him information (about the causal connection of his illness with his life ...) he is bound to recover. The pathological factor is not his ignorance in itself, but the root of this ignorance in his inner resistances; it was they that first called the ignorance into being, and they still maintain it now.<sup>55</sup>

The source of effectivity of an unconscious item is not its exclusion from consciousness, such that by bringing it to consciousness it is eliminated as dysfunctional. Self-ignorance is not the source of repression, information is not automatically resistant to dysfunctionality and ignorance cannot be undone simply by the passive provision of information. What is at issue in psychoanalytic self-reflection is not simply an item of unconscious representation, but one that has *become* unconscious<sup>56</sup> – repressed, disavowed, excluded. To become conscious, to be avowed, recognised, assented, its place, and connection with other areas of subjective life must be worked through. The source of self-ignorance is a set of attitudes held under a particular understanding of who one is.

Self-reflection is more than gathering a belief about one's past – it means grasping the significance of beliefs and desires that determine one's relation to oneself and others. The vindication of the narrative is judged from the perspective of reconstituted self and on its practical implementation. Rousseau's narrative shows the subject to be self-interpreting and self-transforming. It also displays a duality that inhabits subjectivity committed to self-analysis. The subject can see himself differently only by interpreting himself differently, and thus becoming different from what he was. Genevan ignorance is neither a theoretical entity nor a useful fiction. It is a possibility for further articulating indeterminate experiences. These articulations will only have the shape designated by creative interpretations. These interpretations, in turn, involve agents in reinterpreting in accordance with progressively developing narrative. New possibilities of self-understanding rest on self-transfiguration. Rousseau relates himself to the Genevans for the purposes of self-reflection. It is there that he sees the repression, disavowal, and foreclosure that determined life in Geneva, and constituted

the legal subject, and he uses it to assess his current self-understanding as a subject (standing, nevertheless, he presumes, outside the cause) – and his relation (as exile) to them (as citizens).

Rousseau bases the difference between himself and the Genevans on their position relative to the wall of the city. However, Genevan ignorance is as much a sacrifice as the subject's exile: since the conditions of meaning are elusive for all subjects, their objectification into forms of communal life in the city can neither convince Rousseau nor complete the Genevans (be "all" they need). Therefore, all subjects relate to the guarantee of meaning in the same way – the Other is as inaccessible to Rousseau as to the Genevans. The condition of exile is not simply the position Rousseau assumes in relation to the community, but the condition of all subjects within the community. Since subjectivity is founded on the inaccessibility of the truth to the subject, the mutual recognition of subjects and the governance of discourse by language leaves subjects uncertain as to who they are, and where they stand in relation to each other.

Rousseau's exile is, therefore, not a privileged epistemological condition but only a particularisation of the generalised condition of exile defining all subjects and the condition of intersubjectivity itself. Indeed, the difference between Rousseau and the Genevans only disavows the fact that the condition of exile is never fully conscious. Rousseau seems not to know what he is saying about himself in terms of his own criteria for appropriate categorisation. An avowal of the internal exclusion is equally an admission of 'ignorance'. It is not knowledge that distinguishes Rousseau from his fellow Genevans, but an important difference in their respective ignorance. The difference is that Rousseau gives form to the subject's distance from the conditions of

subjectivity. Happiness is precisely what cannot be reflected on. Once it is attained, it satisfies and negates reflexivity – happiness is the satiation that hallucinatorily bridges the gap between self and other. The imaginary completion of the subject (through happiness) is raised in Rousseau’s self-interpretation as the impossibility of calculating the effects of knowledge. The condition that knowledge would satisfy desire (happiness) is what the narrative of his own exile undermines.

### SELF-DENIAL AND SELF-SACRIFICE

Rousseau seeks a political solution to the problem of the non-coincidence of self-certainty and intersubjective relatedness. Unlike Hegel, however, Rousseau does not frame his solution in terms of the state’s recognition of the individual as such.<sup>57</sup> The common structure of law and liberty centered on the will of the legal subject subjects all transgressions to self-punishment. The force alienated to the community can only be returned in kind, and is in fact returned when the citizen expresses that force against himself, as a self-recovery of will. MacIntyre provides a framework for understanding Rousseau’s anti-liberal approach when he embeds the foundation of moral reflection in the individual’s social role. If self-understanding is role-bound, deviation from communal norms results in subjective incoherence. Autopunition, therefore, embodies and expresses the logic of citizen autonomy<sup>58</sup> in that it reacquaints the ideal and the real self in a moment of violent encounter. The proposition of being “forced to be free” is completed by an autopunitive subject who seeks his own punishment when he exceeds his freedom within the symbolic.<sup>59</sup>

As the *Social Contract* equates the punishments of the death penalty and exile, autonomy assumes the form of voluntary self-sacrifice.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, anyone who

professes a civic oath and then commits a crime should “be punished by death: he has committed the worst of all crimes, that of lying before the law.”<sup>61</sup> The law is that which does not lie. The law represents the subject to the extent that, as the child becomes the subject of language, it dissolves into the structures of signification.<sup>62</sup> The taking of the oath is voluntary, but only to the extent that the alternative to complete subjectification is exile. The oath embodies the same force of reason as Habermas’ ideal speech situation in that every empirical utterance presupposes it counterfactually, even though no empirical utterance embodies it. The choice of submission is therefore a ‘forced choice’<sup>63</sup> in that the subject who embraces the condition of subjectivity under the symbolic disappears as a particular subject<sup>64</sup> – since the primordially of the oath decrees consensus and the subject’s dependence on the state for meaning. The subjective state is an emptiness experienced as a lack unless filled in by the symbolic.<sup>65</sup> The subject accepts the normative interpretive framework as a self-interpretation and becomes the subject normatively stipulated. Denial of the oath under these conditions is self-denial.

Denial of an oath is the greatest crime because it exposes the condition of discourse – that its pronouncement cannot guard it against (in fact are the source of) its own contradiction. Contravention of the law is self-contradiction and produces a tear in the symbolic which is re-woven by the desire for self-punishment. Rather than force the subject into a double relation in which it both recognises its desire, and the validity of the law which is witness to its transgression, the desire for unity and the will to completion re-establish the law. All crimes against the republic – the source of life<sup>66</sup> – are irrational but explicable as the desire to reconcile real and ideal: who the subject is, and who the subject wants to be.<sup>67</sup> The permanent discordance between self and

social reality is dialectically resolved as real inadequacy (the alienated self) is compensated for by means of the social role (the self-punishing citizen). The inadequacy is a source of guilt which the crime, by triggering self-punishment, relieves the deviant of. The crime therefore sustains the illusion of an ideal self which, through self-destruction, counterfactually cures itself of the alienation of its actual self. The transgressor must take a narcissistic pleasure in the law if it is to see itself reflected in the force administered against him by the apparatus of the state.

In strictly normative theories, who one is and who one wants to be is resolved in terms of the social role. In reflective theories of subjective constitution, self-interpretation will encounter an initial lack – the experience of having had a place in the symbolic now foregone. But this alienation does not – as it would for MacIntyre – represent the impossibility of being, but the very possibility of being, the pure possibility of the subject. The subject is lacking, missing, or only possible because it is semantically unformed. It is a subject whose story is waiting to be told. This story, as Rousseau indicates when comparing himself to the Genevans, is still closely related to an established schema. However, new meanings are given to past events – and since these events are constitutive of the self, their reinterpretation entails a reconstitution of the subject. In the context of reflective theories of subjectivity, the remoteness of the cause of the subject is alienating until the theories become explanatory, and true, in being accepted by the self-interpreting subject.<sup>68</sup>

#### THE PORTRAIT OF THE KING

However, the subject cannot appropriate meaning or reframe authoritative frameworks intentionally. Rather, intentions themselves become dependent on other

contexts. Rousseau states that he has a well-known and unambiguous attitude towards the King of Prussia which is obvious from the straightforward meaning of the couplet he has inscribed on the face of a portrait: “He thinks like a philosopher, but governs like a king”.<sup>69</sup> The inscription is intended to be unambiguous – and have the same mimetic relation to its referent as the image. However, the inscription introduces another and different order of signification. Furthermore, the co-existence of image and text suggests that neither is unambiguously referential.

Cohen explains that the couplet is in fact inscribed on the *verso* of the portrait, not on its *recto* as Rousseau claims.<sup>70</sup> The inscription on the *verso* suggests that revelation (truth) awaits the subject’s being overturned rather than faced. The subject, therefore, can only arise under conditions of disappearance. Furthermore, the couplet Rousseau inscribes under it requires explanation: “This verse, which from any other pen would have been high praise, contained as I wrote it no ambiguous sense. It was besides, only too clearly explained by the previous line.”<sup>71</sup> Two further absences structure meaning: firstly, other writers whose relation to the verse makes Rousseau’s intentions clear, and, secondly, the uninscribed preceding lines necessary for complete comprehension. Rousseau’s attempt to convey a personal meaning with respect to absolute authority gives rise to the paradox that the real is both what representation presupposes and the excess which escapes symbolisation. Meaning is not present as real, but constructed retroactively as what continuously slips out from under the process of symbolisation.

Identity is therefore structured by unseen perspectives. The canvas on which the king’s portrait is painted is an image of the dividedness, the two-sidedness, of

castration. The foundational event, in other words, has always been constructed with a *recto* and *verso*, writing and anamnesis, logocentrism and its other. In being inaugurated in this manner, culture and subjectivity are determined in the act of determining the other.<sup>72</sup> The portrait is turned over to complete the picture: the other side is what is withdrawn but continues to effect. The splitting of the I into ego (other) and unconscious (other's discourse) brings into being the surface with two sides – the visible (face/*verso*) and the invisible (*recto*/meaning), the invisible support of the visible.<sup>72</sup> The split is the condition of possibility of the existence of a subject. At the same time, only the split subject can overcome the division – alienation and separation are two sides of the same subject, whilst their overcoming is the realisation of the subject.

Putting the I back into the traumatic cause is paradoxical, because retrospective designation is the revelation of an immediacy which can only be known in its 'lost' form. The objective past is the condition of retention and recollection, but is itself the product of that recollection. The master signifier cannot be brought into discourse without the action of subsequent events. Subsequent events are read as 'caused' by the master signifier so as not to qualify it and demote it from its position of authority. So, Rousseau's ambiguous remarks are only revealed by the contexts, not qualified by them. However, what subsequent conditions reveal is that the master signifier as the pure, undialecticised 'event' is non-sensical in both senses of making no sense and having no impact on sense-cognitive apparatus. At the same time the precipitation of subjectivity occurs in the splitting and dialecticisation of the cause. To bring about the effect of signification the subject must dialecticise the master signifier, splitting 'it' into two signifiers – a prior and subsequent. Therefore, the meaning of the master



signifier (the event) is created for the subject at the same time as the opposition between signifiers allows for the subjective position. The subject is what bridges the split coming to be between the two signifiers.

Rousseau explores the retroactivity of signification in an episode where the sight of a periwinkle reminds him of the first such experience.<sup>74</sup> Because his perfect memory of the periwinkle is not a matching of current sense datum with retained impressions<sup>75</sup>, the nonsensicality of a master signifier is detectable. Recognition here is independent of interiorised subjective vision and supports an anti-idealist reading which sees memory as something essentially different from perception. Recognition depends on an unconscious impression being brought to light retrospectively – the second instance reveals the significance of the first through reactivation, even though the second must (only logically) depend on (and ‘be’) a trace of the first. As with the portrait of the king meaning is not created instantaneously, in a matching of inscription of object, but after the event, *ex post facto*.<sup>76</sup> Because the periwinkle is not contained in a cognition that replicates an origin, but in a subject alert to the absence of that origin, the search for the authentic subject can never be completed as the localisation of an event, that is, ontologically. The subject’s appearance is imperfect and unspecifiable because the first event does not bear fruit until a second has occurred. The isolated signifier is irrational until it emerges in a context which involves the other.<sup>77</sup> As Rousseau maintains: “the objects of which one speaks must be understood.”<sup>78</sup>

## A STORY OF FATE AND FREEDOM

Rousseau's discourse of the law is concerned with the problematic of the convergence between the law and freedom. The law unifies the subject and the unbound subject is not free, since freedom is under the law: "With this the great legislator concerns himself in secret, though he seems to confine himself to particular regulations."<sup>79</sup> The legislator's concern with the generality of the law is exercised through particulars which trigger a crisis of the whole subject. A single contravention of the oath, for example, is enough to tear the subject asunder and trigger a reconnection through identification with and internalisation of the symbolic order. The death penalty as self-sacrifice employs the same logic with which Žizek explains sublimation under the figure of the simultaneously healing and smiting spear.<sup>80</sup> The deviant is the expendable means to a higher level of integration, the loss which is itself the condition of recovery. The procedural steps which reinstate the subject are the same ones that initiate the legislator's program. This can be seen when Rousseau employs a similar logic to answer the central legislative question of who "is a fit subject for legislation?"<sup>81</sup> In doing so he contemplates a re-birth:

There are indeed times in the history of States when, just as some kinds of illness turns men's heads and make them forget the past ... horror of the past takes the place of forgetfulness, and the State, set on fire by civil wars, is born again, so to speak, from its ashes, and takes on anew, fresh from the jaws of death, the vigour of youth<sup>82</sup>

The lost origin (the repression of the horrors of the past as forgetting) is the means to subjectivity (born again from the ashes). Castration (the jaws of death) signals that the subject under authority relies on the benevolence of the other. That is to say, the subject's self-assertiveness must be recognised by the structure through which that subjectivity is being asserted. As a servant in the Solars house Rousseau properly

translates the family motto for the assembled guests as ‘some strike but do not kill’.<sup>83</sup> What has been translated alludes precisely to the castration necessary for subjectivation. What is figured there is that ‘putting into words’ heals the wound inflicted upon the subject when the subject is integrated into the symbolic. The approval with which his masters greet his efforts represents “one of those rare moments that put things back in their proper perspective, repair the slights of true merit and assuage the outrages of fortune”.<sup>84</sup> But subjectivation is perverse because it means self-objectivation, conceiving oneself as no more than an instrument of the system.<sup>85</sup> This emptiness of subjective substance is offset, under the paradoxical logic of the healing spear, by a restoration of *jouissance* – the recovery of some of that wholeness and freedom to act unrestrainedly associated with the enjoyment of the unsymbolised body, the body prior to its categorisation and rationalisation. Rousseau’s instinctive response is telling. The repaired subject exceeds its role. Expressing more than is required, Rousseau overfills Mlle Breil’s glass, spilling water over the table and onto his attractive mistress.

The symbolic is the agent of possibility for the subject, but only to the extent that it defines a limit. For Rousseau walls are agents and embodiments of symbolic castration. Rousseau draws on the symbolism of walls in classical literature as ‘principles of retardation’<sup>86</sup> which delay or restrain destructive forces – both from without and within. In *Emile*, the educator is advised “to put a wall around your child’s soul”<sup>87</sup> to preserve his young charge against the effects of social corruption. Lycurgus – the Legislator of Rousseau’s *Social Contract* – forbids the building of walls, asserting that the nation’s warriors were sufficient for the purpose: “*Ne sit Sparta lapidibus circumdata: ibi muros habit ibi viros*” (‘Let not Sparta be

surrounded with stone: there she has walls where she has men’).<sup>88</sup> The Spartans are walls because the symbolic has been inscribed on their bodies and turned them into citizens.

The Spartans are the immovable signs of the complete operation of the law. The totality of the law is encoded less in its visible forms (walls) as in unwritten laws which the legislator works on in secret.<sup>89</sup> The law’s agents are not self-identical, or rather, are so in that they represent and register the form of the law. Rousseau’s narrative, on the other hand, represents the space within which interpretation – a reflexive relation to the law – may emerge. Narrative is instigated because the search for a form of the legal subject of a contained tension between obedience and autonomy. The autobiographical subject emerges in narrative at the point of dislocation, at a distance from the principle of command where the oath is distinct but faint. At this point the subject rediscovers a *jouissance* which obviously cannot be incorporated into the formal law but which dialecticises the ground of lawful subjectivity – frees the flesh from the stone of the wall – and emerges, if not as autonomy, then as that with which autonomy is entwined.

Towards the end of the first book of the *Confessions* Rousseau recounts how, when, at the age of sixteen, he found himself locked out of Geneva for the third time, he decided not to return to face the punishment that he knew awaited him. While avoiding the physical consequences of repeated transgression, the unmistakable phallic imagery of the drawbridge conveys in full the means available to the patriarchy to administer a more potent symbolic punishment – that is, to endorse or condemn by means of inclusion or exclusion from the city:

I saw them raise the first bridge, I trembled as I watched its dreadful horns rising into the air, a sinister and fatal augury of the inevitable fate which from that moment awaited me<sup>90</sup>

Where once the disobedient sojourner's 'fate' had been to return and be duly punished before being reinstated into the community – as are his fellow apprentices on this occasion – Rousseau now clearly uses the word to refer to seeking in the world outside that which the *patrie* cannot provide and, indeed, opposes. However, it cannot be reductively assumed that Rousseau has invested the subsequent narrative with the basic nature/culture dichotomy, nor that 'fate' (the force of the Genevan law) can simply be avoided in the search for 'freedom' (subjectivity).

