

LECTURE ON A MASTER MIND

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU

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THERE are some circumstances in life, some lines in a book, where a great mind reveals itself totally, in a condensed, synthetic, and somewhat symbolic manner. Nothing, in my opinion, is more characteristic of Rousseau's mind than his experience, in the early autumn 1749, on the road to Vincennes, on a visit to his friend Diderot, then in prison. Let me immediately add: nothing is more characteristic of Rousseau's mind than the way he tells his readers about the sudden and decisive transport which seized him on reading, in the *Mercure de France*, the theme proposed by the Dijon Academy: 'Has the restoration of the Sciences and the Arts contributed to purify or to corrupt manners?' At that moment Rousseau, in a flash, becomes aware of the ideas which he was painstakingly to develop over the following years:

If anything resembled a sudden inspiration, it was the movement which began in me as I read this. All at once I felt myself dazzled by a thousand spark-lights; crowds of vivid ideas thronged into my mind with a force and confusion that threw me into unspeakable agitation; I felt my head whirling in a giddiness like that of intoxication. A violent palpitation oppressed me: unable to walk for difficulty of breathing, I sank under one of the trees of the avenue, and passed half an hour there in such a condition of excitement, that when I arose I saw that the front of my waistcoat was all wet with my tears, though I was wholly unconscious of shedding them. Ah, if I could even have written the quarter of what I saw and felt under that tree, with what clearness should I have brought out all the contradictions of our social system; with what simplicity I should have demonstrated that man is good naturally, and that by institutions only is he made bad.¹

What strikes us first here is the role played by the external stimulus given by the question of the Academy. The incitement came (or is said to have come) from the outside; it came unexpectedly, as if it were an accident. Speaking of the same event in a later account,² Rousseau insists even more on the

¹ Second letter to Malesherbes, 12 Jan. 1762.

² *Confessions*, book viii.

concurring circumstances: the heat of the afternoon, the fatigue from the walk, and, later on, Diderot's encouragements. Rousseau reconstructs the crucial event in a manner which should convince us that he was thrown into his literary career against his will: that moment of intellectual illumination was determined by external causes. Rousseau describes himself as only reacting under the active sting of a question linked with the prospective pride of becoming the prize-winner. He words his reaction in a remarkably passive style: his mind was first *invaded* by 'lights', by 'crowds of ideas', to be soon clouded, blinded, and submerged by the emotion resulting from the new insights. Rousseau seems to have had no real grasp over what happened inside himself. Yet if we continue to follow him, these ideas which were, so to say, imposed upon him, were wholly adequate ones. They were the Truth; it was the right answer to the question. Although received in a state of passivity, or perhaps because of it, these ideas coincided with a new birth, with a palingenesis: 'At the moment of reading this, I saw another universe and I became another man.'¹ The world and the self undergo a simultaneous metamorphosis. Rousseau comes anew to the world—to the new world of eloquence and protest. New powers awaken in him, at thirty-seven, springing from a certitude he was able, for just a short moment, to grasp in its entirety. Let me remind here that Rousseau's answer, as regards the moral effects of the restoration of the Sciences and Arts, is a negative one: the intensity of Rousseau's reaction is that which accompanies a passionate *refusal*.

Rousseau's sudden and emotional answer to the external challenge was to be later organized into a system—both an original and a coherent one, in my opinion. A most rational quest for the most effective mode of exposition begins right after the moment of ecstasy, in which the suprarational kind of knowledge and the infrarational phenomena of body response were so closely associated. Although Rousseau's system develops throughout several books which stylistically cannot be considered as parts of the same work, I am tempted to say that he tried to recapture in the unity of a tightly constructed chain of reasoning the truths which had overwhelmed him in the unique quality of an instant of universal awareness. He is at pains to reconstruct, by discursive means, what he had access to, by intuition, *uno intuitu*. But in the letter to Malesherbes I have

¹ *Confessions*, book viii.

