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# A Provisional Reading of Rousseau's *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*

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**Abstract:** Rousseau speaks of his last work, *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, as an informal record of conversations of his soul with itself in its quest for his—our—*naturel* purged of artifice and convention. In the course of these conversations he addresses many of the problems that he explores in his other writings: man's place in the scheme of things, hence God, divine justice, immortality; freedom; the contrasts between the active, citizen life and the circumscribed, solitary life; what we owe to our fellows and what we owe to ourselves; *amour-propre*, shame, and *amour de soi*; the conditions for individual happiness, its kinds, and how they might (or might not) compose with public happiness. However, in the *Reveries* he addresses these problems from an explicitly nonpolitical perspective. While he says that he did not reduce his reflections—meditations, reveries—about them to a system, his account of them is remarkably comprehensive and carefully crafted.

Rousseau's last writing, *Les rêveries du Promeneur Solitaire*, is his absorbing if at times repellent recounting of various stages in his final effort to heed the Delphic oracle's "Know thyself" (1024).[1] It is deceptively simple. It is cast in

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[1]All otherwise unidentified page references in parentheses are to the edition of the *Reveries* in volume 1 of the Pléiade Rousseau, *Œuvres complètes* (hereafter *OC*), ed. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond, 5 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1959–1995); to *Emile* in *OC*, vol. 4; to *Social Contract* (*SC*) by book, chapter, and paragraph; to the *Essay on the Origin of Languages* (*EOL*) by chapter and paragraph. Translations are my own.

On *rêverie* very generally, see M. Raymond's introduction in *OC*, 1:lxxxvi–lxxxviii. On an earlier occasion Raymond had noted that Descartes spoke of his *Meditations* as his "reveries" in two letters to Huygens: 1 June 1639 and 12 November 1640 (*Jean-Jacques Rousseau: La quête de soi et la rêverie* [Paris: Corti, 1962], 162–63). Montaigne dismisses those who disparage the quest for self-knowledge as "revery and idleness" (*Essais* II.6 *i.f.*) and speaks of his own "resverie de me mesler d'escrire" (II.8 *i.p.*). Diderot had initially called "reveries" the conjectures that became his *Pensées sur l'interprétation de la nature* (*Oeuvres complètes*, ed. J. Varloot and H. Dieckmann [Paris: Hermann, 1981], 9:49n. Sorbière, in the Epistle Dedicatory to his 1649 French

the form of ten "Walks," Rousseau's "shapeless diary" (1000) of his reveries, feelings, and thoughts during the past four or five years' solitary walks, when he is fully himself for himself, without distraction or obstacles, and can truly say that he is "what nature intended" (*ce que la nature a voulu*, 1002, 1084, 1098). He is prompted to keep this informal diary by finding himself in the most bizarre situation any mortal ever found himself in, of being shut out from the society of his fellows. It soon becomes evident that the *Reveries* is not really a straightforward record of what happens as it happens, but an artfully crafted reconstruction (1005) of why and how he came to recover who or what he is by and according to nature— his *naturel* (1000, 1036, 1052, 1056, 1059, 1061, 1084)—and to attain happiness in the face of adversity.

Most of the incidents and memories that it recounts are the occasion for reflections about the most fundamental problems: who or what is God; what am I; what is the end and the meaning of everything I seek and feel; what should I believe, what can I believe; how should I live; what does personal happiness consist in and how does it compose with public felicity; what do I owe to others, to myself? But, as he says, he chose not to reduce these reflections to a system.

Like any first-person narrative, the *Reveries* forces the reader to keep track of two first persons, the narrator and the person about whom he is writing, and constantly to wonder whether one or the other of these first persons—or the dialogue between them—is intended as a model for the reader. Complicating matters is the fact that the narrator occasionally says that his subject no longer thinks and feels what he thought and felt even a comparatively short while ago. What is more, the narrative moves back and forth between a present that keeps shifting and different pasts, sometimes from one *Walk* to the next, sometimes within the same *Walk*, and this is apt to confuse the reader about the order in which what is being described took place, and what part of what the first person says is his sentiment at a given time *is* his settled sentiment "now." It is true that he also says that the only reader for whom he is writing is himself. He is therefore free to proceed as if his reader were familiar with the person—or persona—about whom he is being told. Since the *Reveries* addresses many of the issues that

translation of Hobbes's *De cive*, had expressed his preference for "the reveries of Hobbes, Gassendi and Descartes" to the more serious thoughts of some other philosophers. Rousseau had spoken of "the dangerous reveries of such men as Hobbes and Spinoza" in his *First Discourse* (*OC*, 3:28; see also *OC*, 1:1150); in a letter to Voltaire (10 September 1755) he had referred to his *Second Discourse* as his "sad reveries" (*OC*, 3:226). The term traditionally makes what is being said appear more innocuous than it is: see Hugo Friedrich, *Montaigne* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), 26–27.