Fate suggests that the moral trajectory subsequently narrativised re-imagines the whole, but that it does so without freeing itself from the terms provided by culture. The subject is not condemned to repetition and indeed the mechanical repetition of return-punishment-reintegration is apparently broken when Rousseau flees Geneva and, in the ambiguous space of the outside world, represents himself as the agent of self-willed motion: "I had only to take one leap and I could fly through the air".<sup>91</sup> If the privilege of exile is to escape recognition by the law in the sense that the law only comprehends actions that are repeatable, it is not in order to reconceive causality skeptically in terms of chance. Some existential involvement with the mechanism of the law predicates subjectivity, condemning the subject to repetition even if he cannot represent it to himself. Law is a condition of possibility of narrative at the same time as the subject emerges through the renarrativisation of the events that comprise its career through the law.

Whatever innovation exile introduces is immediately qualified as, even outside Geneva and apparently self-directed, Rousseau experiences conditions similar to those he left behind and reiterates, *in nuce*, the narrative of the first book. M de Pontverre sends him to Mme de Warens who directs him to the Catholic hospice at Turin where he renounces the Protestant faith and is baptised into the Church. As Rousseau enters the hospice he notes – recalling the gates of Geneva – “I saw a great iron-barred door which was shut and double-locked behind me”<sup>92</sup> – and experiences the same confinement which caused him to posit the preservative separation of self from citizen in Geneva. In the hospice the dissolution of the integrated self is figured through the separation of the sexes within distinct spaces, and Rousseau identifies with the female converts as in Geneva he had recognised himself in ‘feminine’ acts of private imagination rather than masculine actions of public virtue.

Once converted Rousseau again undergoes expulsion from a universal institution – here the Church rather than the republic. His expulsion immediately after conversion comically mixes membership and physical ejection; but it is through being cast out that he recovers – as he had when leaving Geneva – a quantity of freedom from within fatality:

So far from indulging in tears and despair, I merely altered my hopes, and my pride lost nothing by the change. Never had I felt such confidence and security. I believed my fortune was already made, and I congratulated myself on owing it to my unaided efforts.<sup>93</sup>

The confidence with which Rousseau re-interprets values and formulates new desires (“I merely altered my hopes”) is not empty, but conceals a mechanism which condemns him to a reiteration of the same conditions both within and beyond the city. As a mere renegade, Rousseau is simultaneously mastered and able to indulge in such

a way that, as he heads for Turin, he feels himself to be both under Mme de Warens “direction” and giving full vent to his “passion for wandering”<sup>94</sup> – both determined and free.

The law attempts to identify a subject through representation in signification. It must, therefore, avoid such a compromise formation of subjectivity as is evident here, between the subject to be and the fully constituted subject. Narrative itself simultaneously anticipates and qualifies closure. The concrete instances of narrative reveal themselves under analysis as uncertain points of arrival and departure. The choice of turning contingencies into unitary foundations appears arbitrary rather than normatively motivated. The law in general cannot restrict inherent tensions, but the dialectic of narrative recognises jurisdictions other than the proper jurisdiction of the law of canonical forms. Containment ultimately relies on distinguishing between minor jurisdictions and the law proper, thereby binding the subject – repeating the resolutions of the autopunition – precisely at the points of potential resistance.

#### DEVIATION AND RESTORATION

For Rousseau, the site of subject formation identifies both maternal and paternal jurisdictions. The recovery of fatality within freedom is associated with this bivalence, but does not assess that bivalence for its rationality – that is, whether freedom is no more than a disavowal of determination. A suspension of this assessment occurs because, in narrative, description itself constitutes the subject which is decomposed and multiplied through it. The narrative also produces a panoply of new image and symbolic configurations of the subject, and a multiplicity of events through which the subject emerges in relation to the cause. Subjective cause, as

subjective form, is decomposed, revealed, widened and deepened in the process. The self-interpretation that reflects back on and to some extent becomes the cause is forged in acts of translation between subjective memory and imagination. In what follows, the subject's figuration of the role of castration, and the resolution of subjective denial will emerge as constitutive of the self-interpreting subject.

The law is a system in which the father is installed as a source of coherence. The paternal function is to provide an anchoring point as a primordial signifier for all others to take their meaning relative from.<sup>95</sup> However, Rousseau's relations with his father are marked by increasing distance and a cooling of paternal affection until the elder Rousseau is critiqued as a negative example<sup>96</sup> and replaced by ideals such as George Keith.<sup>97</sup> Ideally, the father secures the child's adherence to the law. However, Rousseau's relation to the law is jeopardised by Isaac who embraces the ideals of "liberty and honour"<sup>98</sup> in such a way as to reveal a dislocation between the city and the subject ending in his own exile<sup>99</sup>.

Rousseau's instinctive reaction to finding the bridge rise before him on his late return to Geneva – "in the first access of grief I threw myself down on the grass and bit the earth"<sup>100</sup> – draws on the symbolism of the earth as a universal origin. Rousseau's desire is to set in train and opposition between universals – the maternal and paternal.<sup>101</sup> However, the origin is resistant and will not accommodate the exile. The mother is an oppositional force operative (albeit negatively) in his departure. Rousseau claims that, even against his own will to leave, his cousin Bernard might have dissuaded him.



But the more I have thought over the way he behaved to me at the critical moment, the more persuaded am I that he was following his mother's instructions and perhaps his father's as well.<sup>102</sup>

Rousseau's groundless conviction is located amongst subsequent developments ("the more I have thought ...") rather than the identification of causes. The retrospective assignation of meaning indicates that the simple binary of nature / culture cannot be reiterated as a paradigm. The existence of the same gesture towards the earth with other significations suggests multiple and equivocal meanings which cannot be ordered and arranged relative to each other by subsuming them under a more general referent. The gesture of kissing the earth arises in a number of contexts encoding moods from the grief stricken to the ecstatic. Thinking that he was "taking final leave of Les Charmettes"<sup>103</sup>, Rousseau says, "I did not depart without kissing the earth and the trees, and turning back again as we went away".<sup>104</sup> On fleeing France for Berne Rousseau recalls how he "flung (himself) on the ground and kissed and embraced it crying in delight: 'Heaven, the protector of virtue, be praised, I am setting foot in the land of liberty'".<sup>105</sup> A little later, "to my pure and deep delight, I felt myself clasped in the arms of the excellent Roguin."<sup>106</sup>

In the symmetry of these moments, the child's grief seems at last to be assuaged, and the mature philosopher restored to a lost territory. Roguin's embrace is fraternal, and Rousseau is amongst citizens. However, as the gesture is doubly encoded as both a desire for the return to the maternal and for repatriation, it is a reaction that sets in motion two apparently opposing forces corresponding to the paternal identity which fails to secure Rousseau's position in the community, and the maternal identity which actively distances him from it.

Derrida reads Rousseau as arguing that moral decline and perversion are ushered in by the cancellation of the original condition. The unavoidable substitutive organisation of meaning in which reality is an effect of the endless chain of supplementation undermines the hope for ontology.<sup>107</sup> This “substitutive perversion”<sup>108</sup> reaches its height when (referring to *Emile*), mothers have ceased to be mothers.<sup>109</sup> However, Rousseau insists on moral salvation through complete denaturation – symbolisation. The celebration of motherhood in *Emile* occurs in the example of the Spartan mother who celebrates the victory of the state rather than grieving the death of her sons.<sup>110</sup> In this example, the citizen-mother and natural mother are revealed as unexpectedly similar.<sup>111</sup> In the Second Discourse Rousseau argues that there is no natural relation between mother and child because there are no essentially maternal actions.<sup>112</sup> Later examples of the mother’s “tenderness ... for their young”<sup>113</sup> illustrating natural pity are not inconsistent because pity is a universal and not a specifically maternal trait. Motherhood is therefore a choice – adoption rather than natural necessity. In *Emile* Rousseau encourages mothers to “follow the master’s wishes”<sup>114</sup>, and subsumes motherhood under the authority of the Tutor: “Do not argue with the nurses; give your orders, see them carried out.”<sup>115</sup>

Rousseau’s solution to the endless regress of maternal signifiers is to reorganise that substitutive chain by means of the paternal master signifier.<sup>116</sup> The mother is symbolised relative to the father – she is conferred citizenship (symbolic status) not in her own right, but is “*citoyenne*”<sup>117</sup> as the result of being a member “of the family of a citizen so called”.<sup>118</sup> The father alone bears the proper name of citizen.

With the instatement of this second instrument, the mother’s desire (‘tenderness’) for the child can be symbolised. Indeed, the mother’s tenderness is turned into an

ordinary signifier *ab initio* as an instance of universal pity, not specific, object-related affection. Symbolising the maternal role makes the mother displaceable by a number of other signifiers. In Rousseau's terms, motherhood is adoption rather than necessity; it is located in the symbolic, not prior to it.

The mother's role is to provide for the early development of the child whose nature is only ever considered in relation to the absent father. Pre-history is selective of a masculine inheritance, while the mother is never described as a contributor to the child's contribution but only its carrier.<sup>119</sup> For Rousseau the child is always the father's image – the mother's role being to perpetuate that image in the world.<sup>120</sup> Indeed, in the *Letter to M. d'Alembert on the Theatre* Rousseau argues that “all the austere duties of the woman (are) derived from the single fact that the child ought to have a father”.<sup>121</sup> The ‘ought’ identifies an imperative making the father a particular kind of signifier – the primordial or master signifier.<sup>122</sup> The primordial signifier is the *sine qua non* of subjectivity, without which there is no possibility of a subject.<sup>123</sup> However, the primordial signifier is only brought into effect once other signifiers come into relation with it.<sup>124</sup> If primordially is not established events assume unstable configurations and only relative relations.

Subjectivity occurs in the relation between signifiers anchored by a primordial signifier. A significant instance of the process of subjectivation occurs conferring of names in the *Confessions*:

‘Little one’ was my name (*petit fut mon nom*), her name was ‘Mamma’ (*Maman fut le sien*), and we always remained ‘little one’ and ‘Mamma’, even when the passage of the years had almost defaced the difference between our ages (*efface la difference entre nous*). The two names, I find, admirably

express the tone of our behaviour, the simplicity of our habits and, what is more, the relation of our hearts.<sup>125</sup>

In Kripkean terms these names are ‘rigid designators’<sup>126</sup> in that they always designate the same thing, unaffected by time. Rousseau draws attention to the fact that these names do not designate positions in a system, because even as the relative position between the signifiers changes, they remain fixed and true. Names become true in their triumph over flux. That change however is an erasure of difference, or a convergence, and so points to a controlling signifier elsewhere than amongst the subjects so called.

Rousseau explains how signifiers attained stability in the first place: “things were called by their true name only once they were seen in their true form”.<sup>127</sup> The scene is one in which: “a savage upon meeting others ... fright will have made him see these men as larger and stronger than himself; he will have called them Giants.” But, after some familiarity, “he will restrict the name Giant to the false object that had struck him during his illusion”.<sup>128</sup> Rousseau allows the subjects of this language game the capacity to make an impossible adjustment giving ‘man’ and ‘Giant’ their proper identity rather than a relative identity. In overcoming the illusion, subjects see things for what they are rather than as a condition of simultaneous presence and absence – ‘man’ as ‘not Giant’ and vice versa. How can this be unless the truth of these things was known beforehand? Somehow, the process of dialectical adjustment lands on the truth which lies beyond its capacity – it discovers what the first, figurative function of language had missed. The circularity of naming is ‘vicious’ only if an exact origin (a proper name) is required.

Again it can be seen that the law operates against the compromise formation of subjectivity between an anticipated but unfulfilled futurity, and a fully fixed position. The subject is caught in this split between what it is necessary to presuppose in order to have knowledge, whilst admitting the inaccessibility of those things to knowledge. The paternal signifier is not an original signifier as ontological event, but is revealed only once it is recognised as an imperative of the process of signification itself. The lack of a name at the origin testifies to an already displaced originality – the birth of the name in the other, and the paradoxical reliance of the autonomous (self-naming) subject on the other to satisfy the economy of signification.

Clearly, there is no ontological category of the name which assigns the right one to the right subject.<sup>129</sup> ‘Petit’ and ‘Maman’ represent regulated points in a functional system. Names are not indexicals which “distinguish things according to their natures”,<sup>130</sup> rather, the appropriate name is the function of a history of calling (a symbolic function),<sup>131</sup> and of a legitimately designated name-giver (a symbolic authority). Emile “shiver(s) at the name Sophie” and, “struck by so dear a name, he is awakened with a start and casts an avid glance at the girl who dares to bear it.”<sup>132</sup> The Tutor asks, “What? Ought the mere agreement of a name have so much power over a wise man?”<sup>134</sup> If the name agrees with the object against which it is to be tested, it is because it is assured by the unpronounceable *nom du pere* from which signification is derived. There is no natural name even if there is perfect ‘agreement’ of name and thing.<sup>134</sup> The name comes from the other – from that which has no name but goes by the name of the *nom du pere*. The name seems ‘necessary’ to what appears in the world without a name because that necessity comes from the father.

The name 'Petit' is a construct the making of which can be traced across several episodes. It appears first in an early romantic adventure in the company of Mlle de Vulson and Mlle Goton<sup>135</sup> in which Jean-Jacques was an instrument in their true romances: "Such artful maidens know how to make use of a little man (*petites poupes*) as covers for their affairs with their elders, or to tempt real lovers by making an attractive show of unreal ones."<sup>136</sup>

Through the cover of the name the shape of the real can still be discerned. Possibly, only through the name can the real be figured. However conceived, the name is the fragment which bears the stress of the relation between intention and the real. The reference to himself as a 'little man' recalls an earlier incident in which a precocious sexuality is stimulated by the spanking delivered by Mlle Lambercier. She notices the consequences and:

Two days afterwards we were made to sleep in another room, and henceforward I had the honour, willing though I would have dispensed with it, of being treated as a big boy (*en grand garcon*).<sup>137</sup>

The oxymorons 'little man' and 'big boy' identify a contradictory subject which the neutral form 'little one' defuses in order to restore the appropriate innocence of childhood, and halt Rousseau's unwilling expulsion from the "earthly paradise" of Bossey.<sup>138</sup> The subject is, therefore, a sedimentation of meanings furnished by the other – as Giant was when man experienced his lack. However, Rousseau idealises the subject as innocent in order to purify it of the tension which both bears and is borne by the relation to the other.

The oxymoron resumes the logic of the smiting and healing sphere. Rousseau describes how he "swelled with pride when she preferred me to grown-up rivals,

whom she appeared to slight.”<sup>139</sup> Of course, both the appearance and the preference are false, but the restoration of the subject is necessarily mounted on the fantasy of a return to wholeness. The name in fact marks the site of the subject of castration who must abandon the paradisaal complementarity with the mother. Rousseau’s pride is only another temporary correction to the state of permanent injury which makes the injury the ironic locus of fulfillment.

If the subject is what sediments as the effect of one signifier on another (intersubjectively), then it is a subject of meaning (and is deprived of being). The symbolic intervenes in the real, and annihilates pure *bios*. Language replaces the fixation of the pre-symbolic with substitution and displacement, translation, metaphorisation and the transference of fascination from one object to another. The subject, then, is not only sedimentation, or objectification but a relation of signifiers. Subjectivity is a position in the system of signification and the path forged between signifiers.<sup>140</sup>

Rousseau makes the mistake of believing that he has acceded to full subjectivity through the relationship he has entered with Mme de Warens. However, he has done no more than fill the space provided by her. Congruent with the adventures and incidents through which the name developed, the name identifies that which occupies the place of desire. Rousseau’s fantasy of a relation with Mamma has opened the possibility for subjectivity, but only as an emptiness to be filled. What he discovers at this point is that there is nothing more to the subject than this void. It is the passage from consciousness to self-consciousness at this point that elevates the subject – not in the sense of a telos, or something to be fulfilled which will fully constitute

subjectivity, but in the sense of a precipitous suspension of the subject above any possible ground. It is, as Žižek says referring to Hegel, the feeling that “there may yet be something”.<sup>141</sup> The subject is therefore put in a position of reliance on the other – autonomy calls upon the grace of authority to recognise it.

The crisis of subjectivity for Rousseau is, in other words, to be seen in terms of the “absolute maladjustment of the predicate to the subject”.<sup>142</sup> So, Mme de Warens ‘names’ not Jean-Jacques but a position with respect to her which may be filled by anyone. Not surprisingly, then, Rousseau returns to her only to find his place usurped by Wintzenreid.<sup>143</sup> Resolving to devote himself to Mme de Warens, she welcomes him back “as if I had brought back treasure” (*Elle me recut come si j’avais rapporte des tresors*).<sup>144</sup> ‘Treasure’ designates the real, not a mere relative value, and Rousseau’s determination as a subject is confirmed by it – since he thereby resumes the status of ‘idol’ he had as a child.<sup>145</sup> However, the self-sameness is an illusion since Wintzenreid so impresses Mme de Warens that “she thought this young man was a treasure” (*Elle crut ce jeune homme un tresor*).<sup>146</sup> Both Jean-Jacques and Wintzenreid are treasures, at different times, and interchangeably. Rousseau presumes a crisis in which meaning has been jettisoned, and signifiers represent nothing in particular.<sup>147</sup> On the contrary, the displacement of subjects testifies that the master signifier is in place, and castration has been.