just quoted, he insists that his different systematic books—the two *Discourses*, *Émile*, and the *Contrat social*—contain but a part of what was revealed to him on the road to Vincennes. What had been ‘seen and felt’ in a state of extreme lucidity could not be expounded later in its entirety. ‘All the rest has been lost’, says Rousseau, in words strangely similar to those of Coleridge explaining why *Kubla Khan* had to remain a fragment; ‘All the rest had passed away.’ In Rousseau, as in Coleridge, we find an idea and an intellectual attitude, which we might perhaps call romantic and which ascribes to the written word a dependent and sometimes an inferior value in comparison to a previous mental or existential experience. To express totally and adequately what has been ‘seen and felt’ in a dazzling immediacy is a requirement which cannot be totally met. Something has always to remain missing. Rousseau does not hesitate to go from one affirmation to the other: he speaks of his printed books as constituting a whole, a system, ‘un triste et grand système’, and almost simultaneously he tells us that they are only a fragment of a greater whole on which he has had too short a vision. This applies not only to the Vincennes ecstasy but to many other instances. One might think here that such an affirmation has the advantage of covering the written, manifest, system by the credit given to the previous unspoken, perhaps unutterable experience. Regardless of what might be found lacking or unsatisfactory in the system, the reader is invited to trust it on the basis of an inner evidence, deeply seen and felt, which is its alleged origin. In other words, the system is said to be legitimate, because in its manifold aspects it adds to its rational argumentation an implicit faithfulness to one unique founding intuition. Of course, you have to take Rousseau’s word for it: and this he asks you to do again and again.

Actually, Rousseau’s narration of his experience of illumination on the road to Vincennes goes further: he tells the reader that, having started to devote his life to the service of Truth (*vitam impendere vero* became his motto), he has given himself to the most fatal and cruel destiny. This he had not foreseen. ‘Diderot encouraged me to pursue my ideas, and to become a competitor for the premium. I did so, and from that moment I was ruined. All the rest of my misfortunes during my life were the inevitable effects of this moment of error.’¹ While the stimulus to his inner experience came from the outside, the

¹ *Confessions*, book viii. We follow W. Conyngham Mallory’s translation, New York, 1928, p. 541.

consequences of its literary expression exposed him once again to the outside: to hatred, calumny, envy, in brief to all the hostile powers of the outside world. His literary reputation was to make him the target of undeserved and unexpected attacks. In Rousseau's interpretation of his own destiny, the moment of intellectual insight is followed by a succession of events the last effects of which cannot be entirely mastered. From the beginning on, he asserts, his activity as a writer has been a deviation from the type of life nature intended him for. In many passages of the *Confessions* Rousseau assures us that he was really made for music, or for a life entirely spent with 'maman' (Madame de Warens), and so on.—Literature drew him out of his way. He uncautiously slipped into writing, to remain caught up in a dangerous world, which he compares, in his *First Promenade*, to a nightmare or to a 'strange planet'. Paradoxically the defence of Truth went along for him with an existential error. At least, so he tells us. And eventually, when writing to recapture and to explain his past, he feels the 'strange situation' he is in as the last unforeseen consequence of the decision he enthusiastically took after reading the question of the Dijon Academy.

I have deliberately insisted on this episode, and on the manner in which Rousseau relates and interprets it, because its triple-time construction seems to me extremely characteristic. One finds this triple-time construction in several other instances, and particularly in the *Discourse on Inequality*, where Rousseau looks for the causes and the mechanisms which determined man's evolution from the 'state of nature' onwards. This triple-time construction works as an organizing pattern of thought, or as a model which is equally valid to explain what happened, and how things happened, in Jean-Jacques's personal destiny as well as in mankind's historical development. According to Rousseau's hypothetico-deductive way of thinking, man is at first a solitary animal, endowed with the latent faculties of liberty and perfectibility, but still deprived of moral sentiments, of reason, of language, of technical skills, and tools. From this dormant stage man is awakened by external circumstances. Rousseau is at pains to imagine what could have changed in the natural conditions of life. He ingeniously offers more than one hypothesis. They are all similar in their consequences: after having lived lazily in a mild and protective climate, man is confronted with ecological difficulties, with obstacles which compel him to develop his latent faculties, in order simply to survive. The external challenge triggers man's response: the

previously isolated individuals associate more and more closely. From hunting hordes to pastoral families, then to larger groups of cultivators and metallurgists, and finally to affluent nations, Rousseau describes the various types of association in close relationship with the succeeding modes of subsistence. Language, intellectual faculties (in particular reflection), psychological attitudes (in particular pride) develop also accordingly, both as effects and as causes of economic activities. Thus, a 'second state of nature' follows the first one. But the chain of events, in this 'second state of nature' leads at a later stage to the Hobbesian 'war of every one against every one', which makes a social contract necessary, in order to survive again. This contract, far from being the right one, gives only a legal basis to seizure of land by the rich and powerful. Rousseau interprets later history as starting from this vitiated origin and giving rise to more and more despotic forms of government. When power is arbitrarily concentrated in the hands of one man, violence again prevails, civil ties are dissolved, and a new but perverted state of nature threatens to return. This is the contemporary situation in Rousseau's opinion. This page is well known to every reader of Rousseau. I only wished to point to it as a good example of the third stage of the triple-time pattern: the evils of despotic rule are the unmastered consequences of what had started when man first answered nature's challenge. Man has not been able to control the process which was initiated when he set to work and invented his first tools. The long chain of effects ends in a disaster for which the original nature of man cannot be held responsible: 'man is good naturally'.¹