On the work as a whole and *rêverie* in particular, see Heinrich Meier's searching *Über das Glück des philosophischen Lebens: Reflexionen zu Rousseaus "Rêveries"* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2011).

Rousseau had addressed from the *First Discourse* on, it is sometimes difficult not to read it in the light of these other works. Yet, although he mentions some of them in the *Reveries* (1088), he explicitly says that some of the views that he is expressing in it differ from the views that he professed in those earlier works. And, most strikingly, he makes no direct reference in it to his major political works, the *Discourses* and the *Social Contract*.

The dominant theme of the *Reveries* is the suffering of an innocent man, and achieving happiness in the teeth of it. Broadly speaking, its plot is an inverted *Social Contract*. The contract has the parties in a body receive each member "as an indivisible part of the whole" (*SC* I.6.ix). The *Reveries* has a single individual excluded ("sequestered," 1004, 1015) from the society of his fellows by their unanimous agreement (*accord unanime*, 995, 996; *universel*, 1010). Insofar as the action of the social contract may be said to consist in de-naturing—civil-izing—natural man (*SC* II.7.iii, II.11.iii), the action of the *Reveries* may be said to consist in re-naturing—de-civil-izing—one civil man. And insofar as the *Second Discourse* may be said to conjecture how obstacles force(d) individuals and the species to acquire new ways, to form civil societies and to become civil-ized, the *Reveries* may be said to recount how adversity forced one individual gradually to peel off (*éplucher*, 1025) many of these acquired ways, to purge himself of the beliefs, the opinions, the needs, the passions, the hopes and the fears, and, above all, the *amour-propre* that are constitutive of them.

The *Reveries* quite naturally breaks into five sets of two *Walks* each. The first two *Walks* set the stage. They deal with "now."

The *Reveries* begins abruptly, as if in the middle of an ongoing narration: "Here I am then…" It ends almost as abruptly.

*"Me voici donc seul"* (995), the most sociable and loving of men, proscribed by his fellows from among their midst—"buried alive" (995, 996). He reciprocates in kind: "So there they are, strangers" (995), unknown nothings to me since that is what they wanted. He would have loved his persecutors in spite of themselves. By ceasing to treat him as a fellow human being, they ceased to be fellow human beings in his eyes.

It is now some ten or fifteen years since his persecution began. For a long time he struggled to understand and to cope with the incomprehensible chaos into which he had been thrust. It sometimes still seems to him as if it all were a dream (*rêve*, 995). By and by he submits to his fate (*destinée*). His resignation makes for a calm that compensates (*dédomage*)[2] for his suffering. Until about two months ago he no longer feared anything, but he still hoped, to restore his reputation and, he implies, for the immortality of his soul. With his late autobiographical writings, the *Confessions*, the *Dialogues*, and now the *Reveries*, he goes to very great lengths to secure the second best, immortal fame, by insuring and as much as possible shaping men's

[2]*Dédomagement(s)*: 996, 1002, 1019, 1020, 1021, 1047, 1088, 1089, 1096, 1081.

memory of him. Now, for the past two months, he has found "an interval of full quietude and absolute rest" which he has reason to believe will not ever again be interrupted (998, 1077). Now he lives without earthly attachments or anything to hope for or to fear in this world, as if on an alien planet, "impassible as God himself" (999 and "Ébauches des *Rêveries*," no. 2, in *OC*, 1:1165; cf. 1047). Nothing others do can any longer help or harm him; and since he himself can no longer do anything that might not harm others or himself, he concludes that his sole remaining duty is to abstain from all action or "activity" (1000, 1056). "But while my body is inactive (*désœuvré*) my soul remains active, it continues to produce sentiments, thoughts, and its internal and moral life seems even to have increased with the death of every earthly and temporal interest" (1000).