Rousseau’s deflation occurs in the face of the fact that, after the law the real does not exist. It continues as a remainder alongside the symbolic, inaccessible to symbolism, but enabling the articulation of that to which there is no access.<sup>148</sup> Mme de Warens is not the Other guaranteeing the meaning of terms and Rousseau’s sense of treasured



identity. Because any subject can be a treasure no signifier is related to the absolute, and no signifier identifies a subject.

### TO KNOW A MAN

Rousseau's response to his loss of status is to remain in the house to supervise Wintzenreid. He accepts his repositioning with a pathos that avows castration. To accept his own, of course, he must embrace Mme de Warens' lack, her inability to guarantee the uniqueness of individual signifiers. The mature response is itself the overcoming a compromise formation in which Rousseau enacts the classical fetishist symptoms of simultaneous disavowal and acknowledgment of female castration.<sup>149</sup>

As a young man Rousseau attempts to disavow the woman's castration and recover the maternal phallus.<sup>150</sup> In one episode he exposes himself to female passers-by and then attempts to escape into "subterranean passages"<sup>151</sup> pursued by an angry crowd. Entering the maternal space for protection he finds that, rather than going on "for ever" as he had assumed on prior investigation, he is soon stopped by a wall and unable to go further.<sup>152</sup> The wall, as previously noted, is evidence of the process of subject formation, of castration. Rather than the escape route Rousseau imagined, his memory of the expanse of the crypt misleads him. The crypt is not a theatre for staging the shattered symbolic, but a platform for reassembling the symbols of authority. Rousseau looks upon it as a place in which secrets may be guarded. However, it calls forth the interdiction as the space is almost immediately filled with his pursuers: "In a moment I was caught and seized by a big man with a big moustache, a big hat and a big sword, escorted by four or five women each armed with a broom handle".<sup>153</sup>

Caught and confronted by hyper-masculinised threat, Rousseau extricates himself by posing as the abused son of a cruel, aristocratic father, thereby winning the “terrible man(’s)” sympathy. Paternal severity is momentarily replaced by paternal benevolence. Rousseau attempts to promote his own interpretive strategy, however, he is dispossessed of discursive authority. The episode concludes in an act of expulsion as the man – having stripped Rousseau of his mask – punishes him by means of a “mocking imitation” of his pleading voice: “I am a prince. I am a prince and a coward. But don’t let his highness come back again.”<sup>154</sup> The man is the conventional voice of the father telling the son that he has entered that place for the last time, that this is the point at which he gives up *jouissance*.<sup>155</sup>

The entire scene is one of dispossession. The repressed unlikeness of the women is acknowledged by having them accompany the man carrying their phallic broom-handles, bearing the signs of authority. The women are condemned to imitate men even though it is they who measure the gravity of the transgression and recognise the failure of authority to properly punish the transgressor: “from the way the girl and the old women scowled at me ... I concluded that ... left to them alone, I would not have got off so cheaply.”<sup>156</sup>

However cloaked in mimetic displacement, the scene suggests – through the male authority’s actions – that, ultimately, no matter how surreptitiously bypassed, a true form of authority exists, and responds to the true identity of the subject. It is not the women, then, who, simply by bearing the signs of authority, expose its contingencies.

Their role is not to implement the law, but – as the objects of the subject’s desire – to reposition the subject’s desire in relation to the law.

On two occasions the breast becomes the site of considerable anxiety. A comic triumph concludes the incident in which the Countess de Menthon – a rival of Mme de Warens’ – attempts to expose the latter’s breast on which, it is rumored, “there is a mark ... like an ugly rat, so much so indeed that it almost seems to be moving”.<sup>157</sup> In trying to expose the disfigurement, de Menthon only manages to make Mamma ‘unforgettable’ by revealing her beauty.<sup>158</sup> The unblemished breast only confirms Rousseau’s advancing construction of de Warens’ perfection – the site of ontological security ready to serve subjectivity when and as required. The demotion of the love object and destabilisation of ontology is never introduced through Mamma but is displaced onto the Venetian courtesan Zuletta, who presents an exterior perfection disguising a marred interior.<sup>159</sup> Venice is the city of the imagination. Enchanted by the singing of the *scuolae*, and convinced that such voices could only belong to women equally beautiful, Rousseau desires to meet the ‘angels behind the grille’. He is cruelly surprised at their ugliness but asserts, in a symbolic disavowal of castration, that “their voices lent such an imaginary charm to their faces ... I persisted in finding them beautiful, notwithstanding the evidence of my eyes.”<sup>160</sup> Becoming suspicious of the authority of the imagination, Rousseau subjects Zuletta to an investigation designed to locate her reality elsewhere than in an appearance which seems to defy imagination,<sup>161</sup> focussing on anomalies such as the discrepancy between her beauty and her availability to him. Like de Menthon before him Rousseau searches for a defect to satisfy an uncanny sense of foreboding, thus disrupting the rule of the imagination.

Zulietta represents the limit of Rousseau's enchantment, and the point at which appearance submits to the compulsion to investigate. When the courtesan advises him, "*Gianetto, lascia le donne, e studia la matematica*"<sup>162</sup> ('Jean-Jacques, leave women alone and take up mathematics') she points to the break in the lyricism of his sense of romantic completeness. With Zulietta, "what might be ineffable pleasure turns to poison in (his) wretched head."<sup>163</sup> The cause is Rousseau's attempt to locate the source of an anxiety so deep that, once revealed, it unveils a general condition and results in universal reassessment. Thus, when Rousseau identifies Zulietta's malformed nipple as the reason for his hesitancy and apprehension, he concludes that:

It results from some remarkable imperfection of Nature ... I saw as clear as daylight that instead of the most charming creature I could possibly imagine I held in my arms some kind of monster, rejected by nature, man and love.<sup>164</sup>

Under the rule of law, the primitive love object is transformed from the site of pleasure and affirmation into a locus of revulsion and universal doubt. The comic reassurance of the revelation of Mme de Warens gives way to the absurd dread of the sequel. Once radical desire traverses the now fundamental law Rousseau can know discrepancies before verifying them – suspicions becomes the self-affirming fulfilments of determinations made under the law.

Embracing the law as an imperative determines a suspicion against nature. Zulietta's malformed nipple is as much a product as a sign of this suspicion, but Rousseau privileges the discovery as the moment, not of doubt, but complete self-discovery: "If there is one incident in my life which plainly reveals my character ... Whoever you may be that wish to know a man have the courage to read the next two or three pages and you will have complete knowledge of Jean-Jacques."<sup>165</sup> The episode, then, is

central to the labours of autobiographical discourse – “to know a man”. In the certainty of self-knowledge, Rousseau can derive some satisfaction from his suffering. Dread is the very moment of subject formation under the law to the extent that it signals the emergence of identity in the risk of regress to the pre-ontological condition of indistinctness, merging and unrecognisability. Zulieta’s melancholy attraction repeats the descent into subterranean depths holding the promise of meaning. However, to dare to cross the pre-oedipal threshold and stare at the maternal body is to risk lifting the oedipal interdiction.

Previous to both Mme de Warens and Zulieta Rousseau had delivered a testament to the character of Countess de Vercellis’ struggle with breast cancer.<sup>166</sup> There the love object decays, and corrupts the body and the subject along with it. His relationship with her is disappointing as he experiences neglect (“it was natural that she should take a liking to a promising young man ... But she did nothing for me”,<sup>167</sup>) and ultimately negation (“she finally asked me no more questions and never spoke to me except to give me orders. She judges me less by what I was than by what she made me; and since she saw nothing in me but a servant she prevented my to her in any other light.”<sup>168</sup>). Unlike Mme de Warens, Rousseau cannot tell the story of the Countess as one in which the subject secures affirmation through the object. The Countess is cold, dignified and “*philosophical*.”<sup>169</sup> The ambivalence characterising the previous episodes is absent in the one involving de Vercellis. Rousseau can derive no satisfaction from his suffering as his disappointment is complete and he cannot position himself anywhere in the other’s desire. Her death is the signal of his complete castration as she takes all of herself with her in death and he cannot recover

even a modicum of the real from the other to satisfy the formation of his desiring subjectivity.<sup>170</sup>

The Countess' death provides the framework for assessing the labour of self-knowledge. The fetishist may disavow the perception (or fact) of the lack. However, as the castration is never perceived the fetishist may in fact be rejecting the theory of subject formation which underpins it. When de Menthon exposes de Warens' lack of a blemish (lack of a lack) Rousseau may take pleasure in the subject's restoration to full reality. When Zuietta is revealed as flawed, the subject senses a disturbance beyond perception affecting the conceived presence of the subject itself – as if the blemish were a threat to a presumed prior wholeness. Zuietta is rejected by “nature, love and man” – all undiminished wholes, or ideal presences, which the subject has an interest in preserving as such. What Rousseau achieves through witnessing the death of the Countess is the necessary displacement of subjective presence from the unknown plenitude of pre-ontology. The response to Zuietta, then, identifies self-knowledge concretely but ambivalently with castration as the cause of the subject.

#### THE PONT DU GARD

The final step from pre-ontology to the known but unmarked presence of the paternal signifier in order to feel its presence as the first loss does not occur until Rousseau's acceptance of the law in the presence of the awesome Pont du Gard.<sup>171</sup> The Pont du Gard clearly recalls the horned gates of Geneva. However, where the horned gates signaled expulsion from a city which repressed the imagination, the Pont du Gard absorbs the power of the imagination: “for once the reality exceeded my expectations”.<sup>172</sup>

The Pont du Gard simultaneously appears within and stands outside symbolic castration as its own law, its own reality. Outside the locus of the treasure of the signifier<sup>173</sup> it both is its own reality and ensures the reality of derivatives. In this sense it underpins the interpretations available to the subject. Those interpretation calls on the Pont du Gard as phallus, in the sense of the structure's being not a figure of the transcendental signifier but of a first loss<sup>174</sup> and so a signifier that stands at the frontier between the real and the symbolic. Rousseau's self-understanding is consequently phrased in terms of an irrecoverable origin: "if only I had been born a Roman."<sup>175</sup>

The Pont du Gard is able to substantiate its own being as the image that takes the place of the real. Initially, it is held to be a protection "against the girls of Montpellier" about whom Rousseau had been forewarned. They are prostitutes like Zuletta – in whom terror had mingled with delight as the subject approached the threat of the pre-ontological encounter with the maternal body, until it was finally suspended by the arresting flaw. The experience before the ancient structure reveals the subject's inability to substantiate its own being, to recognise itself as complete unless represented in its own reality. The Pont du Gard distances the menace, and through its activity of foundational signification relieves the subject of having to approach and comprehend the real for themselves.

The subject appears in this space between pleasure and terror: "in spite of all my smallness I felt my soul to be in some way elevated."<sup>176</sup> Rousseau is both fantasising the ideal of non-castration and acknowledging his castration – his place in the law.<sup>177</sup>

The rhythm of elevation and nihilation marks the Pont du Gard as the spear that deals the wound (smallness) and that restores (elevation) the subject through it. However, unlike the incident at the House of Solars, the Pont du Gard calls the subject to virtue – to resist the allures of courtesans. Rather than respond through the sexual excess expressed over Mlle Breil, Rousseau arises as a subject through the stoic intervention into sexual peril.

Reference to “reverence”, “reverie”, and “rapturous contemplation” situate the satisfaction somewhere between rationality and imagination. The sublimity of an event the reality of which is greater than expectations (interpretive frameworks) – signals a dislocation between image and reason giving rise to both the pathos of the sublime (filled in wishfully – “if only I had been born a Roman”)<sup>178</sup> and the exercise of rational interpretation and theory construction. The wish identifies the first loss as ‘something about the subject’ itself; principally that the subject is something in relation to the revered and dream-like (*rêve*) structure.

In terms of the Epistle Dedicatory, the Pont du Gard is the wished-for in every sense. The Pont du Gard is the symbolisation of what ought to be symbolised – castration through the paternal signifier. It reorganises the lost past like the oedipal mechanism which retrospectively designates all prior desire as disorder. Musing “if only I had been born a Roman” suggests that the solution to the problem of integration can occur only at or more likely before birth. Consequently, to revere the Pont du Gard is to acknowledge subordination to an order which cannot be grounded in experience: that is to say, by the subject occupying the place of subject formation (the other) subsequent to its interpretation of the causes and consequences of those formative



processes. In other words, the only certainty is not the fixed, discoverable ontological event but the context of another narrative framework, another place and time, another scene. There can always be – albeit within intelligible limits – re-interpretation, and re-narrativisation of the process of subjectivation. The Pont du Gard is a monument to subjective dispossession in that it points to the cause at the same time as establishing its inaccessibility. The Pont du Gard requires the subject to draw on reserves that can only grasp the real in reverie and reverence – or as Lacan says, in a dream, which nonetheless means something.

1. The disenchantment of modernity is of course a theme of the nineteenth century associated with Weberian sociology but by no means restricted to it. Habermas takes up the theme in recent critical theory: see *The Theory of Communicative Action* Vol.I (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995) pp.243-71. He also takes up the theme specifically in relation to Durkheim's analysis of forms of religious worship.: see J M Bernstein, *Recovering Ethical Life: Jürgen Habermas and the Future of Critical Theory* (London: Routledge, 1995) pp.91-105.
2. The classic formulation of this zone of reasoning in recent critical thought is Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry Into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1989) Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (trans).
3. On Habermas' project of reconstructive science see John B Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984) pp.255-78, John B Thompson, *Critical Hermeneutics: A Study in the Thought of Paul Ricoeur and Jürgen Habermas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) pp.71-112, Georgia Warnke, *Justice and Interpretation* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1993) pp.146-50.
4. See Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel and the Critique of Ideology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993) p.172.
5. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (London: Duckworth, 1985) pp.361-2.
6. See Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995) p.45.
7. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (London: J M Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1973) G D H Cole (trans) I [6], p.174.
8. Ibid, I[6], p.175.
9. Ibid, I[8], p.178.
10. This is the subject of a major study: see Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, above n 6.
11. Jacques Lacan, 'The Function and Field of Speech and the Language of Psychoanalysis' in *Écrits: A Selection* (London: W W Norton & Co., Ltd, 1977) A Sheridan (trans) pp.30-114, p.46.
12. Lacan quoted in Peter Dews, *The Logics of Disintegration: Post-Structuralist Thought and the Claims of Critical Theory* (London: Verso, 1987) p69.
13. Jacques Lacan, 'The Signification of the Phallus' in *Écrits*, above n 11, pp.281-92, p.285.
14. Dews, *Logics of Disintegration*, above n 12, p.78.
15. See for example Juliet Flower MacCannell, *The Regime of the Brother: After the Patriarchy* (London: Routledge, 1991); see also by the same author, *Figuring Lacan: Criticism and the Cultural Unconscious* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1986) pp.46-9.
16. See Lacan, above n 13; see also Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, above n 6, pp.101-25.
17. On self-interpretation as the basis of practical origins of subjectivity see J M Bernstein, *Recovering Ethical Life*, above n 1, pp.58-87.
18. Rousseau, *Social Contract*, above n 7, II [6], p.190.
19. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin and the Foundation of Inequality Among Men in The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) Victor Gourevitch (ed and trans) [I], p.118.
20. See Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, above n 6, p.96; Dews, *Logics of Disintegration*, above n 12, p.90.
21. See Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, above n 6, p.153.
22. On the distinction between naturalist and critical modes of interpretation see Bernstein, *Recovering Ethical Life*, above n 1, pp.65-71.
23. Charles Taylor, 'Self-Interpreting Animals' in Charles Taylor, *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) pp.45-76.
24. See David Rasmussen "Rethinking Subjectivity: Narrative Identity and the Self" in R Kearney (ed) *Paul Ricoeur: The Hermeneutics of Action* (London: Sage Publications, 1996) pp.159-72.
25. Jürgen Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995) William Mark Hohengarten (trans) p.166.
26. Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis* (London: Penguin Books, 1977) Alan Sheridan (trans) p.58.
27. Ibid, p.59.
28. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, above n 5, pp.218-19.
29. See Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology*, above n 3, p.264.
30. Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988) p.378.

31. Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology*, above n 3, p.260.
32. Ibid, p.263.
33. Dwight Furrow, *Against Theory: Continental and Analytical Challenges in Moral Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1995) p.47.
34. Quoted Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology*, above n 3, p.267.
35. Jürgen Habermas, 'Some Distinctions in Universal Pragmatics', *Theory and Society* 3, 1976, pp.165-7.
36. See Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology*, above n 3, p.266.
37. Habermas also adopts the logic of 'scenic understanding' to relocate events from ontology. See 'The Hermeneutic Claim to Universality' in *Contemporary Hermeneutics* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982) Josef Bleicher (ed) pp.181-211, pp.192-4.
38. Jean-Jacques Rousseau 'Epistle Dedicatory' in *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: The First and Second Discourses Together with the Replies to His Critics and Essay on the Origin of Languages* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986) Victor Gourevitch (trans and ed).
39. Ibid, [14], p.123.
40. Rousseau, *Social Contract*, above n 7, IV [2], p.117.
41. Rousseau, 'Epistle Dedicatory', above n 38, I [8], p.119.
42. Rousseau, *First Discourse*, above n 38, I [34], p.36.
43. Rousseau, 'Epistle Dedicatory', above n 38, I [13], p.128.
44. Rousseau, *Social Contract*, above n 7, II [3], pp.184-6.
45. Rousseau, 'Epistle Dedicatory,' above n 38, I [8], p.119.
46. Rousseau, *Social Contract*, above n 7, IV[8], p.276.
47. Ibid, II [2], p.278.
48. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Confessions* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1953) p.59.
49. Ibid, p.141.
50. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, above n 5, pp.361-2.
51. MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* above n 30, pp.349-69.
52. Here Rousseau reiterates that it is only to the stranger that knowledge is available. See *First Discourse*, above n 38, I [15].
53. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, above n 5, p.362.
54. Ibid.
55. Sigmund Freud, *Therapy and Technique* (New York: Collier Books, 1963) Philip Reiff (ed) p.93.
56. Bernstein, *Recovering Ethical Life*, above n 1, p.72.
57. G W F Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1942) pp.160-1, 279.
58. Rousseau, *Social Contract*, above n 7, II [5], p.189.
59. Ibid. See also John Plamenatz, 'On le Forcera d'Être Libre' in Maurice Cranston and Richard S Peters (eds) *Hobbes and Rousseau: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1972) pp.318-32.
60. Rousseau, *Social Contract*, above n 7, II [5], p.189-90.
61. Ibid, IV [8], p.276.
62. On this potential in thinkers of intersubjective subjectivity see Joel Whitebook, 'Intersubjectivity and the Monadic Core of the Psyche: Habermas and Castoriadis on the Unconscious' in Maurizio Passerin d'Entreves and Seyla Benhabib (eds) *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity: Critical Essays on The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1997) pp.172-96.
63. Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, above n 6, p.49.
64. Ibid, p.50.
65. Ibid, p.51.
66. Rousseau, *Social Contract*, above n 7, II [5], p.189.
67. Jacques Lacan, 'La Causalité Psychique' in *Ecrits* (Paris: Seuil, 1966) cited Carolyn Dean, 'Law and Sacrifice: Bataille, Lacan and the Critique of the Subject' *Representations* 13 1986, pp.42-62, p.55.
68. J M Bernstein, *Recovering Ethical Life*, above n 1, p.68.
69. Rousseau, *Confessions*, above n 48, p.547.
70. Ibid.
71. Ibid.
72. Ned Lukacher, *Primal Scenes: Literature, Philosophy, Psychoanalysis* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986) p.46.
73. Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981) Barbara Johnson (trans) p.111. Here, anticipating the terms he explores in *The Postcard*, Derrida describes the

- difference between writing and anamnesis as “invisible, almost non-existent”, a difference no thicker than a “leaf” or “sheet of paper”, a “*feuille*.”
74. Rousseau, *Confessions*, above n 48, p. 216.
  75. For the materialist theory of the period see John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Glasgow: Wm Collins Sons and Co Ltd., 1964) ss 1.1.8, 2.9.2. See also John W Yolton, *Locke and French Materialism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) and *Thinking Matter: Materialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984).
  76. See Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, above n 6, p.63.
  77. *Ibid*, p.78.
  78. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages which Treats of Melody and Musical Imitation in The Origin of Language: Two Essays by Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Johann Gottfried Herder* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1966) John H Moran and Alexander Gode (trans) p.58; see also *Discourse on Inequality*, above n 38, I [21].
  79. Rousseau, *Social Contract*, above n 7, II [12], pp.206-07.
  80. Zizek, *Tarrying with the Negative*, above n 4, p.190.
  81. Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, above n 7, II [12], p.207.
  82. *Ibid*, II [10], p.203.
  83. *Ibid*, II [8], p.198.
  84. Rousseau, *Confessions*, above n 48, p.96.
  85. *Ibid*, p.97.
  86. See Peter Goodrich, *Oedipus Lex: Psychoanalysis, History, Law* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995) p.131.
  87. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile or On Education* (London: J M Dent, 1993) Barbara Foxley (trans) p.19.
  88. Quoted in Matthew Leigh, *Lucan: Spectacle and Engagement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997) pp.20-1; Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition: A Study of the Central Dilemmas Facing Modern Man* (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1959) pp.63-4 refers to the same tradition, citing Heraclitus whom she glosses as meaning “the people should fight for the city as for a wall”, and refers to the “sacred” wall that separates public from private claiming that “only the enclosure was political”.
  89. Rousseau, *Social Contract*, above n 7, II [12], pp.206-07.
  90. Rousseau, *Confessions*, above n 48, p.6.
  91. *Ibid*, p.52.
  92. *Ibid*, p.66.
  93. *Ibid*, p.74.
  94. *Ibid*, p.60.
  95. Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, above n 6, pp.55-6.
  96. Rousseau, *Confessions*, above n 48, pp.61-2.
  97. *Ibid*, pp.61, 200. On Rousseau’s idealisation of the father figure see, for example, Ronald Grimsley, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: A Study in Self-Awareness* (Cardiff: Wales University Press, 1961) pp.100-01.
  98. *Ibid*, p.62.
  99. *Ibid*, p.23; see also Rousseau, *Social Contract*, above n 7, II [12], pp.206-7.
  100. Rousseau, *Confessions*, above n 48, p.49.
  101. Zizek, *Tarrying with the Negative*, above n 4, pp.79-80.
  102. Rousseau, *Confessions*, above n 48, p.50.
  103. *Ibid*, p.220.
  104. *Ibid*, pp.220-21.
  105. *Ibid*, p.542.
  106. *Ibid*.
  107. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976) Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (trans) pp.175-7.
  108. *Ibid*, p.177.
  109. Rousseau, *Emile*, above n 87, pp.16-17.
  110. *Ibid*, p.32.
  111. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, ‘Sur les Femmes’, *Oeuvres Complete* (Paris: Gallimard, 1959-95) p.1255, notes that history is written with a masculine bias resulting in a preponderance of heroes over heroines. Susan Mill Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979) considers that there is a disparity between Rousseau’s early and later writings. However, Rousseau has

- always negated the civic function of women in the sense that it amounts to being a vehicle of the paternal law.
112. Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, above n 19, I [25], p.153.
  113. *Ibid*, I [35], pp.160-1.
  114. Rousseau, *Emile*, above n 87, p.23.
  115. *Ibid*, p.28.
  116. See Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, above n 6, p.57.
  117. Rousseau, *Confessions*, above n 48, p.6.
  118. See 'Citoyen' in *Encyclopedie II (B-C) Diderot Oeuvres Complete Tome VI*, Edition Critique et Annotee (Paris: Herman, 1976) pp.463-67.
  119. If Rousseau does not subscribe to an Aristotelian gynaecological theory in which the mother passively bears the form inscribed by the active principle of paternity *in utero* he does to on *ex utero*. For Aristotle's theory see *Generation of Animals* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972) D M Balme (ed and trans) 765b-766a. Rousseau cites Aristotle in a discarded fragment of *Emile* saying that the wife must remain "under the absolute law of her husband" ('Fragments pour *Emile*' in *Oeuvres Complete*, above n 111, p.872).
  120. Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, above n 19, I [8], p.144, and I [12], pp.146-7; indeed, Rousseau writes of childhood without introducing the mother, I [4], p.142. See R D Masters, *The Political Theory of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968) pp.127-30 for the father's place in the mother-child relation. A near contemporary reference can be found at J G Herder, 'On The Gospels' in *Against Pure Reason: Writings on Religion, Language and History* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993) M Bunge (ed and trans) pp.175-201, p.195.
  121. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Letter to M. d'Alembert on the Theatre* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991) Allan Bloom (trans) p.85.
  122. See Fink, above n 6. p.57.
  123. *Ibid*, p.77.
  124. *Ibid*, p.106.
  125. Rousseau, *Confessions*, above n 48, p.106.
  126. Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980) p.57.
  127. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, above n 78, 3[1], p.246.
  128. *Ibid*, 3[3], p.246.
  129. The classic text on naming is Plato, *Cratylus in Cratylus, Parmenides, Greater and Lesser Hippias* (London: Loeb, 1926) H N Fowler (trans) 388c-389a. Parmenides argued against the category of the pure name "which mortals laid down believing them to be true", see Parmenides Fragment 8.39, quoted Massimo Cacciari, 'The Problem of Representation' in Giovanna Borradori (ed) *Recording Metaphysics: The New Italian Philosophy* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988) pp.155-66, p.156.
  130. Plato, *Cratylus*, above n 129, 388a, and 432d.
  131. See Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968) J Glenn Gray (trans) p.120.
  132. Rousseau, *Emile*, above n 87, p.414.
  133. *Ibid*, p.416.
  134. Plato, *Cratylus*, above n 129, 389a. See also Marc Froment-Meurice, *That is to Say: Heidegger's Poetics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) Jan Plug (trans) p.97.
  135. Rousseau, *Confessions*, above n 48, pp.35-8.
  136. *Ibid*, p.36.
  137. *Ibid*, p.26.
  138. *Ibid*, p.30.
  139. *Ibid*, p.37.
  140. See Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, above n 6, p.24.
  141. See Zizek, *Tarrying with the Negative*, above n 4, p.194.
  142. *Ibid*.
  143. Rousseau, *Confessions*, above n 48, p.249.
  144. *Ibid*, p.201.
  145. *Ibid*, pp.22, 39, 160.
  146. *Ibid*, p.249.
  147. See Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, above n 6, p.74.
  148. *Ibid*, p.24.

149. See Sigmund Freud, 'From the History of an Infantile Neurosis' in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud XVII* (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-74) James Strachey (trans) p.85.
150. Rousseau, *Confessions*, above n 48, pp.90-2.
151. Ibid, p.91.
152. Ibid.
153. Ibid, p.92.
154. Ibid.
155. Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, above n 6, p.99.
156. Rousseau, *Confessions*, above n 48, p.91.
157. Ibid, p.185.
158. Ibid, pp.185-6.
159. Ibid, pp.300-02.
160. Ibid, p.296.
161. Ibid, p.300.
162. Ibid, p.302.
163. Ibid, p.300.
164. Ibid, p.301.
165. Ibid, p.300.
166. Ibid, pp.83-6.
167. Ibid, p.84.
168. Ibid, pp.84-5.
169. Ibid, p.84, emphasis in original.
170. See Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, above n 6, p.60.
171. Rousseau, *Confessions*, above n 48, pp.242-3.
172. Ibid, p.242.
173. Lacan, *Ecrits: A Selection*, above n 11, p.285; see also Peter Dews, *Logic of Disintegration*, above n 12, p.86; Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, above n 6, p.114.
174. Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991) p.100.
175. Rousseau, *Confessions*, above n 48, p.243. Compare Huntington Williams, *Rousseau and Romantic Autobiography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983) who sees the Pont du Gard as representing the author's desire for temporal continuity.
176. Rousseau, *Confessions*, above n 48, p.243; see also Lyotard, *The Inhuman*, above n 174, p.98.
177. See Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, above n 6, p.110.
178. See Lyotard, *The Inhuman*, above n 174, p.98.

# EMILE: OBSERVING AUTONOMY

## INTRODUCTION

Rousseau's *Emile* posits autonomy as a separation of the self from the effects and influences of others. Consciousness, in other words, separates itself from the object that gives rise to it. Emile's education is therefore an example of self-assertion against, and nihilation of, the other. The other must be transcended since the subject's recognition of it is a reciprocation of the recognition it gets from the other. This interplay and exchange of recognition threatens the self-sufficiency of the subject. For Sartre the I must reject the Me as object to be autonomous.<sup>1</sup> This means rejecting authenticity for the sake of autonomy – abandoning self-reflexivity. According to theorists of intersubjectivity such as Mead and Habermas, the other can be refused but not negated. In this respect, they are both proponents of the Hegelian insight that reason educates (*Bildung*) desire and transforms it, thereby achieving a non-dominant relation to otherness.<sup>2</sup> The interaction between subject and object represents “the repositing of the given ... self-reflection is a return to self from a presupposition that has been repositied.”<sup>3</sup> The look of the other is an invitation to exchange responses and is therefore a learning process, not a fixation and curtailment of development. The solution to alienating recognition by the other is therefore to depend on the other in order not to be the other – to make the other part of self-conscious reflection.

The question of critique is inherent in this view of the subject in language. Because signification occurs in the relation between signifiers, and meaning is designated retroactively; the basis of knowledge and subjective understanding is metaphor. Aemilian epistemology (including self-knowledge) centers on the possibility of

referentiality ('is') and the inevitability of displacement ('as'). It is not possible to transcend metaphor. Acts of enunciation must be mediated intentionally, but this is not the coincidence of speech and meaning, only the subject catching what it must have meant, seeing itself as having meant something. Mead's subject requires a central integrative ego function which resolves the relations of present self-perception, abandoned past and future selves. However reflexive integration creates no more than a new object self because nothing can reflect on the current situation in which the formed self finds itself.<sup>4</sup> Lacan has made this proposition a commonplace of psychoanalytical descriptions of identity when he argues that, at the universal mirror stage of child development, the basis of self-recognition is misrecognition.<sup>5</sup> Mead's construction of the self, on the other hand, neglects the barring of the self from its own recognition of its alienation in language, and represents the denial of castration. For Lacan, the condition of possibility of self-consciousness is contained within the impossibility of ever knowing the self as united, or experiencing oneself as free.<sup>6</sup>

The project of autonomy which Rousseau constructs in *Emile* is based on principles of education forming a natural man 'for society' without his being 'of' society.<sup>7</sup> *Emile* is a 'savage in the town' and experiences himself as being "alone in the midst of society".<sup>8</sup> The prospect of a reconciliation between the individual and society has given rise to declared doubts but continued to intrigue commentators both of *Emile* and the *Social Contract*.<sup>9</sup> Given that *Emile* sets out to educate the natural man (an independent whole) while the political treatise is concerned to denature man into the 'fractional citizen' it is difficult to appreciate the confidence with which Rousseau maintains their interdependence. He claimed, for example, in a letter to Duschene that



the two texts “together form a complete whole”, and that the *Social Contract* forms a “kind of appendix” to *Emile*.<sup>10</sup>

Communitarians have criticised Rousseau’s characterisation of autonomy for lacking social parameters, arguing that sociality cannot be added to identity but is inseparable from the conditions of formation of the individual which Rousseau posits ‘prior’ to society.<sup>11</sup> Rousseau recalls Rawls’ ‘original position’ – where moral reasons are developed outside the context of society, but precisely for the purpose of constructing moral society (based on the standard of ‘fairness’).<sup>12</sup> Rawls describes participants with no preconceptions about the type of society they are to belong to nor the place they are to occupy within it, making rational choices behind a ‘veil of ignorance’.<sup>13</sup> Communitarians object to the misconception of the self that this theory entails. Sandel, for instance, argues against this “essentially unencumbered subject of possession”<sup>14</sup> as being paradoxical in requiring a unified identity prior to membership in an historical community. Individuals do not emerge from the state of nature with the capacity for ethical conduct as both Rawls and Rousseau argue. A normative context is fundamental to self-understanding as a self “wholly without character” is “incapable of self-knowledge in any morally serious sense.”<sup>15</sup> In fact, Rousseau, in the last book of *Emile*, appears to concur. The completion of the autonomous subject by socialisation undermines the claim that Emile is complete at each stage of his education (“all that a boy can be at his age”<sup>16</sup>). That is, it admits that autonomy is fundamentally divided between the choice made by the subject and the historical context in which that choice is made.

Unity, under these assumptions, is only possible through the transcendence of historical society by the individual will. The coherence of the Rawlsian moral thinker

is based on its construction as an independent observer, judging without participation. The Rawlsian observer in its strictest form would have to transcend the dependence of observations on other observations. The hermeneutic critique of pure observation argues that it denies the reality of membership – that is, that all positions are participant perspectives and that the observer therefore exists in a network of primary and secondary observations.<sup>17</sup> The universalist response to the hermeneutic critique of this so called ‘paradox of form’ is that it denies the possibility of developing standards for the critique of systematically distorted pathological perspectives.<sup>18</sup>

Critique is the pedagogical aim in *Emile*. The standard of ‘nature’ represents an explanatory theory for distinguishing between good and bad developmental processes, and between the legitimate and illegitimate practices the individual might assume with respect to society. *Emile* rejects learning processes based on hermeneutics – that is, negotiated understanding in the intersubjective context. Indeed, Rousseau’s claim for the unity and interdependence of *Emile* and the *Social Contract* support interpretations of the educational program as critical-transcendental rather than hermeneutic-historical. However, as the observer is contextualised in a relay of looks, autonomy must centralise context – there is, as such, no simple transcendence. Rousseau argues that it is impossible to be both autonomous and a subject of the look. All that can be recognised by either the generalised or concrete other is a role – the acceptance of available norms, not their renegotiation by an autonomous agent. However, this argument is based on a reified version of the look – the look as abstracting, and as abstraction.

The look, in reality, is more differentiated than this – it is evaluative and operates in a normative context. So, autonomy can be sought beyond the role to the extent that the

role is not a fixed entity but designates a negotiable boundary between the individual and society, self and other. Autonomy, then, is the reconfiguration of an internal boundary previously internalised by the subject in response to the other's gesture. This reconfiguration implies an interpretation of the normative context, and thus a position from which to interpret which does not simply repeat or confirm social norms. However, the Tutor prevents Emile becoming an object of reflection for himself. Emile remains fixed in a role constructed through the internalisation of the Tutor's command without possibility of dialecticisation. Because Emile cannot symbolise himself to another, neither can he represent himself to himself. Fixated at the level of a prior transcendent truth (what 'is'), the understanding cannot be freed in language (as metaphor).