Such is Rousseau's 'end of history': civilized men are totally alienated and dependent. They exist only in the opinion, in the admiration, or in the fear of others. What here must be particularly stressed is that man has become unhappy against his own will. He was inevitably driven into this situation by a kind of necessity which Rousseau assimilates to that which determines the individual's decay in old age. But when he praises those groups who were able to delay this evolution, to stay midway and thus to remain closer to 'the true youth of the world',² he is unable to tell what these small societies of happy savages really did to keep their way of life, and how they prevented any further evolution towards moral decline and technical superfluity. To sum up, here again we find a human response

¹ *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, note ix.

² *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, part ii.

provoked by an aggression from external circumstance, and followed by unmastered consequences, in which the external factors again prevail. In a way, one could say that Rousseau, both in his own life and in the conjectural history of mankind, describes a kind of original overreaction which at first seems triumphant, but which proves eventually fatal.

This triple-time pattern has an evident function. I would almost say: an evident purpose. That is, to prove that those who reacted thus were innocent victims and were not at first evil-doers. Their intention, if they had any, was just to make the right response to the actual challenge. That pattern, which makes action a parenthesis between two passive stages, is in itself a way of pleading not guilty. It works like a device which exculpates: the original overreaction cannot be held as an original sin, although both open the doors to evil. Rousseau puts the blame on the 'social system' and on the 'institutions': they are of course man-made, but are only the outward materializations of the unforeseen consequences deriving from the primeval efforts against nature. If things went wrong in history, and if civilized men are vicious and corrupted, 'those vices', Rousseau says, 'do not belong so much to man, as to man badly governed'.¹ Guilt, in Rousseau's universe, cannot be so easily erased. It is displaced from those who are exculpated, to impersonal entities. In other words, exculpation is only possible when associated with a resolute inculpation, directed against other culprits, such as appearance, pride, and society. And the more intense the need to be held not guilty, the more passionate the incrimination of what is thought to be the real face of evil. Rousseau is, no doubt, one of the originators of what the French philosopher Paul Ricœur calls 'les pensées du soupçon', that is to say, those systems of thought which strive to debunk or to point out the true face under the attractive mask. In Rousseau it is even a little more complicated, because the hideous face hidden behind the mask of polite manners is itself a mask, under which the primitive goodness of man might still be concealed, as a deep secret, like the god Glaucus's statue's true face, under the seaweed and the crust of salt and shells.

Arthur O. Lovejoy has very aptly shown, many years ago, that Rousseau's thought cannot be labelled a primitivism;² it is better defined as a kind of pre-Darwinian or rather pre-

¹ *Preface to Narcisse.*

² 'The supposed Primitivism of Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality*', in *Essays in the History of Ideas*, Baltimore, 1948, pp. 14-37.

Lamarckian evolutionism, which combines historical pessimism and a consideration of the slow and gradual progress of human abilities under the influence of the environment. Friedrich Engels, on his side, was persuaded that Rousseau's theories, especially in the *Discourse on Inequality*, foreshadowed Marxism. Moreover, it would not be difficult to show—with the Genevan psychologist Édouard Claparède—that Rousseau, both in his individual and collective psychological theory, is a forerunner of 'genetic psychology' and that his hinting at the emotional factor in the origins of language was a good guess.

It is always a little dangerous to read a work of the past as a sketch or a rough draft of later doctrines. Those I have mentioned are just a part of what has been retrospectively read into Rousseau, whose writings have offered, and still offer, a remarkable projection test. However, one can easily recognize a common character in Lamarckian evolutionism, Marxist dialectics, genetic psychology, and it could easily be demonstrated that this common character is closely related to the all-pervasive triple-time pattern I have tried to show in Rousseau: they all ascribe a considerable importance to the interaction of the outside world and the individual's inner faculties, through which a historical process develops.