With only himself to occupy him, he yields fully to the sweetness of conversing with his soul. He asks "what"—not "who"—am I myself? (995, 999, 1001, 1015–16).[3] He may be assumed to have known that the soul's conversing with itself is how Socrates characterized thinking.[4] He proposes to proceed by gauging "the changes and the successive stages" of his soul, as one might record successive barometer readings. If by dint of reflecting about his internal dispositions he succeeds in putting them in better order and in redressing what evil they may still contain, these "meditations" will not have been altogether in vain.[5]

Although he claims to have achieved utter calm, he speaks, here and throughout much of the *Reveries*, with great anger about his present circumstances as well as about the preceding ten or fifteen years. "They were so impatient to bring my misery to its peak that all human power assisted by all the cunning of hell could add nothing to it" (997). Is this really how one would write for oneself? Rousseau certainly was the victim of unusually mean-spirited personal attacks and of public persecutions by both church and state in France and in Geneva. Yet what strikes the reader of the *Reveries* is that he barely alludes to these attacks in his reports of what he calls "the plot." To the extent that he tries to account for them here, he speculates about long held grudges by various groups—doctors, a religious order—he might have offended in one or another of his writings. Most of his examples are trivial and not particularly persuasive. It is certainly bizarre to describe being ostracized or looked at askance by passersby as the absolutely worst thing that could happen to one. It clearly suits his purposes in the *Reveries* to present himself from the first as a victim, and to

[3]Cf. "But I do not yet know sufficiently clearly what I, myself, am" (Descartes, *Méditations* II [AT VII 25]); the *Emile*'s Savoyard Vicar asks, "Who am I?" (*OC*, 4:570; J.-J. Rousseau, *Emile, or On Education*, trans. Allan Bloom [New York: Basic Books, 1979], 270).

[4]Plato, *Theaetetus* 189e; *Sophist* 263e.

[5]Rousseau does not consistently distinguish between "reflect," "think," "meditate," "contemplate," and "revery": 999–1000, 1004.

proclaim his innocence. The reader cannot help the impression of someone indulging self-pity. Rousseau knows how repellent that is. But his intent is clear: it is a basic tenet of his moral psychology and hence of his rhetoric that we are more moved by people's suffering, especially by hearing them tell about it, than we are by their good fortune (1074; *Emile*, 503–4, 596–97 [221–23, 287–88 Bloom]; *EOL* I.10n). In recounting how he learns to overcome adversity, he may be said to purge the pity that he expects to arouse.

The Second *Walk* opens with an echo of the opening of the First *Walk*: "Having set out, then…" Now, since his powers are fading, he proposes to backtrack four or five years "to the time when I had lost all hope here below, and no longer finding any nourishment for my heart on earth, I gradually grew accustomed to feed it off its own substance and to look within myself for all of its fodder" (1002), the time when he recognized that men cannot render miserable someone who resolves to be happy and to enjoy the "inner delights that loving and gentle souls find in contemplation" (1003). He would never have suspected the treasures he had in him if his persecutors had not forced him to discover them. However, what he goes on to tell is how recently, as he was out botanizing and thinking that while he was born to live he will die without having lived, he was knocked over by an onrushing Great Dane, got hurt, and lost consciousness. When he came to, he felt as if newborn: "it seemed to me that I was filling all the objects I perceived with my slight existence [*legere existence*]. Wholly in the present moment, I remembered nothing; I had no distinct notion of my person, not the least idea of what had just happened to me. I knew neither who I was nor where I was. I felt neither hurt, nor fear, nor worry. … I felt throughout my being a ravishing calm to which, whenever I recall it, I find nothing comparable in the full flush [*toute l'activité*] of known pleasures" (1005).

Upon reflecting on how people reacted to the news of his accident, he concludes that his being universally ostracized cannot be simply fortuitous. He used to think that it was due to men's wickedness. "But all wills, all fatalities, and all revolutions have confirmed what men have wrought, and so striking a convergence, verging on the prodigious, cannot let me doubt that its full success is inscribed in the eternal decrees … one of those secrets of Heaven that are unfathomable to human reason" (1010). "God is just; he wants me to suffer; and he knows that I am innocent. That is the cause of my confidence. My heart and my reason cry out to me that it will not deceive me. … Eventually everything must be restored to its proper place, and so will I be" (1010; 1077 var. (c)).

In the Third *Walk* Rousseau speaks in some detail about what his heart and his reason used to tell him about everything's being restored to its proper place, and in the Fourth he considers at length what he may be obligated to say in public on this subject among others. He most immediately indicates that the Third and Fourth *Walks* form a unit by choosing as the epigraph of

the Third *Walk* Solon's "I go on learning as I grow old," and ending the Fourth *Walk* with a final reflection on this saying.

Solon's remark implies that it is good to learn and to go on learning, but Rousseau's experience in the past twenty-odd years is that neither is necessarily good. He has learned that people whom he liked and who, he believed, liked him have turned against him. Would he not have been better off if he had remained ignorant of their hostility and their intrigues? Does having learned of them help him to avoid them? "Adversity is unquestionably a great teacher, but one has to pay its lessons dear, and often the profit from them is not worth their cost" (1011).