#### HERMENEUTIC AND CRITIQUE

Hermeneutic understanding presumes to be interpreting shared social meanings, and public values rather than articulating universal principles of justice grounded on a priori moral standards.<sup>19</sup> This describes a transition from disputing claims to truth to recognising differences as interpretive differences. Because there is nothing non-interpretive about interpretations, there are always other modes of understanding, which, once recognised, opens the subject to the possibility of learning from others. Hermeneutics thus applauds the existence of a pluralistic society allowing for diverse interpretations without demanding a resolution to interpretive conflict. Hermeneutics corresponds to Habermas's aesthetic standards of judgment in that different interpretations challenge each other to reexamine themselves in the light of the other, and to forego insistence on their own uniqueness.<sup>20</sup> Hermeneutic conversation is the

form education assumes through the questions raised and propositions stated by alternative interpretations.

Strictly hermeneutic attempts to understand meaning are sufficient as long as the meanings to be understood are only temporarily inaccessible because of cultural, social and historical distance.<sup>21</sup> For Gadamer, hermeneutic analysis works because social interactions are founded on a “deep common accord”.<sup>22</sup> Habermas criticises this idealisation of social interaction arguing that hermeneutics neglects social processes which are not wholly linguistic, and fails when confronted with processes of force and domination producing “systematically distorted communication” and “pathologically unobtrusive speech”.<sup>23</sup> Critical theory therefore works to uncover the presuppositions and operations of the accord. It assumes that pathology may not cause any apparent incoherence.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, because partial perspectives are constructive rather than restrictive of observation, the distortions a text involves are frequently if not characteristically not available to those examining its significance.<sup>25</sup>

Hermeneutics has taught us that we are always a participant as long as we move within the natural language ... There is therefore no general criterion available to us which would allow us to determine when we are subject to the false consensus of a pseudo-normal understanding and consider something as a difficulty that can be resolved by hermeneutic means when, in fact, it requires systematic explanation.<sup>26</sup>

Critique offers the subject the opportunity to return the negation to the text – to refuse its meaning when that meaning is potentially damaging. If instructors are understood as being in the position of the text, critique represents the well-grounded right to refuse a command or teaching assessed as unwarranted, wrong, or psychopathic. Self-understanding extends beyond the hermeneutic restriction of a community of those with whom we share meanings, evaluative norms and experiences.

In other words, learning and the higher order reflexivity of autonomy begin where understanding replaces consensus.<sup>27</sup>

For Habermas the means of avoiding or overcoming the potential damage is to take a theoretical position from the outset.<sup>28</sup> This position would include a description of normal developmental processes – so as to assess the damage by understanding the potential deviations, and avert it. Rather than beginning with a contextual understanding of the meaning of a dialogical partner's expression, the observer must rely from the start on an explanatory theory that can transcend the restrictions of the deformed context to explain the meaning of the deformed behavior, its source, and the reason for its incomprehensibility. The observer cannot rely on the meaning the object's behavior has in the language of action and practice of which it is a part because the point is that this language is deformed. Because the object has no other language, actions remain incomprehensible even to it. Because of the distortions within the language of understanding and interpretation itself, the possibility of revising interpretations rationally requires a theoretically informed viewpoint.<sup>29</sup>

According to Habermas, then, understanding will not be improved through hermeneutic conversation since its evaluative assessments cannot reveal the distorted character of the assessment, and its cause. Hermeneutic self-transformation simply reproduces the ideological self-distortion existing in the original self-understanding of society and its traditions. Habermas argues that what is required is a critical theory of society.<sup>30</sup> A critical theory of society would go beyond the hermeneutic offer of challenging interpretations to develop in the direction of greater depth and strength without abandoning their distinctiveness. Such a theory involves, amongst other things, an account of individual socialisation processes, an account of processes of

social reproduction and transmission of cultural knowledge, and an account of the possible causes of structural deviation. To secure the objectivity of a critical social theory, Habermas appeals to reconstructive social science. He outlines the project of such a science in this way: “the object of understanding is no longer the content of a symbolic expression or what specific authors meant by it in specific situations but the intuitive rule consciousness that a competent speaker has of his own language.”<sup>31</sup>

Rousseau is an interesting precursor to this approach, basing Emile’s upbringing on the discovery of his ‘natural’ developmental stages. Through the paradigm of ‘nature’ Rousseau hopes to secure a theoretically informed analysis of the symbolic domain, which would reduce the context dependency of understanding.<sup>32</sup> However, he, like Habermas, must deal with the fact that the interpreter-observer is always already a member of the lifeworld occupying a specific social, historical and cultural position, achieving an inevitably situation-bound understanding.<sup>33</sup> The goal is an understanding from the point of view that is on the same level as what is understood.<sup>34</sup>

Like Habermas, Rousseau believes that subjects have a tacit know-how enabling them to perform and produce without explicitly adverting to or being able to give an account of the structures, rules or rationality of those performances.<sup>35</sup> The realm of nature is precisely such a pre-symbolic, implicit domain. The educational program renders explicit the practically mastered (and theoretically unarticulated) competences of undistorted subjects. Unfortunately, Rousseau leaves the exploration of competence descriptively at the level subject-object interaction. Emile’s labours in the domains of inner and outer nature are not consciously integrated through communication with other subjects but by raising objective claims and attempting to fulfill them through the instrumental use of the self and others. Habermas insists on

the reconstruction of normative relations through a program of “universal pragmatics” based on the successful performance of speech acts.<sup>36</sup> Communicative competence is the ability to follow, adapt and apply rules producing speech acts about the external world of objects, and subjective relations to them.<sup>37</sup> Communication therefore involves raising, criticising and redeeming validity claims – that is, conditions which make statements true or false<sup>38</sup> with the express aim of bringing about an agreement based on the recognition of the validity of those claims.<sup>39</sup> Reaching an understanding about truth and falsehood is an inherent telos of the activity of speaking :<sup>40</sup> “Thus the basis for the assertion of identity is not really self-identification, but intersubjectively recognised self-identification.”<sup>41</sup>

Habermas refers to Mead as being amongst the first to consider the interdependence of socialisation and individuation.<sup>42</sup> However, Mead’s account is limited in that it describes conventional role formation, but not the formation of an independent ego. Mead’s formulation is equally applicable to situations where roles are assumed without question, or under duress in a desire to avoid the negative consequences of not occupying proffered positions. The avoidance of similar passive, conformist performances is at the centre of Emile’s education. Autonomy requires the subject to act on the basis of conviction that can withstand rational critique.<sup>43</sup> For Habermas, the expansion of the moral outlook to embrace other perspectives constitutive of the social panoply can only occur in dialogue with others. Adopting Mead’s terminology, this ‘generalised’ other is both a collective ‘we’, and a composite plurality which can be set against the numerically dominant empirical normative perspective<sup>44</sup> – an ‘I’ or ‘you’ which may question the ‘we’. Aemilian ontogenesis, on the other hand, falls

short of this position. It accepts that conventional roles do not in and of themselves define morality, but it cannot provide foundation for autonomous ego formation.

That foundation, Habermas argues, is a rational discourse, wherein the social roles of self, other and society are interdependent.<sup>45</sup> Mead formulates this as the relation of the I and the Me. The subject self (I) is aware of itself as an object self (Me). The I is self-aware but caught in the ungraspable flux of present consciousness and thereby unable to know itself. If it can be said to know anything, the thing it knows is its past self – the Me. The I cannot know itself because in order to satisfy the unity of identity it must recognise the Me as itself, and thus become the Me, and no longer be the I. Identity must contend with this temporal duality – the subject is never what it is but what it was, an historical figure conceived in the present. However, its essence, the I, the source and expression of self-consciousness, belongs to an undetermined future. The indeterminate nature of the I makes of the subject an open whole, a source of spontaneity, a possessor of freedom. This indeterminacy is a feature of Habermas's conceptualisation of the I-me relation in terms of the complementary roles of speaker and respondent: the first raises a proposition structured by social expectations which the second is free to reject.<sup>46</sup>

In the following discussion, *Emile* is examined in terms of the elements of the critical theory of society outlined. In the first instance, the demand of objectivity – the subject at one with itself – is identified, as is its unsustainability. This is supplemented with the search for a higher order reflexivity, which fails because it does not grasp the need for an intersubjective context. The social context is examined through the techniques of surveillance in which the external discourse (the gaze) objectifies the self into a role. *Emile* exemplifies the danger that development may rest there – the subject



identifying with the external purveyor of the look and internalising it as his perspective in order to resolve conflict. Hermeneutic interpretations find the transcendence of this level of observation is inconceivable. However, the look as an abstract threat to the possibilities of the autonomous subject is critiqued as insufficiently differentiated. It is argued that the look is evaluative, and therefore invites interlocution since evaluative language is contrastive and exists not in absolute terms or as master signifiers, but as sets of signifiers whose meaning is given by their relative position in a system. The response to the look (or discourse) is the basis for the renegotiation of the boundary between the self and other, especially a dialecticising or interpretation of the internal limit represented by the role. Whilst each of these formative stages to autonomy is detectable in *Emile*, autonomy is ultimately unavailable, since the internalisation and fixture of authority is overwhelming and cannot be ousted.

#### MASTER AND SLAVE

In Hegel's description of the Master-Slave dialectic, the Master seeks to be whole without otherness.<sup>47</sup> However Hegel identifies the relation itself as the site of a hidden dialectic, and consequently of an intersubjective redefinition of identity and autonomy. A boundary in the transactional milieu defines roles, but these roles are renegotiable, giving rise to the recognition of flexible boundaries between subject positions rather than fixed positions for subjects to identify with or assume. The meaning of the designated roles lies not in the fact that they can be assigned to an individual, but that they are all available to individuals, and the positions they signify interchangeable. The slave's role is to remove the otherness of things – to mediate the Master's relation with the world of objects, and to humanise them (and him). In the

process, the master believes that he has received recognition for his authentic independence.

*Emile* represents a social system which obstructs the interchange of roles.<sup>48</sup> Under such circumstances, the subject develops only as an object self, remaining what they were made by the other. *Emile* prioritises the experience of the subject and self-consciousness as a unity. However, as Mead explains, self-consciousness emerges in the context of a rift, the disunity of the object of consciousness (Me), and the conscious awareness of the object (I). *Emile* accepts Hegel's logic to the extent that the subject arises on the ground of the other's role, and by cancellation of the other. Following the master-slave dialectic, women provide men with the conditions under which they can fantasise their own unity – since, as Rousseau says, women should be strong for men.<sup>49</sup> Women do not work<sup>50</sup> only to the extent that they do not humanise the object field for themselves; that is, precisely to the extent that they labour entirely for the men whom they allow to position themselves as they would like with respect to the other's desire, “desir(ing) to be pleasing in men's eyes”.<sup>51</sup> Sophy is therefore a bridge without substance, a medium without a reality of her own.

Sophy is guided by one precept – “What will people think?”<sup>52</sup> While men are autonomous subjects to the extent that they transcend, or are free from, public opinion, women are ethical to the extent that they internalise public opinion as a limit. A woman's identity is entirely bound to being worthy of respect.<sup>53</sup> Her social role is to act as a spectacle of selfless responsibility. For this reason, only women are in need of mirrors. *Emile*'s room, on the other hand, will have no mirrors<sup>54</sup> because going without having to have their unified image reflected back to them (or, for example, recognised by others) arms men against any original doubt. Mirrors reflect an

'effeminate' image to the extent that they are used to compose an acceptable social persona prior to appearing in public.

Mirrors would denature men to the extent that they construct an appearance different from their identity – men adjusting themselves before a mirror would be men *qua* role, rather than men *qua* men. A misrecognition of the self through the reflected image (doubled and split)<sup>55</sup> promotes a displaced identity above an essential unity. Not surprisingly, then, when Sophy discovers Emile (her 'Telemachus') he is exactly as she imagined him.<sup>56</sup> Sophy, on the other hand "delights us, we know not why,"<sup>57</sup> suggesting that object and construct are not as exactly aligned for her as they are for Emile.<sup>58</sup> Sophy is a role, not (yet) a self; her existence is conventional. When Emile first encounters Sophy it is, significantly, the name which 'arrests' him.<sup>59</sup> The name is necessary, because the object cannot speak its own reality. We are in fact told that even though she seems to speak of her own volition, it is Sophy's mother that makes her speak.<sup>60</sup> Rousseau informs us elsewhere that nature has no need of names, and that in a perfectly mimetic art such as classical realist painting, the name of the painting under the picture is unnecessary<sup>61</sup> because the observation is self-supporting, and not a reference to other unsupported observations.

The openness to the other defining love represents a threat to the integrity of the self. Absolute self-sufficiency is revealed as a specular relation to the other when Emile reacts with horror at the news of Sophy's death.<sup>62</sup> The Tutor takes this opportunity to construct Emile's integrity, removing her as a condition of identity for him. This negation of Sophy is the condition of possibility of Emile's virtue (his self-control).<sup>63</sup> Love, in this sense, is a subject-object relation which facilitates the self's mastery over otherness. Love is an illusion, Rousseau maintains, because it is entirely a

product of the imagination. It is, however, illusory in another sense. What it does is not hide the presence of a real relation, rather it reveals the emptiness of independence conceived in absolute terms.

Sophy's best prospect – marriage – will only produce a seamless being to the extent that she is subsumed under the authority of her husband.<sup>64</sup> Ironically, her independence in the choice of marriage partners is encouraged by seemingly liberal parents who wish “to make (her her) own mistress” so that she can choose her husband in “full liberty”.<sup>65</sup> However, this liberty is subject to the “opinion of others”. She is permitted to “judge for (her)self until” the danger of fascination swamping reason and the threat of filial abrogation of responsibility arise. In both pre-married and married life autonomy only exists against an ultimate background of authority.

#### A NATURAL LANGUAGE

Rousseau identifies this condition of monadic unity as the only condition of freedom. Sartre recalls Rousseau's systematic premises when he argues that the subject is essentially a consciousness never at one with itself, seeking a self-enclosed matter of factness.<sup>66</sup> Emile's education is founded on the incompatibility between the openness of subjectivity and the ideal state of quiescence. For Rousseau, the education attempts to recapture the homeostasis of nature for Emile. This calm of nature represents a condition in which the subject is controlled only by the forces of nature, or 'necessity'. Emile's ontogenesis – the preservation of his natural development – is an attempt to maintain the totality of the subject. However, detotalisation occurs in the temporal lag between stages because then the subject is forced to relate to itself as a not-self - that is, a current self (Me) encountering its current limit with a self to come

(I). Paradoxically, to be itself the subject would have to exceed itself because this temporal lag between I (self-conscious subject) and Me (object of consciousness) is both necessary to identity and opens the subject to uncertainty.

What is revealed in Sophy's persona is in fact equally revealing of Emile, and of the status of the education and its search for a theoretical perspective uncompromised by temporal and linguistic displacements. Emile is subjected to a pedagogy whose effects are to remain 'imperceptible' to him. As he moves from one relation to another, and from circumstance to circumstance, he is not to be made to feel the context dependency of his condition. Thus, the Tutor contrasts Emile's education to one in which the subject passes through "many hands" – but can only secure the difference by ensuring that he and the nurse "seem like one".<sup>67</sup> What is imperceptible to Emile is the deposition of a germ of otherness in the constitution of his identity in the forms of the exteriority of another will, and of the displacement of language from nature. Emile's condition is imperceptible to him because the education is presented as a restatement of the same, a locating of the thing rather than a hermeneutics of revisable interpretations.

The fable of the 'Fox and the Crow' explores the workings of a powerful cultural mythology representing reality to the child in such a way that "they get hold of it in the wrong sense".<sup>68</sup> The sense in which the child gets hold of reality wrongly is that he grasps it by means of language rather than directly. The world is semanticised ("Word! Words! Words!"<sup>69</sup>) in direct contradiction to the prime tenet of the education which is to show the thing rather than use the word or symbol. The fable establishes the full range of possible substitutions in the poetic realm. In that domain the trickster-fox is the producer of a perverse discourse which can "compare qualities as

different as those of song and plumage”.<sup>70</sup> In the fable, conventional substitution is so entrenched as to function as natural signification. Alarm is expressed at the mention of the phoenix: “All of a sudden we are floundering in the lies of antiquity – we are on the edge of mythology.”<sup>71</sup> The phoenix introduces an irreconcilable difference between sign and signified in which nothing is taken for something, in which ground completely gives way at “the edge”. Rousseau consistently evokes the dangerous edge, the place where ground suddenly and irretrievably gives way, as a threshold between ontogenetic stages of development and levels of understanding which needs to be negotiated through revised conceptions of what constitutes adequate foundations: “One language supplants another” – “this progress is quite natural.”<sup>72</sup>

Being ‘at the edge’ therefore introduces liminality rather than utter groundlessness. Language cannot be completely purified of strategic and rhetorical effects because there are no firm boundaries between language games. To be at the edge is to be in-between, to work with the reality of an original displacement or metaphor as the condition of consciousness – not knowledge ‘is’ but knowledge ‘as’. The latter is the distinctive sign of meaning. When the Tutor teaches Emile to find his way through the world without the aid of maps he presents this as an education in the direct apprehension of natural phenomena. Lost in the forest of Montmorency and “without a landmark to guide us”<sup>73</sup> Emile and the Tutor attempt to return to the town without knowing where to look. Rousseau is here interested to address the central epistemic problem of how anything which was once unknown can be known. What is being discovered, then, is consciousness, or method – “how to find out for himself”.<sup>74</sup> The thinking and judging subject, then, is the subject of this episode. In particular, it is the

subject of the opacity of the Me to the I – that is, the formative process of the I not completely retrievable by the I.