Let me now go a little further, that is to say: from the system of causes to the reign of ends. If the triple-time pattern we have paid attention to is a substitute for the theological concept of the Fall, then it has to be inserted, as a middle stage, in the frame of a larger triple-time pattern: Paradise, Fall, Salvation. It has been often contended that Rousseau's state of nature was a laicized and, so to speak, an animalized version of the Paradise myth. Rousseau's Adam is the orang-outang. He enjoys unity and plenitude, but at the lowest possible level, without even being conscious of his happy privileges. Unity and plenitude were still present, on another level, in the first patriarchal societies. But unity, plenitude, and immediacy are qualities Rousseau cannot dispense with, and while acknowledging that it is now impossible to go back, and that regression is not even desirable, he is looking for whatever means can recapture plenitude in our world. Here, it is important to remark that Rousseau's thought is consistent in its final aim, but that, as regards the means, it remains tentative, and tries out several possible solutions which are not entirely compatible with each other: the political one, the pedagogical one, the personal and 'literary' one. Nor are

these solutions contradictory: they correspond to different working hypotheses. If modern societies can still be transformed—and it is the better hypothesis—then political principles should be applied. If it is too late for such a solution, then you should try to educate a few individuals, or just one, Émile, who should be helped to keep man's natural unity and plenitude, in order to stand fast against a wicked and dissolute society. Rousseau's third and worst hypothesis is that, being himself surrounded by enemies, deprived of any audience, the only thinkable kind of plenitude is the personal one, that of the ego living in solitude, on its own resources.

Having secularized or laicized the dogma of the Fall, Rousseau might have been tempted to keep the dogma of Salvation, thus theologizing his view of historical evolution: the evils of social life could then be considered as amenable to political remedies, and, at the end, if man develops further the resources of his perfectibility, he might be able to reconcile nature and culture, and obtain plenitude and unity again, on the highest possible level. This almost eschatological outlook appears fleetingly in Rousseau. In the first draft of the *Social Contract*, he does hope to find 'dans l'art perfectionné la réparation des maux que l'art commencé fit à la nature'¹ ('in art brought to its perfection the reparation of the evils which nature suffered from incipient art'). Kant and many of his successors, in Germany, were to expound similar ideas, not because they had read these lines (which were published for the first time only in 1887), but, most probably because they all drew from the same religious, mostly pietistic, sources. However, it is difficult to assert that such an optimistic outlook appears in a clear-cut manner in the published works of Rousseau, and that, for the whole of mankind, such an 'apocatastasis' is thinkable to him. On reading the *Social Contract*, one discovers that Rousseau remains very faithful to the concepts of classical political philosophy and that the preoccupation with decline and degeneracy predominates over the tendencies that our contemporaries would call 'progressive'. His distrust of what might be brought about through becoming, makes him rather willing to check the downward course of social groups and nations. As long as nations can be likened to living organisms (and Rousseau sticks to this analogy), it is understandable that they should be maintained as long as possible in their youth or in their maturity. Nothing can be done when they grow old. To them the future can bring

¹ *Œuvres complètes*, Paris, Pléiade, vol. iii, 1964, p. 288.

nothing but death: they are, as the phrase goes, past redemption. This is already the case, Rousseau thinks, for the great civilized countries. The next best solution, then, is to save what can be saved; that is to say: the individual. Rousseau's programme of education plans to reconcile nature and culture within a single person; it takes for granted that individual happiness can be attained, in spite of the corruptness or of the weakness of all the other members of society, including Sophie, the lovable but unfaithful wife of Émile. Émile is educated as an outsider, armed with a capacity to resist the circumstances from which he cannot escape. 'Émile is no savage to be banished to the desert, Rousseau writes, he is a savage who has to live in the town. He must know how to get his living in a town, how to use its inhabitants, and how to live, if not like them, at least with them.'¹

In a novel-like continuation of the book, Rousseau made Émile a slave to the Moors in Alger: this new 'circumstance' was needed to show, in a hyperbolic way, Emile's fortitude, independence of mind, autarky. Émile is thus defined more by his power to negate or to overcome persecution, than by any positive action, which would not have been possible in the world as it is, in Rousseau's view. Anyway, the individual is bound to be either in a state of virtuous indifference, or in a more open conflict with society. And one could almost say that the failure of Émile's marriage is a proof of the relative unimportance of the time category of the future; the category of the past, if not predominant, still works as a counterpoise; in the earlier stages of the educational programme Rousseau insists on withholding and delaying Émile's intellectual, imaginative, and sexual development. As in the *Contrat social*, Rousseau seems more interested in keeping as much as possible of something natural and primitive in us, rather than fostering and accelerating the movement through the evolutionary stages. It should be put to Rousseau's credit that he was perhaps the first to recommend letting the child be treated as a child, and allowing it to enjoy its childhood.