He now backtracks, but much farther back than the four or five years when he learned to live off his own substance. He had always sought to know the nature and destination of his being. Experience taught him early on that he was not made for the hustle and bustle of the world, and that it is not among men that he would find the happiness for which his heart yearned, the true end (*véritable fin*, 1013) of life. From the very first his ardent imagination overleaped his barely begun life to come to rest in a tranquil seat (*une assiete tranquile*, 1012; 1014, 1046, 1077) in which he could settle. He implies but does not say that this imagined tranquil seat was a form of religious faith. He has seen many people who philosophize more learnedly than he, but they inquire about the universe and about human nature as objects about which to discourse, not in order to know themselves for themselves. Rousseau says that he, by contrast, would pursue every study he has ever undertaken even on a desert island to which he'd be confined for the rest of his days. Would he have pursued his political studies on one? Or do they not count as studies properly speaking?

He was raised in households in which piety and morals (*mœurs*) reigned, and he was imbued from earliest childhood with principles and maxims—"others would say prejudices" (1013)—that never entirely deserted him. Before long he speaks in his own name of his "childhood prejudices and the secret wishes of my heart"(1017). He recalls how in adolescence and in early adulthood "meditation in retirement, the study of nature, contemplation of the universe, force a solitary person forever to soar up to [*s'élancer vers*] the author of things and to search for the end of everything he sees and the cause of everything he feels" (1014). He converted to Catholicism—but "always remained a Christian"—and became devout almost in the manner of Fénélon. He increasingly speaks of his detachment from worldly concerns in language of a distinctly religious cast. In his twenties and thirties he drifted rather aimlessly. He had always planned that at the age of forty he would once and for all review and reform his thoughts, beliefs, and conduct—in other words, the piety and the *mœurs* in which he had been brought up (1015, 1019).

At the time he was frequenting a group of modern philosophers, the so-called philosophes, who bore no resemblance to the ancient philosophers. The ancients took seriously men's perplexities regarding the "true end of life" and strove to resolve them, whereas the philosophes undermined men's most

firmly held convictions about the most important matters. Their philosophy is as it were alien to them, a tool kit, not a way of life. They seek not so much to understand for themselves as to persuade others. They are "zealous missionaries of atheism" and "imperious dogmatists" (1016) in matters where dogmatism is the way of charlatans (1018).

The contrast that Rousseau draws between the ancient philosophers and his contemporary, dogmatic atheist philosophes clearly refers to Socrates's rallying his companions' flagging spirits as he considers the immortality of soul with them on the last day of his life. He acknowledges that the philosophes' arguments shook him, but they failed to convince or even to persuade him. He could not always think of effective arguments to rebut them. His "heart answered them better than did his reason" (1016, 1020).

His "great review" required extended, leisurely meditations in total withdrawal from the hurly-burly of the world. He came to like this retired, reflective life so much that he has adopted it whenever he could ever since: "when, later, men reduced me to living alone, I found that in sequestring me in order to cause me to be miserable, they had done more for my happiness than I had been able to do for myself" (1015). In other words, he now significantly qualifies his earlier remarks about ostracism being the greatest evil, as well as his earlier response to Solon's remark, that one might prefer to be spared the lessons adversity teaches (1011).

After the most searching and scrupulous inquiries by perhaps any mortal he settled on some "few fundamental principles" adopted by his reason, confirmed by his heart, and bearing the seal of internal assent in the silence of the passions (1018). He summarizes these few fundamental principles here in the most general—and equivocal—terms: a moral order—"the system of which is the result of my inquiries [*mes recherches*]" (1018)—that establishes the congruity he perceives between his nature and the constitution of this world. "His nature" may refer to his individual *naturel* or to human nature in general; the moral order ("moral world," 1015) "which is the result of my inquiries" leaves unclear, deliberately it would seem, whether he discovered this moral order or constructed it. These few fundamental principles are "approximately" (*à peu près*) the principles that he subsequently attributed to the personage he calls the Savoyard Vicar, adding that the Vicar's Profession of Faith which men nowadays unjustly defame and revile might come to be recognized as sound and even salutary "if good sense and good faith are ever reborn among them" (1018). He says that the fundamental principles on which he settled—in other words *not* the principles that he attributed to the Vicar—have been the immutable rule of his conduct and of his faith ever since. Although he will say that his primary interest was to discover the truth, he does ask himself whether he adopted the principles that he adopted because they console him and conform to his childhood prejudices. But regardless of why he did adopt them, they prove, in retrospect, to have prepared him to bear the great trials he would face by assuring him of compensation (*dédomagement*) for them. "In any other system I would live without