In turning Emile's thoughts towards the conditions of knowledge the Tutor provides him with what Rousseau elsewhere calls "the means to cease being a savage."<sup>75</sup> The process is a demonstration of what is required to bridge "the distance between pure sensation and the simplest knowledge".<sup>76</sup> This distance is measured and bridged by signs, which at the same time indicate the direction to travel and bar access to the destination. At Montmorency, "a mere thicket"<sup>77</sup> hides the town from view and instigates the process of reading signs to indicate direction, distance and time. The sign is a sign because it leads from one place to another, and not because it is 'itself' anything. In fact, the sign, which is essential to the process of understanding, does not make more present but further displaces and conceals. The distance from sensation to knowledge is the admission of an essential indirectness, just as the researches in the forest were inaugurated by wandering, aimlessly at first and then more determinedly.

Knowledge is symbolisation, the translation of the object into language. However, the condition of translation is original and is not the act performed on a presumed *ur-text*. Rousseau is forced to admit this when he says – having first displaced the role of maps in geographical education – "no matter whether he carries maps in his head, provided he understands what they mean and has a clear idea of making them."<sup>78</sup> The education in orientation appears to occur in an asemic space. However, this is only because the 'original' marking – the Tutor's education of Emile in seeing as 'seeing as' – is not revealed until it is re-marked.<sup>79</sup> This retroactivity of effect is revealed when Emile, delighted by the discovery of the town, acknowledges his debt to the

mediating code: "Emile (clapping his hands): 'O, I can see Montmorency ...

Astronomy is some use after all ..." <sup>80</sup>

Rousseau argues that fables are not suitable for children but suitable for adults. <sup>81</sup>

Sophy is fabular (a product of the imagination) in the sense that she, too, has been semanticised. Successful semanticisation for Rousseau means mimesis. The best example of this is musical. Melody is mimetic because – like Sophy prior to Emile's meeting her – "it is in the reader's mind all along." <sup>82</sup> By this Rousseau means that "in a melody, sounds act on us ... as signs of our affections." <sup>83</sup> Nonetheless, "one has to understand the language in which one is being addressed if one is to be moved by what one is told." <sup>84</sup> Successful mimesis, then, understands that things of themselves are inaccessible and must be mediated by discourse: "objects have to speak in order to make themselves heard; in every imitation some sort of discourse must always complement the voice of nature." <sup>85</sup> Even the most direct access to nature lacks immediacy: "for we cannot touch, see, or hear, except as we have been taught." <sup>86</sup>

Sophy is allowed to wear cosmetics to the extent that they intensify her beauty – that is, emphasise nature. This permissible semanticisation marks (and obscures) the subject as a product of substitution: that autonomy is an act of metaphorisation to the extent that the subject enters relations with others and through them negotiates boundaries of identity and discourse. Meaning only occurs when statements are situated in a context of other statements. The I therefore arises in a place foreign to it, where forces of otherness once dominated. To recognise itself, it must subjectify the site of alienation. <sup>87</sup> In *Emile*, this subjectification is figured in the student occupying the place of the Tutor. The goal of the education is said to be to dialecticise isolated terms, to introduce the first signifier (the Tutor) to another (Emile) and to forge



meaning from the relation. The subject is precipitated by dialecticising the master signifier so as to bring other signifiers into new relations with the cause. However, the terms of subjectivity remain dualistic and the subject cannot project itself as a self-positing consciousness. Because reflection is unable to lift the subject out of the world of objects the only possible mediation is a totality spanning both intersubjective relations and objective authority – the Tutor. The rule of ‘one teacher for every student’<sup>88</sup> asserted at the outset of the education exists to suppress the experience of difference, disunity, and dissonance between self and society which are essential to the emergence of self-consciousness.

#### THE COMMAND

Hermeneutics argues that consciousness of the limit develops from the challenge to integrate the unexpected. Subjective self-consciousness emerges from the sense of anticipation that comes from a world of open possibilities constantly moving towards that which is not.<sup>89</sup> Self-consciousness less likely to develop in a controlled environment, where the encounter with novelty is diminished, since the sense of self is a dialectic between the present of consciousness mediating between the anticipated (not yet / self as lack) and the immediate past of consciousness. A pluralistic community is therefore central to the practice of hermeneutics because challenges to self-understanding can only be issued from beyond the sphere of familiar knowledge and conversation partners. Rousseau, however, devalues the tension inherent in an open future, placing a higher value on consistency instead. Indeed, it is extraordinary that in his discussion of the establishment of culture (as agriculture) Rousseau should posit pre-existing unnatural qualities of labour and foresight in nature itself.<sup>90</sup> The

principle of agriculture is “known’ prior to its practice<sup>91</sup> and thus, as an idea, is anticipated.

The education, therefore, raises the prospect of autonomy only to nullify it. In hermeneutic terms, once interpretation is installed above epistemic foundations the process of justification becomes dialogic and dialogue unlimited. The Tutor’s discourse, however, must form part of the conditions of objectivity. This is achieved when the source of instruction as another’s will is obscured.<sup>92</sup> What is ultimately to be hidden is the structure of the subject’s identity as the internalisation of an external limit. On the one hand, the individual is molded on the natural object as speech follows need.<sup>93</sup> On the other hand, speech is ‘imperceptibly’ modeled on the Tutor – “the pattern he shall copy”.<sup>94</sup> Like the ‘innocent’ semanticisation of nature through music, the commanding will is not additional to the conditions of possibility of nature, understanding or subjectivity. The Tutor’s commands are a force of nature rather than the expression of another: “let the curb be force, not authority ... do not forbid him but prevent him ... Let your ‘no’ once uttered be a wall of brass.”<sup>95</sup> The interiorisation of authority removes the need for correction and conflict which would itself present the child with the opportunity for resolution through a transcendence of his role as a dependent. However, the child’s attention is numbed by being ‘naturalised’ (based on need alone) and turned away from the intersubjective context in which need both arises and is mediated by speech.

The subject’s displacement from itself is mediated in other ways. Emile’s docility is secured by maintaining a rigid boundary between his current contentedness and any ambitions for higher reflexivity. The problem of divinity, for instance, is settled by negation. Since it is not possible to understand the fundamental fact that God ‘is’, the

Tutor counsels that it is better for the child to have no ideas of it than to have unworthy ideas.<sup>96</sup> That is, it is better for the child to consider that God exists and that this underpins the science of his education and the facticity of his social position, than for him to think that nothing does, or that God can only be understood metaphorically (in terms of 'as') which tends to endless regress. Here Emile encounters the original aporia of language – that 'is' is necessary but incapable of signifying. What it marks is meant to be self-evident. However, self-evidence is at once the end of language, and the condition of language: 'is' appropriates the human subject as the subject of language, and bars it from entry into the real which 'is' marks the entry point to.

Emile's indifference to things beyond his reach invokes the oedipal docility of the pedagogy: the only proper response to the incomprehensibility of God is to follow the father's religion. The education admits that the symbolic order has no place for truth as it reveals that at the point of greatest freedom – the freedom to choose faith, or the ground of the self-grounding system (analogously in Sophy's case, the freedom to be bound to whatever master she desired through marriage) – autonomy is subordinated to authority. Indeed, the individual is dissolved in a self-grounding system, and only acquires meaning through this subsumption to it. Incomprehensibility refers to what it is not possible to assume the observer's position with respect to, without revealing the observer as an observed. Incomprehensibility in this sense reveals that one only sees what one already knows – that meaning occurs within the hermeneutic circle.

Emile is never articulated as both observer and observed, since the source of the perspective of the observer is the other. The source of the observer's perspective is therefore the internalised limit, the not-self. Perspective is the command built into the very conditions of appearance and availability of the thing (the observed self, or Me).

It is what Rousseau identifies as the supplemental discourse par excellence: “the very illusions of perspective are necessary if we are to arrive at a knowledge of space and compare one part of space with another. Without false appearances we should never see anything at a distance ... distance would have no existence for us.”<sup>97</sup> Apart from this function with respect to its object, perspective has a function with respect to the whole system – it justifies supplementarity.<sup>98</sup> The Tutor’s command is as silent as perspective is blind. The Tutor’s mediation is as necessary as perspective is dispersed.

Articulating the interdependency of self (observer) and other (observed) would require the self to remain an object of knowledge. Self-determination is the capacity to adjust to the limit of the self by negating the not-self – to convert the other into the self. However, the theory of ontogenesis represents an arrested form of development – the self remaining at the level of the object self, without the development of reflexivity. Arrest at this level determines the child as dependent.<sup>99</sup> Emile is both not fully recognised by the other (as an independent self) and confined to self-identification as the object self that he takes himself to be<sup>100</sup> – so that, at the end of his education, he chooses to remain what the Tutor has made him. Emile’s self-ascription is confined to the Tutor’s recognition of Emile as mirroring him (“you are my work”<sup>101</sup>). Emile is only recognised and recognisable to the extent that he is like, or mediated by, the Tutor.

#### SEE AND BE SEEN

For Sartre, recognition by another consciousness (the look of the other) mediates identity and puts the subject in the position of one such subject amongst others.<sup>102</sup> In fact, it is not the subject’s seeing but its being seen that constitutes its subjectivity, in

that self-description is initiated once the subject becomes the object of a description by the other. Objectification remains central and the subject is repelled by their fixation under the gaze, rather than an involvement in communication. The constitution of the subject under the gaze lacks the capacity to articulate intersubjectivity, multiple position taking and negotiation available to linguistic exchange.<sup>103</sup> In other words subjectivity is only constituted by and when the gaze is returned to the subject; it is intersubjectively constituted founded on acts of mediation and reciprocation.

For Mead, self-consciousness is the essence of identity: subjective unity is secured by giving the I the power to transform the Me under circumstances which threaten to destabilise the relation. For Rousseau, a number of problems arise. Firstly, this model of personal autonomy determines self-understanding as always refracted through the lens of the acquired role. Because *Emile* allows for no individual-society dialectic, any compromise of individuality is diagnosed as alienating. Self-realisation therefore is ideal or the self is systematically distorted and determined. Secondly, for Rousseau, threats to the stability of identity are not resolved by giving a reflective subject the power to reorganise the socially embedded object-self. A scenario in which the I responds to the Me entails the subject being several things at once, and Rousseau's education is grounded in the recognition of a natural ontogenesis of development whereby the subject progresses from one stage of completion to another, one static system emerging from another.

There are, however, no intersubjective processes in *Emile*. Communication has an inner negativity. There are, however, intersubjective preliminaries presented as objective conditions. The 'imperceptible' actions of the Tutor, for example, is the

rendering opaque of intersubjective conditions. Rousseau begins from the situation of 'recognition' as the fixation of the subject of and by the look, and concludes with the necessary failure of interaction.<sup>104</sup> The logic of the gaze is psychologised into *amour propre* which represents the point of failure of interaction.<sup>105</sup> Wanting to be desired leads the subject to want to be preferred above others. The idyllic festival at the waterhole<sup>106</sup> spirals into violence and bloodshed as a result. In the *Social Contract*, because interaction is the vehicle for coercion and domination, so the formation of the General Will is conducted under conditions in which no communication is permitted.<sup>107</sup>

To avoid being reified the subject must reverse the direction of the interaction. The self that feels restricted and inhibited by the other, returns that sense of inhibition and inhibits the other – and in so doing inhibits itself.<sup>108</sup> Reciprocal objectification destroys communication. Emile both directs objectification at the other saying of a refused request that "it was impossible" and resists being a participant in the other's gaze.<sup>109</sup> Emile makes the social world a world of mutual objectifications where concrete relations are relations of subjugation and instrumentalisation. A relation of communicative agreement between subjects is not possible since one subject must find themselves in a permanently objectified state.<sup>110</sup> How, then, is conflict overcome? For Rousseau, this means making relations a relation among objects in the sense that verifiable objective conditions become the basis for intersubjective validity. "Use" is Rousseau's universal standard, and the means by which to guide and judge the value of the child's development and the education's achievements.<sup>111</sup> The child may legitimately solicit responses from the Tutor only by means of the issue of 'use'. *Robinson Crusoe*, the only book allowed Emile in his education, promotes use

value.<sup>112</sup> The pursuer of useful things, such as Crusoe, is the true scientist – and science is the basis of the education in autonomy. The science of utility, then, is the normative foundation of *Emile*. It provides, says Rousseau, the “standard of comparison”<sup>113</sup> since it is disenchanted to the extent that it is unaffected by the relations between things established in society. Cultural traditions, argues Rousseau, can no longer provide grounds for value interpretation and self-interpretation: will formation (somehow) occurs best when the individual places himself outside society.<sup>114</sup>

However, the only ground for transcending convention is the natural world, which is subject indifferent. The disenchanted relation of the subject to the object is transferred from subject-object to subject-subject relations. Rousseau struggles to point to the relevance of the scientific attitude to morality. By promoting a spirit of unaffected observation and inquiry in *Emile*, the Tutor can teach his charge to “form his judgment rather than teach him your own”.<sup>115</sup> So constituted, the child will not be swayed by a sympathetic appeal until he has first judged the “worth” of the “sentiments” behind the appeal. Ultimately, the worth of the other’s sentiments will be based on their ‘use’ – with no explanation as to what it means to assess the ‘use’ of a sentiment. Individuals are not related to each other or to norms by anything as impersonal or neutral as the rational consent promoted here.

If the only fruitful attitude towards nature is that of the observer-scientist, and if this – rather than a discursive-communicative – is the model for normative evaluations of, and relations with, others, then social relations are only valid to the extent that they assume instrumentalised form.<sup>116</sup> This is indeed *Emile*’s position: in his view, others are relevant to him only as tools.<sup>117</sup> *Emile* in fact takes the same attitude towards inner

nature as outer nature, giving rise to a social world (and a private sphere) marked by indifference, coldness and strategic actions. Self-mastery, prediction and control characterise inter- and intra-subjective relations removing nature from the realm of *natura naturans* and making it an object of domination.<sup>118</sup>

The problem with Rousseau, as with Sartre, is that the key interactive situation of 'being seen' is described in a reductivist manner. The scenes of emerging passion at the waterhole – where subjects gaze and are gazed upon, and the initial impulse of love turns to pride, then jealousy resulting in bloodshed, in an escalation of violence – translates the struggle for recognition into a struggle for self-assertion. Two things need to be said about the discourse of the gaze. Firstly, the look is not an abstraction absolutely other to the subject. The look emerges from a social context in which the subject is a participant. The look therefore means something and conveys that meaning - questioning, consenting, imploring, disapproving, skepticism.<sup>119</sup> Secondly, the look of the other is more qualified than the property of fixing the subject into an object allows – it is evaluative in the sense that it is open and relational and invites a response. The object of the gaze assigns a positive or negative ascription to it and responds accordingly. The look can be interrogated and clarified. It can also be the object of a demand that it declare or reveal itself. The look is normatively significant (a look of hate, the look of love, a look of contempt) and meaningful to the subject. We take a position with respect to these (to some degree internalise these role-related attitudes) because they occur in normative contexts. That is, the look cannot be abstracted from this context of social interaction.

No look, therefore, is a metaphysical condition of objectification – it is a moral reaction. The specific meaning of the look of the other is decisive in the sense that



through the look of the other one becomes an object to oneself in the linguistic mode. The subject's response depends on some degree of personal self-understanding – initiated by taking the attitude of the other towards oneself.<sup>120</sup> Subjectivity is inseparable from this degree of normative self-understanding. Here, role and self are conducted as a negotiable relation – allowing different roles to be exercised in different contexts without losing one's identity (being reified by the other).<sup>121</sup> The sense of self and self-worth (self-affirmation) occurs through self-recognition which is inseparable from attaining a specific social place. Self-consciousness (autonomy), therefore, cannot be a sense of self-affirmation attained irrespective of the good.<sup>122</sup>

The look does not simply have a reifying effect (an undifferentiated 'being seen'). It is not identification with a role, but an offer to the subject to occupy a role – it is an offer of meaning – which the subject may respond to by accepting or rejecting.<sup>123</sup> The role is necessary but not sufficient to self-constitution. One cannot simply affirm the role since that would fix the subject in a conventional form. Neither can one simply reject the role, since then one would be repeating Rawls' empty 'original position' and rejecting the basis for developing independence. Subjectivity is completed self-reflexively, by means of the subject selecting their role. However, in *Emile*, only one offer is made, and only one role offered, so that the self-relation is controlled by the role Emile plays with respect to the Tutor.