In spite of the stress laid by Rousseau on the time factor, gradual development, and slow acquisition, what matters to him is not what comes at the end of the process, what is final and ultimate as such, but what can be considered as a principle. To put it a better way, if the most important principles can only be grasped as a result of a well-directed intellectual and

¹ *Émile*, book iv. Paris, Pléiade, vol. iv, 1969, pp. 483-4.

moral development, they are not important because they are discovered at the end of a progression, but because they are fundamental, and eternally so. The *Social Contract*, for instance, is neither a Utopia nor a political programme: it is a timeless model or, in Kantian terms, a 'regulative concept', which principally allows us to pass judgement on every given political situation, and also permits us to give advice, as Rousseau did in the case of Poland, about useful reforms. There is a very complete summary of the *Social Contract* in the Fifth Book of *Émile*, just before the hero and his teacher set out on their travels. Why should the study of the principles of political law be then a prerequisite? The answer is as follows: one 'must know what ought to be in order to judge what is [. . .] Before beginning our observations we must lay down rules of procedure; we must find a scale with which to compare our measurements. Our principles of political law are our scale. Our actual measurements are the civil law of each country.'¹ The same could be said of the state of nature which Rousseau admits 'has perhaps never existed': it has to be understood as the zero mark on another scale, which permits us to measure the degree of historical development in different types of societies. It is less a true beginning than a concept of man's nature stripped of all his adventitious and artificial acquisitions.

Thus the interpretation by which we thought we had a laicized version of a theology of human history—with a starting and ending point in an earthly paradise—seems to fade away. But this does not mean that Rousseau entirely gave up his longings for a paradise of plenitude, unity, and happiness. It almost looks as if Rousseau, having discovered that no results can be expected from any action in the outside world, had no other way to paradise than his own solitary experience, with the advantage that here paradise could be regained right away, as the hippie slogan goes: 'Paradise now'. Is not immediacy hidden in every instant of our life? Is it not within our reach to enjoy the pure feeling of our existence? In the celebrated pages of the *Fifth Reverie*, Rousseau asserts that, in spite of the universal league of his persecutors, it is in his power to realize full immediacy, peace and unity within himself and to reach an independent happiness: 'What is the nature of one's enjoyment in such a situation? Nothing external to oneself, nothing except oneself and one's own existence; so long as this state lasts, one suffices

¹ *Émile*, book v. Paris, Pléiade, vol. iv, 1969, p. 837.

to oneself, like God.' This is as much a Stoic paradise as a Christian one.

The main point of Rousseau's philosophy is not only that man is able to find a full and self-sufficient happiness when living according to the prescriptions of his conscience, but that these prescriptions are the only voice which man has to obey. External authority, of whatever sort, is illegitimate. Only one's 'reason enlightened by feeling' can have access to the legitimate law. Rousseau obstinately invites us to dispense with revealed writs, dogmas, and priests: they all are obstacles between God and man. Provided his reason and his feelings have had the right education, man encounters God in the depth of his own heart: 'What God will have a man do, He does not leave to the words of another man, He speaks himself; His own words are written in the secret heart.'¹ It has been often, and I think rightly, contended that, on this subject, Rousseau's thought is a prefiguration of the Kantian philosophy of the autonomy of the practical reason. There is no sovereignty above man's free and rational will. The voice which proclaims the law resides in man's subjectivity, provided subjectivity has freed itself from passions and has become able to prefer at all times the universal good to personal interest. Listening to that inner voice, coinciding with its prescriptions, or, according to the other metaphor, reading the inner writ and acquiescing in it, are the preconditions for man's unity with himself and with the order of the cosmos. In the case of the individual, as in that of society, Rousseau's stroke of genius was to proclaim that sovereignty, that is, the legitimate source of authority, was within, and that it was unalienable.