Rousseau refers to an episode in Homer where the son of Hector is cured of fear.<sup>124</sup> The scene described is one where a helmet worn by Hector frightens the young boy. The mother reassures the apprehensive child until Hector finally removes the helmet and the child's composure returns. The scene is constructed in a relay of recognitions and misrecognitions. First, the helmet obscures the father who is unrecognisable

behind it. The child, unable to identify with the appropriate figure wins a smile from the mother who thereby bestows her recognition upon him. The child's identity in this passage of signification between subjects is, however, only provisional. Most reassuring, most identity-confirming of all gestures occurs when the child recognises the father.

Rousseau reconstructs the scene from the Iliad with an emphasis on the articulation of gazes not found in the original. The looks are highly differentiated, and clearly evaluative. Significantly, they occur within the context of the normative structure of the family. In the oedipal terms of role structuring which is central to *Emile*, the central fear for the child is the fear of castration which the process is designed to allay. The child is made only one acceptable offer on this occasion. The offer to identify with the mother, or to internalise that gaze as a prospective source of norms arises momentarily, and is accepted with pleasure, but assumes a secondary importance in the context of a scene framed by paternal identity and authority. The threatening father is, at first, outside the relay of looks between mother and child. The removal of the helmet figures the child's castration, the precondition of identity arising in the context of the legitimate family.

This episode illustrates that subjectivity is the dynamic of the self as an object of social expectation – and the response the individual gives to the normative expectations of others. Pre-existing norms are therefore necessary to autonomy. Norms, embodied in the look, do not simply negate. The father's appearance on the scene from behind the helmet enters the discourse of evaluative statements passing between mother and child and controls them. His affirmation, and the child's acceptance, of identity occurs by means of a rejection which is the negation of a

negation. The mother's affirmation of the child is retrospectively designated as the negation of a legitimate identity through the establishment of an exclusive relation. What the child identifies, then, is not simple refusal but a new universal conception directed towards gaining recognition by others. Even in this most formal context and the most stringent adherence to the law, the self does not simply confirm itself as a social reflection.

Rousseau's greatest concern is that the child's earliest ideas will be those of the 'tyrant' or the 'slave'.<sup>125</sup> In the former he commands before he can speak, whilst the latter means he obeys before he can act. In the first place the child refutes the social order prior to accession to the symbolic, and gives up all possibility of sociability.<sup>126</sup> The 'no' ungrounded in the experience of a social role is an empty gesture. In the second place, the pure 'yes' to the social command forgoes any possibility of autonomous development. Rousseau's solution is to return the child to a condition of 'natural' docility – to expose him to appropriate pain in order to develop his sense of pity for others.

Emile's education is a training in docility, but one tantamount to paternal authority and filial duty. The second book of *Emile* provides not only numerous examples, but a clear program, of oedipal education fit for training a son to succeed to a proper place in his father's house, wherein the only 'wounds' he feels are the necessary ones of castration. The anecdotal material in Book Two refers to 'princes' and heirs'.

Rousseau maintains that he only trains 'men', not 'princes', but his examples are significant since they undergird and direct Emile's own upbringing. In one instance, the author recollects a 'triumph' of his own in which the child was returned to a true position with respect to his father.<sup>127</sup> Paternal and natural education are exactly

symmetrical. Exposed to the small infirmities of a 'castrating' nature (a studied paradox), the child is kept from complete destruction. It is not insignificant in this case that the son's position relative to his father is directly opposed to his position relative to his mother – for whom he is “the most important person in the world”<sup>128</sup> – and which is necessarily sundered. The child wanders through the environs of his father's estate “alone and unprotected”<sup>129</sup> albeit under constant surveillance, until he returns home, repositioned in the paternal register, “ashamed and humbled, afraid to look me in the face.”<sup>130</sup> The father has sanctioned the educator's method because he refused to have “a rebel in my house.”<sup>131</sup>

The Homeric scene arises in the context of rule based communications. However, it contains an (unrealised) capacity for the subject to respond to a prescriptive sentence (rule), and thereby to distinguish intersubjective relations from the stimulus-response model of natural causation. Subject and object are no longer bound by cause-effect model of interaction.<sup>132</sup> In one episode Emile and his Tutor watch a conjuror perform a trick at a fair.<sup>133</sup> The conjuror makes a wax duck act more or less like a real one, attracting it towards a piece of bread held in his hand, by means of a hidden magnet. Emile and the Tutor set out to discover the scientific principle behind the trick. They do so and Emile is invited to demonstrate his discovery before the audience at the conjuror's next performance. Unable to bring the duck under the same degree of control as the conjuror despite being in possession of the 'principle' behind the illusion, Emile experiences intense shame when his magic fails before the onlookers.<sup>134</sup>

The meaning of objects remains unquestioned as long as action with respect to those objects proceeds as normal. However, tension between action and expectation results

in the analysis of actions and the objects they derive their content from. Emile is unable to resolve conflict by simply reorganising objects within the same schema – the ‘principle of magnetism’. New meanings are therefore sought. The subject emerges in this temporal interstice between the passing away of the old universals, and new universals yet to come. However, the situation reinscribes Emile into a conventional role. The conjuror accuses the Tutor of wrongly letting Emile have his way and reminding him that “your experience should be his guide”.<sup>135</sup> The Tutor, equally ashamed, concurs and promises that the episode will not be repeated.

This question is designed to ‘imperceptibly’ deliver Emile into the Tutor’s hands by providing the education with new indispensable grounds, which the painful memories of shame and confusion permit without resistance. The scene is presented to resolve the problem of temporal disjunction in the child’s development – of pride rather than maturity leading intellect. However, it does so by fixing the child in the gaze of the expectant onlookers who then register their disapproval and derision. There is no evidence here of a freedom of response in which good reasons must be given as the justification for following a rule.<sup>136</sup> The child merely internalises the crowd’s evaluation and adopts it as the limit of his development. Nonetheless, a partner of discourse<sup>137</sup> is implied since the text admits of the relation between Tutor and pupil that “the time is coming when our relation must be changed, when the severity of the master must give way to the friendship of the comrade.”<sup>138</sup> In other words, the subject cannot understand himself without understanding social relations, and will be unable to reevaluate identity without reinterpreting social relations.

The fact that the new pedagogy meets with the child’s unstinting approval suggests strongly that the conjuror’s and the Tutor’s pronouncements are responses, or

articulations which anticipate a response from Emile. Approval is one such response, but not the only possibility. He may critique historical society and posit self-respect from the point of view of a better or ideal society.<sup>139</sup> Emile and the Tutor are invited to be guests of the conjuror and are let “in on the secret” of his trick, “but do not tell”.<sup>140</sup> In fact, the only secret being kept is the one Emile is not in on – the new equivocation introduced into (but subsequently reinforced in) the rule-bound principle of education. Commitment to a course of action is still rational only in the sense of being bound by ‘nature’ from the scientist-observer’s point of view, not by good reasons raised in intersubjective contexts. The only alternative to role fixation in *Emile* is skepticism – that is to say, an undermining of objectivity and hence subjective collapse.

The child is exposed to nature in order to develop a non-negotiable boundary of subjective identity. Impregnability of monadic selfhood is prized above the flexible rearticulations of available norms in novel situations. Exposed to nature the child becomes familiar with threats and develops a “coat of mail”.<sup>141</sup> The child is being educated to take no situation as normal, to develop no expectations, nor cognitive habits with respect to causal patterns. Since the only rule is necessity, necessity dictates the absence of a covering rule.<sup>142</sup> The child could be said to be developing no role identity. In fact, the unbreachable boundary suggests a developmental itinerary in which the role is fixed and unmaleable. Indeed, as the child’s freedom is defined as being regulated by the force of things rather than by the commands of others,<sup>143</sup> an absolute boundary around the role is constructed.

Emile provokes no response when he breaks objects because it is explained that he is not the cause or agent of the breakage which occurred ‘by itself’.<sup>144</sup> However, the

relation between things and bodies is not natural and direct but mediated.<sup>145</sup> The body and the body-thing interface are part of the subject's social identity. Thus, the refusal to assign blame or identify cause raises an absolute boundary between Emile and others, by failing to acknowledge their position in a discursive system. Things, therefore, do not 'prevent without forbidding',<sup>146</sup> as Rousseau requires since they do not belong to a time prior to prohibition, or symbolic interdiction. The absolute separation of self from things represents a rigid negation of the other and rigidly determines identity without the possibility of negotiation.<sup>147</sup>

#### A HIGHER ORDER

Rousseau seeks to construct a guiding theory and to avoid the pitfalls of hermeneutic understanding. He dismisses the authority of the scriptures on the basis that it is the product not of the text per se, but commentators, interpreters and mediators.<sup>148</sup> Furthermore, the original language has been translated, and no native speakers of the original remain.<sup>149</sup> On the basis of the importance of these first and second order mediations he endorses the abandonment of the text in favour of nature rather than attempt to reconstruct the original or true meaning. Because biblical exegesis is unable to found morality Rousseau dismisses the authority of what passes for Christianity. Unable to found conviction either within the institution or outside it he is forced to maintain an attitude of 'reverent doubt'.<sup>150</sup> Choosing not to submit, the subject renegotiates the authority of long-standing norms and thereby emerges as subject. The conservative hypothesis of the Creed reasserts itself, however, when, in the face of no certain knowledge, the law of the nation and the father of the family form the basis of public order.

The 'Creed of the Savoyard Vicar' releases the potential for higher order reflexivity, at the same time as it contains it.<sup>151</sup> Considering the effects of Cartesian doubt the Vicar says "we scarcely know whether man is one or many."<sup>152</sup> The only solution to the multiplication of doubt is to 'follow the inner light'.<sup>153</sup> Reflection unifies the subject since "I alone ... produce it". The 'many' now recenters on the 'one' which becomes a first principle. However, multiplicity returns when the Vicar admits the incomprehensibility of the union of mind and body.<sup>154</sup> The only solution to this dilemma is to posit the wholeness of the will – making it whole to the extent that it is independent of the senses.<sup>155</sup> The search for an irreducible unity has marginalised the possibility of an intersubjective solution to the fracturing of identity. Knowledge of the difference between right and wrong is posited in conscience. However, whilst the child is invited to examine himself in the light of all that is revealed through the sermon, this is restricted by the Tutor's reminder that at this stage in his development it is better for him to think as the Tutor does.<sup>156</sup>

As truth fails to appear in the symbolic order and its textual practices and interpretive institutions, authority is merely re-embedded. Hermeneutic reconfigurations of past understandings would posit a different solution, but Rousseau's stringent requirement for certainty prevents it. Instead, strong individualism (in the form of 'conscience' – a centered, 'inner light') emerges to take the place of community. Nation and family are idealised communities able to provide the individual with recognition and consent. When his education is complete, Emile assumes his place 'in' society by occupying a farm physically separate from but politically connected to the city.<sup>157</sup> In fact, life on the farm is invested with the ideal trappings of republican life and represents a lost and imaginatively reconstructed Roman order. Virgilian georgic is the genre



controlling Aemilian social formations, implying a condemnation of Roman decadence, a relocation of centers of sociability midway between barbarism and full civility, and a value structure of *labor, usus, and arte*, rather than the pastoral values of spontaneity and *otium*.<sup>158</sup> Indeed, authentic identity only appears to rest on the abstraction of the subject from the community and his reliance on exclusively truth-sensitive cognition producing significations independent of others. Emile, indeed, bases his identity on a redetermination of existing practices of the self – and not at all on scientific criteria.

Given that the telos of the education, and the criteria for assessing, is autonomy – Emile’s independence from the Tutor – his having “decided to be what you have made me of my own free will”<sup>159</sup> appears (but only appears) decidedly inauthentic. The *Social Contract* recognises the extent to which social role and selfhood are mutually sustaining: “If there were no different interests one would scarcely sense the common interest.”<sup>160</sup> However, rather than a struggle for the mutual recognition of self-understanding the interactive situation is the context for maintaining a transcendent identity. The struggle for recognition may contain its own potential for resolution in the intersubjective recognition of claims to selfhood. However, interdependence in *Emile* is skewed towards a basis in strong individualism only to the extent that it reveals a countervailing tendency to reassign the basis of social autonomy to the legal order. The self-sufficiency of agrarian life is idealised because “there is only one man who gets his own way – he who can get it single-handed.”<sup>161</sup> However, the absolute boundary that this idealises as the basis of autonomous identity is only the necessary counterpart to absolute dependence. The education is in fact a georgic labour for the Tutor who fashions Emile as his product: “You are my

property, my child, my work.”<sup>162</sup> The legitimacy of one’s claims and self-interpretations is not a source of agreement. Instead, Emile’s identity is an internalisation of the Tutor’s identity to the extent that he equates “love of the Author of his being” with his natural “love of self”.<sup>163</sup>

The imperceptibility of the force which shapes him blocks Emile’s capacity to renegotiate the boundary between his identity and other’s. Emile internalises authority absolutely during the transformation of that authority from ‘mastery’ to ‘friendship’ which gives control the immediacy of self-motivation: “self-love put(s) him into your hands”.<sup>164</sup> The Tutor is the “middle term”<sup>165</sup> linking Emile to society. However, mediation is a dangerous concept in *Emile* because it represents a source of alienation. Therefore, the Tutor is not another (alienating) will but ‘another self’. This other self, however, does not enter into relations with Emile but represents the rigid identity of both parties linked in terms of absolute dependence: “I would have tutor and scholar so inseparable that they should regard their fate as one”.<sup>166</sup>

For Emile higher level subjectivity is a self-integration based on an ontology of selfhood – integration into a naturally, metaphysically determined, teleologically structured higher stage. Because Rousseau fails to historicise and socially contextualise the conditions for the strategic distortion of human interaction, interaction remains negative at an ontological (rather than historical) level. The pathology of communication is inherent rather than developmental and is therefore irreversible. Once constructed “the first link in ... (the) social order” is no longer amenable to validity testing and rational reconstruction.<sup>167</sup> Because interaction does not have a communicative intent it cannot distinguish between reaching an understanding and success – that is, exerting an influence on another.<sup>168</sup> So, argues

Rousseau, “the child’s first tears are prayers, beware lest they become commands”.<sup>169</sup>

This state of vigilance determines that techniques of surveillance are central to subjective development.

Rousseau explains why in the context of a speculative reconstructive theory of history. In a good – albeit primitive – societies, character is immediately available for inspection: “The good man is an Athlete who delights in fighting naked.”<sup>170</sup> Character is wedded to action with the same immanence as action to the body, and motivation is completely externalised. Assessments of others can be made “at first glance”.<sup>171</sup>

Similarly, Emile is both educable to the extent that he is perceptible, and to be rendered more perceptible by his education.<sup>172</sup> Rousseau advises guarding against the ‘indistinctiveness’ of city children.<sup>173</sup> Modern societies, he says, throw a “deceitful veil of politeness”<sup>174</sup> over genuine relations, and so are to be made subject to the paradigmatic sites of inspection, role construction and limit internalisation found in Geneva. In Geneva balls are arranged for the marriageable youths “where the eyes of the public are constantly open and upon them, forcing them to be reserved, modest, and to watch themselves most carefully.”<sup>175</sup>

Parry points out that the transparency of republican festivals is reinforced by surveillance: “A lord commissioner presides over the ceremonies. The elderly and particularly married women are observers and censors. A queen of the ball is elected as an example to the community of modest conduct. Through these censors the community acts as a partial spectator of individual behaviour.”<sup>176</sup> The passage is resonant with Rousseau’s discussion of Emile’s integrity based on the importance of public honour to Sophy: “What will people think?” Emile there internalised the prohibition as ‘virtue’ exercised in self-control.<sup>177</sup> Surveillance is an internalised

spectator which congeals the self around the role representing the permissible limits of expression. In Geneva governance through the censors constructs a correspondence between self and society which appears self-positing because the look is an evaluative device segregating recognition from oblivion. It is only through the internalisation of these normative limits that a sense of particularity concretises the individual who should “decide to be what the community has made him.”<sup>178</sup>

The form of identity promoted here is not autonomous because no higher order reflexivity (‘decision’) binds the individual to their role. For Rousseau, legitimate action in society is a product of the combination of the “utmost generality in content with utmost individuality in source”.<sup>179</sup> However, as a ‘source’ the individual merely doubles his role, and reproduces his persona in his person. In Geneva, the individualist indifference to standards cannot be solved except by an equally extreme reaction – the individual capitulation to standards.

#### BOUNDARY AND LIMIT

Aboulafia argues that the sense of self is a bounded quasi-totality in the sense that it has a redefinable boundary. This boundary is redefined by the subject’s response to normative situations, but only to the extent that this response is recognised.<sup>180</sup> This significant stage of consciousness is foreclosed in *Emile* at a number of levels. The father, for example, counters the child’s capacity to negate a negation with an absolute negation against which no subjective position can be taken.<sup>181</sup> Unrecognised, the subject’s power of negation (‘No’) remains alien to the subject, and prevents self-creation.<sup>182</sup> The Tutor on the one hand introduces ‘use’ value as a transcendental standard for the child to test ‘reality’. ‘What is the use of that?’ is the means the child

is given for legitimately soliciting responses from others.<sup>183</sup> More importantly, authority is the means put into the Tutor's hands to call an end to 'useless' questioning. The Tutor's 'no' is a universal negation without possibility of returning the negation, not an offer in relation to which the child is invited to respond in order for the subject to emerge.

For Rousseau, the worst possible education is one that 'hesitates' between the will of the educator and the will of the child.<sup>184</sup> The battle of wills occurs in a gap that artificially separates and assumes the irreconcilable conflict of 'being-for-ourselves' and 'being-for-others'.<sup>185</sup> In the place of this potential hesitancy Rousseau advises the constant prohibitive command: 'No'. However, the 'no' is thereby a signifier of the presence of the gap in the command between its issuance and its being followed. There is no automaticity to the action that responds to the command. Emile is a split subject, caught between the binding norm and the motivation (affective claims) to follow it.<sup>186</sup> The buried 'double negative',<sup>187</sup> that structures the 'no' admits the possibility of discourse, and thereby of a possible negotiation of the boundary between subjects and objects of command, between sources of authority and their targets. Ultimately, the conversion of utterance into intersubjective discourse opens the possibility for the subject to occupy the role of the other. However, for Rousseau, the respective wills of the child and the Tutor represent an essential discrepancy which cannot be reconstructed.

The sense of self results from a resolution of the conflict of wills – an integration of impulse (the self) and prohibition (the No). This is initiated by Emile identifying with the Tutor to decrease the tension in containing both the desire and the prohibition.<sup>188</sup> Autonomy is only fully realised, however, when the limit between internal and

external internalised as a property of consciousness is negotiated in the subject's intersubjective relations with society. Ultimately, silence – the refusal to communicate – becomes a source of assurance, of truth, and of power and authority. Making the 'no' a wall of brass<sup>189</sup> registers the refusal to be accountable and to justify it, to open the hermeneutic dialogue. The impersonality of the 'no' makes the utterance situation independent rather than embedded in interactive contexts. Rousseau makes it a wall of brass to extrude ambiguous and subjective tremblings from it – to dry it clean of uncertainty and open-endedness. The father who does not respond to his children when they speak to him ("What a father!"<sup>190</sup>) thereby establishes himself as father – he need not answer, he need only express his wishes, desires and orders.

The Tutor, as mediator, obscures the paradox of form – the dependence of the observer on the observed.<sup>191</sup> By means of a communicative prohibition the Tutor in fact privileges certain semantic performances (his negation) over others (negation allowed to all dialogic participants on the basis of their role as partners of discourse), monopolising the authority to control observations, and defuse paradoxes by linking orders of observation. Hesitation in education occurs because of a dual conception of the sign. On the one hand the sign is arbitrary, with no natural relation to the referent. On the other hand the sign represents the unity of difference between the signifier and the signified. Even Sophy is (and must be) 'adorned',<sup>192</sup> and the fable of the Fox and the Crow, rather than a relic of feudal mythology, is the condition of Enlightenment. Although the sign is without a referent, it establishes a relationship between the signifier and the signified (or first order and second order observations) that is the relationship of reference. The Tutor's 'no' is equally ambiguous. As a command it is not outside society – not a wall of brass – but within it and therefore the subject of a

response. That response calls forth the question and answer session between Tutor and child positing pedagogical instructions within a space of reasons. The dynamics of identity, in other words, can only be captured by second order observations: the observer observes how observers deal with objects that are only references to observations stabilised by other observations. There is no immediacy or transcendent subject of observation, only a communicative context of knowledge.

There cannot, therefore, in the absolute terms established in *Emile*, be any freedom, critique or will. Ferrara recognises that, for Rousseau, autonomy only appears in its negative form, as freedom from the effects of social pressure represented by the influence of others.<sup>193</sup> Ferrara's requirement is based on Mead's concept of the self. Habermas' conception of a discursively and communicatively, or intersubjectively, constituted self posits autonomy of a different order, and exposes *Emile* to a critique which Mead's descriptive concept cannot articulate. For Habermas, the subject comes to be in the place of the other where the other's utterance has opened the possibility of a response.<sup>194</sup> As long as the Tutor's command is considered absolute it cannot be refused. The 'No', however, is situated in contexts of interaction which necessarily establishes a conversational relationship since it anticipates the response of a conversation partner.<sup>195</sup> As an offer of meaning the 'No' ultimately depends on the response it draws forth. This response, importantly, is not predetermined. It is open whether the command will be confirmed or resisted, whether the subject will occupy the role or transcend it through a qualitatively different response. It is not, then, as Ferrara says, that the Tutor plays the role of an integrative ego function.<sup>196</sup> Rather, it is only in the breaching of objective autonomy and the openness of the subject to discourse that conditions of reflective autonomy are established.

1. Mitchell Aboulafia, *The Mediating Self: Mead, Sartre and Self-Determination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986) p.55.
2. G W F Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) p.27.
3. Seyla Benhabib, *Critique, Norm and Utopia: A Study of the Foundations of Critical Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986) p.81.
4. Mitchell Aboulafia, above n 1, p.57.
5. Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: A Selection* (London: W W Norton, 1977) Alan Sheridan (trans) p.4-13. See also Anika Lemaire, *Jacques Lacan* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977) pp.79-80, 176-80; Peter Dews, *Logics of Disintegration: Post-Structuralist Thought and the Claims of Critical Theory* (London: Verso, 1987) pp.54-5.
6. Slavoj Zizek, *Tarrying With The Negative: Kant, Hegel and the Critique of Ideology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993) pp.170-2.
7. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile, or On Education* (London: J M Dent, 1993) Barbara Foxley (trans) pp.124, 150.
8. Ibid, p.167.
9. S Ellenburg, *Rousseau's Political Theory: An Interpretation from Within* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976) argues for the unity of the identities of educated natural man and the citizen, pp.236, 314.
10. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Letter to Duschene May 23, 1762, *Correspondance Complete* (Paris: Pleiade, 1982) X, p.281.
11. Rousseau, *Emile*, above n 7, p.170.
12. See John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971) pp.17-21.
13. Ibid. On Rawls see R Dworkin, "The Original Position" in N Daniels (ed) *Reading Rawls: Critical Studies of A Theory of Justice* (New York: Basic Books Inc., no date) pp.16-53; R P Wolff, *Understanding Rawls: A Reconstruction and Critique of A Theory of Justice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977) pp.37-8.
14. M Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) p.14.
15. Ibid, p.180.
16. Rousseau, *Emile*, above n 7, p.170.
17. See generally, D Baecker (ed) *Problems of Form* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); specifically Niklas Luhman, 'Sign as Form', pp.46-63.
18. Niklas Luhman, 'Paradox of Form', in Baecker, above n 17, pp.15-26.
19. G Warnke, *Justice and Interpretation* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1993) p. 130.
20. See David Ingram, *Habermas and the Dialectic of Reason* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987) pp.172-88.
21. Warnke, above n 19, p.132.
22. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976) David E Linge (trans) p.157.
23. Jürgen Habermas, *Theory and Practice* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973) p.9.
24. Jürgen Habermas, 'Summation and Response', *Continuum* 8 1970, M Matissech (trans) pp.123-29, pp.128-9.
25. Warnke, above n 19, pp.141-2.
26. Jürgen Habermas, 'The Hermeneutic Claim to Universality' in *Contemporary Hermeneutics*, J Bleicher (ed) (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980) pp.181-211, p.191.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. See Warnke, above n 19, pp.144-5.
30. Ibid.
31. Jürgen Habermas, 'What is Universal Pragmatics?' in *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1979) p.12.
32. Jürgen Habermas, *On the Logic of the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1988) pp.143-70.
33. Habermas, above n 31, p.11.
34. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975) pp.263-4.
35. Jürgen Habermas, 'Reconstruction and Interpretation in the Social Sciences' in *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, Christine Lenhardt and Sherry Weber (trans) (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990) p.31.



36. The essays of Habermas which discuss, forecast and adumbrate the project of Universal Pragmatics include 'Toward a Theory of Communicative Competence' in *Recent Sociology* (New York: MacMillan, 1970) Hans Peter Dreitzel (ed) pp.114-48; 'Some Distinctions in Universal Pragmatics' *Theory and Society* 3 1976, pp.155-67; 'What is Universal Pragmatics', above n 31. For a discussion of Habermas' project see John B Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984) pp.255-302; G Warnke, above n 19, pp.135-57.
37. Habermas, 'What is Universal Pragmatics?' above n 31, p.2.
38. Ibid, p.8.
39. Ibid, p.3.
40. Thomas McCarthy, *Ideals and Illusions: On Reconstruction and Deconstruction in Contemporary Critical Theory* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1993) pp.132-3.
41. Jürgen Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, above n 31, p.107.
42. Jürgen Habermas, 'Individuation Through Socialisation: On George Herbert Mead's Theory of Subjectivity' in Jürgen Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995) William Mark Hohengarten (trans) pp.149-204.
43. Jürgen Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995) pp.63-5.
44. Ibid, p.53. See Ingram, above n 20, p.109.
45. Habermas, above n 42, pp.149-52. See Ingram, above n 20, p.110.
46. Habermas, above n 43, p.53. See Ingram, *ibid*.
47. Hegel, *Phenomenology*, above n 2, p.116.
48. See Aboulafia, above n 1, pp.102-06.
49. Rousseau, *Emile*, above n 7, p.394.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid, p.393.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid, pp.423-4.
54. Ibid, p.70.
55. Ibid, p.199.
56. Ibid, p.453.
57. Ibid, p.427.
58. Ibid, p.452.
59. Ibid.
60. Ibid, p.396.
61. Ibid, p.252.
62. Ibid, p.486.
63. Ibid, p.487.
64. Ibid, p.532.
65. Ibid, p.435.
66. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966) Hazel E Barnes (trans) pp.300-04. See also Axel Honneth, *The Fragmented World of the Social: Essays in Social and Political Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995) p.60.
67. Rousseau, *Emile*, above n 7, p.28.
68. Ibid, p.60.
69. Ibid, p.72.
70. Ibid, p.78.
71. Ibid, p.78.
72. Ibid, p.41. Further examples of the imagery of the dangerous edge are to be found at pp.233, 319-20. The abyss suggested by the edge is a Cartesian figure of doubt and the dislocation caused by doubt, see Rene Descartes, *Oeuvres et lettres* (Paris: Raymond, 1965) VI, p.24.
73. Rousseau, *Emile*, above n 7, p.143.
74. Ibid, p.134.
75. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin and the Foundations of Inequality Among Men* in *The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) Victor Gourevitch (trans) I [21].
76. Ibid, I[27]
77. Rousseau, *Emile*, above n 7, p.143.
78. Ibid, p.134.
79. Marc Froment-Meurice, *That is to Say: Heidegger's Poetics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) Jan Plug (trans) p.33.

80. Rousseau, *Emile*, above n 7, p.144.
81. Ibid, p.76.
82. Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages which Treats of Melody and Musical Imitation in The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) Victor Gourevitch (trans) 14 [6], pp.287-88.
83. Ibid, 15 [1], p.288.
84. Ibid, 15 [3], p.289.
85. Ibid, 14 [7], p.288.
86. Rousseau, *Emile*, above n 7, p.97.
87. See Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995) p.77.
88. Rousseau, *Emile*, above n 7, p.13.
89. Aboulafia, *The Mediating Self*, above n 1, pp.29-32.
90. Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, above n 75, I [22].
91. Ibid, II [22].
92. See Rousseau, *Emile*, above n 7, pp.133, 141, 150, and 151.
93. Ibid, p.46.
94. Ibid, p.59.
95. Ibid, pp.54-5.
96. Ibid, p.265.
97. Ibid, p.104.
98. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976) Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (trans) pp.149, 153-4.
99. See Aboulafia, *The Mediating Self*, above n 1, p.114.
100. Ibid, p.116.
101. Rousseau, *Emile*, above n 7, p.323.
102. Aboulafia, *The Mediating Self*, above n 1, pp.54-6.
103. For the necessary linguistification see Jürgen Habermas, 'The Paradigm Shift in Mead' in Mitchell Aboulafia (ed) *Philosophy, Social Theory, and the Thought of George Herbert Mead* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991) pp.137-68.
104. For a parallel mechanism in Sartre see Honneth, *The Fragmented World*, above n 66, p.161.
105. On 'amour propre' see John Charvet, *The Social Problem in the Philosophy of Rousseau* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974) ch. 3; N J H Dent, *Rousseau: An Introduction to His Psychological, Social and Political Theory* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988) pp37-86.
106. Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, above n 75, II [44].
107. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract in The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) Victor Gourevitch (trans) III [3], p.60.
108. See Aboulafia, *The Mediating Self*, above n 1, p.74.
109. Rousseau, *Emile*, above n 7, p.115.
110. Honneth, *The Fragmented World*, above n 66, p.162.
111. Rousseau, *Emile*, above n 7, p.170.
112. Ibid, p.176.
113. Ibid, p.177.
114. See J M Bernstein, *Recovering Ethical Life: Jürgen Habermas and the Future of Critical Theory* (London: Routledge, 1995) p.92.
115. Rousseau, *Emile*, above n 7, p.179.
116. McCarthy, *Ideals and Illusions*, above n 40, p.139.
117. Rousseau, *Emile*, above n 7, p.40.
118. McCarthy, *Ideals and Illusions*, above n 40, p.149.
119. Honneth, *The Fragmented World*, above n 66, p.164.
120. Ernst Tugendhat, 'Mead: Symbolic Interaction and the Self' in Aboulafia (ed) above n 103, pp.169-202, p.181.
121. Ibid, p.186.
122. Ibid, p.192.
123. Ibid, p.190.
124. Rousseau, *Emile*, above n 7, p.35.
125. Ibid, p.17.
126. Ibid, p.60.
127. Ibid, p.105.
128. Ibid, p.104.

129. Ibid.
130. Ibid, p.105.
131. Ibid.
132. See Gary A Cook, 'The Development of G. H. Mead's Social Psychology' in Aboulafia (ed) above n 103, p.92.
133. Rousseau, *Emile*, above n 7, pp.136-7.
134. Ibid, p.137.
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136. Habermas in *Postmetaphysical Thinking*, above n 42, pp.156-7.
137. Tugendhat, in Aboulafia (ed) above n 103, p.169.
138. Rousseau, *Emile*, above n 7, p.138.
139. See Bernstein, *Recovering Ethical Life*, above n 114, pp. 50-6.
140. Rousseau, *Emile*, above n 7, p.105.
141. Ibid, p.111.
142. Ibid, p.66.
143. Ibid, p.67.
144. Ibid, p.160
145. Aboulafia, *The Mediating Self*, above n 1, pp.78-80.
146. Rousseau, *Emile*, above n 7, p.58.
147. Aboulafia, *The Mediating Self*, above n 1, p.81.
148. Rousseau, *Emile*, above n 7, p.312.
149. Ibid, p.319.
150. Ibid, p.324.
151. See Bernstein, *Recovering Ethical Life*, above n 114, p.110, for the re-establishment of self-regard at a higher level after it is fractured by socialisation.
152. Rousseau, *Emile*, above n 7, p.276.
153. Ibid, p.277.
154. Ibid, p.283.
155. Ibid, p.290.
156. Ibid, p.274.
157. Ibid, p.457.
158. See M C J Putnam, *Vergil's Poems of the Earth: Studies in the Georgics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975) pp.82, 142, 144.
159. Rousseau, *Emile*, above n 7, pp.532-3.
160. Rousseau, *Social Contract*, above n 107, II [13].
161. Rousseau, *Emile*, above n 7, p.48.
162. Ibid, p.323.
163. Ibid, p.277.
164. Ibid, p.316.
165. Jürgen Habermas, 'The Unity of Reason in the Diversity of Its Voices', above n 42, pp.115-49, p.141.
166. Rousseau, *Emile*, above n 7, p.20.
167. Ibid, p.37; see also p.71.
168. Habermas, above n 42, p.138.
169. Rousseau, *Emile*, above n 7, p.37.
170. Rousseau, *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts*, above n 75, I [11].
171. Ibid, I [12].
172. Rousseau, *Emile*, above n 7, p.32.
173. Ibid, p.44.
174. Rousseau, *First Discourse*, above n 167, I [14].
175. Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Languages*, above n 82, p.128.
176. Geraint Parry, *Community and Republic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992) pp.117-18.
177. Rousseau, *Emile*, above n 7, p.489.
178. T Barnard, *Self-Direction and Political Legitimacy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982) p.28.
179. Rousseau, *Social Contract*, above n 107, IV [1]; see also Parry, *Community and Republic*, above n 176, p.118.
180. Aboulafia, *The Mediating Self*, above n 1, p.118.
181. Rousseau, *Emile*, above n 7, pp.103-04.
182. Ibid, pp.119, 124, 126.

183. Ibid, p.170.
184. Ibid, p.59.
185. Bernstein, *Recovering Ethical Life*, above n 114, p.95.
186. Bernstein, *ibid*, p.92, refers to the 'double men' in Rousseau's discussion on this matter.
187. On the polyvalence of the negative see Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, above n 87, pp.39-40.
188. Rousseau, *Emile*, above n 7, p.87.
189. *Ibid*, p.65.
190. *Ibid*, p.52.
191. See Luhman in Baecker, *Problems of Form*, above n 17.
192. Rousseau, *Emile*, above n 7, p.396.
193. Alessandro Ferrara, *Modernity and Authenticity: A Study of the Social and Ethical Thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993) p.26.
194. Habermas in Aboulafia (ed) above n 103, p.186.
195. Tugendat in Aboulafia (ed) above n 103, p.179.
196. Ferrara, *Modernity and Authenticity*, above n 193, pp.83-4.

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