It was Rousseau's intention, in his own life, to make this inner sovereignty his stronghold against his enemies and persecutors. But it was also his fate not to be able to make it certain and strong enough. And this is where Rousseau's intellectual stroke of genius is, in my opinion, secretly linked with his personal weakness or, if you prefer, to his madness. What Rousseau wanted was not only to find within his heart the holy writ, the sacred voice of the moral law, but also his own innocence confirmed and guaranteed as his permanent essence. He thus wanted too much. To this effect, he needed God as his witness, he needed an absolute guarantor. God then became not only the pre-existing writer of the inner writ, the pre-existing speaker

¹ *Émile*, book iv. Paris, Pléiade, vol. iv, p. 491.

of the inner voice, but also the final judge who declares him not guilty. Rousseau not only wanted to be guided, but to know in advance that, in spite of all his errors, in spite of his having abandoned his children, he was innocent for ever.

Having thus recourse to God for this particular purpose meant falling back from autonomy into a new sort of dependence. I will here open a short parenthesis and remark that the same happens in society, according to the *Social Contract*, when the general will, although right and unerring in its intention, needs to be enlightened on its objects and scopes by that godly man, the legislator. As if incapable of fulfilling the role of the ultimate sovereign, Rousseau and the creatures he invents (the citizen of the *Contract*, Eloisa, Émile) need to be reassured by an arch-authority. In several instances, as in the case of the legislator or of the preceptor, Rousseau projects and fancies himself into the role of that arch-authority. He is conscious, however, that it is a dream of his imagination, and that in the quest for happiness, certainty, and innocence it cannot be a decisive step. It shifts the question of the guarantee without solving it. The same holds true for the way Rousseau in the *Confessions* and in the *Reveries* anticipates God's judgement on him. He cannot but suspect that he himself is speaking instead of the transcendent authority he wanted to have on his side. Anxiety, guilt feelings thus are likely to reappear in a more acute way. The more one ascribes absoluteness to the inner voice, the more it is likely to attract one's own suspicions.

Let me add that the real or imaginary figures Rousseau calls on for help are undoubtedly disquieting. Even for Rousseau himself their benevolent aspect can soon turn into a malign one. The Hume story is just one instance among many. But for the modern observers, some of the arch-authorities called on by Rousseau have a touch of resemblance to the political manipulators of recent times, and they have been, somewhat unjustly, considered as their direct forerunners.

There is a more radical way of asserting one's autonomy, instead of looking for a pre-existing, pre-inscribed inner rule or for a verdict of not guilty given by a transcendent judge. It consists in vindicating for one's own will and sentiments the privilege of being the only decisive instance. Rousseau also tried out this more radical attitude which dispenses with any other guarantee, and which implies that the individual takes on the role that the former attitude still ascribed to God. Rousseau then allows himself to be the judge. *Rousseau juge de Jean-Jacques* is the

title of the work which follows the *Confessions*. The voice to which Rousseau eventually listens is that which speaks in the feeling of his own existence, the holy writ is the one he has never finished to write, to demonstrate Jean-Jacques's innocence. In his last work, the *Reveries*, he will go on writing, to duplicate narcissistically his fundamental goodness, or rather to make it exist while proclaiming it. But it is an endless task: he remains a culprit, and to assert his innocence Rousseau has to expel and repel ceaselessly to the outside every shadow which might appear in his mind. He projects and materializes it into a world of conspiracy and persecution. He thus divides the world into two regions, the first one being the ego's transparency and infallibility, the second one being the dark circle surrounding the solitary self.

Terror might be a good political parallel. But whereas terror, in order to keep an unstained civic integrity, strikes at the real or alleged enemies, the solitary man only wants to persuade posterity of his innocence. Instead of the *authority* inscribed in the inner self, we find an *author* whose pen has to move over the paper to convince himself and the others of his ever-pure intentions. In his self-justification Rousseau discovers and develops a power of fiction which is neither truth nor lie. Among his commentators, some are severe, and think that, while proclaiming his infallible truthfulness, he is bound to be constantly a liar. They are perhaps right, but one should point out to them that what they condemn in Rousseau is the modern aspect of *literature*, as we still practise it, for better or for worse.

I started this lecture with an analysis of a thought pattern which appeared to me as an exculpating device. I end it now, having tried to show what made exculpation necessary for Rousseau, and why he had to use such a device.

I am quite conscious of having followed a rather narrow path through the individual psychology and through the work of Rousseau. I have not really described his character, nor have I expounded his whole system. I have hoped, perhaps too ambitiously, that by following from start to end one of the obvious directions offered by his life and writings, I would disclose an emblematic image of a larger whole, which still is a challenge for modern interpreters.