resources and die without hope" (1019). In short, he here implies that he chose to believe in the immortality of the individual soul or at least to allow for it. At the same time, he acknowledges the "impenetrable mysteries," "insoluble objections," and "insurmountable difficulties" (1017–18, 1020, 1022) that he encountered in the course of these meditations,[6] and he goes out of his way to point out that he is still occasionally assailed by his old doubts as well as by new insuperable difficulties. So that when he says that at the stage of his reflections on which he is now reporting, or even at his present advanced age, he will not reconsider or let reason defeat conclusions reached by reason, he only calls attention to the reservations about these conclusions that he continues to harbor.

As if to underscore how many questions about God, immortality, and man's place in the scheme of things these reflections raised but left unanswered, Rousseau devotes the immediately following *Walk* to an exceptionally detailed discussion of lying. In doing so he breaks the chronological order of his narrative. Yesterday, in other words many years after his "review" and his discussions with the atheist philosophes, he received a note that he perceived as a challenge to his right to his chosen motto, *vitam impendere vero*, "to dedicate life to truth" (1024).[7] He happened just to have reread Plutarch's *How to Profit from One's Enemies*. In the spirit of that essay the perceived challenge to his right to his motto leads him to wonder yet again what share of the truth we owe to whom, what falsehoods may be permissible under what circumstances, and what falsehoods are impermissible under any circumstances. His reflections about these questions form the single most sustained, rigorous argument in the *Reveries*. It certainly is not a "revery" in any of the ordinary senses of the term.

The upshot of these reflections is that we owe to others the truth "in all matters useful" (1026–27), the "perhaps not particularly numerous" general abstract truths man needs for his happiness, the truths that instruct him on "how to conduct himself, to be what he ought to be, to do what he ought to do, to strive toward his true end" (1026). We do not owe useless let alone harmful truths to anyone. To withhold or to disguise such truths is not to lie, any more than is telling useful or beneficial falsehoods. They are fictions or fables (1029, 1030).

Rousseau had drawn the distinction between truth and utility on several occasions in the preceding *Walk*: when he remarked that some general as well as some particular truths may be useless or even downright harmful, again in his "guiding principle" that how one ought to act in large measure

[6]"Insoluble objections" is Bayle's expression: e.g., *Dictionnaire*, Éclaircissement II, "Sur les Manichéens" (4th ed., 1730), IV 627; see Leibniz, *Théodicée*, Discours sur la conformité, §§ 24, 27.

[7]Juvenal, *Satires* 4.91; Rousseau, *À M. d'Alembert*, in *OC*, 5:120n; *Lettres écrites de la montagne*, epigraph.

depends on what one ought to believe, and yet again when he considered the possibility that he may have chosen the views about God and immortality that he says he chose because he found them more consoling. He takes "we owe the truth in all matters useful" to mean "as justice requires" (1027): "injustice consists solely in the harm [*tort*] done to another" (1027). Not everything is useful—hence just—for everyone alike. It is therefore necessary to "distinguish between cases where truth is strictly owed and those when it can be omitted without injustice and disguised without lying" (1028). The remark inevitably raises the question of what truths about his views the narrator of the *Reveries* thinks he owes to its potential readers, and what truths he may omit or disguise. For "even the intention to deceive, far from being always coupled with the intention to harm, sometimes has the very opposite aim" (1029). Hence it will certainly not do to say: always be truthful, regardless of the consequences. Consequences matter. But judging by them is unreliable. The only adequate gauge is intention. Still, for a lie to be innocent, one also has to be sure that it will not hurt anyone. It is rare and difficult to be confident that it will not do so. Hence innocent lies are rare and difficult.

Rousseau finds his premise, that there are permissible and perhaps even required falsehoods, confirmed by a definition of lying that he recalls having read in a philosophy book: to lie is to withhold a truth that ought to be disclosed because it is owed.[8] On this premise questions about what truths are owed, to whom, and under what circumstances are questions of distributive justice. In the most general terms, we owe to each his due. Rousseau's heart followed this rule mechanically (*machinalement*) and his "moral instinct" implemented it before ever his reason had adopted it. All deceptions are twofold: they deceive both about what is the case and about the deceiver. To deceive about oneself is to be false (*être faux*, 1008, 1055). To be true (*être vrai*, 1031, 1055) is not necessarily to be artless, immediate, sincere, or even truthful as at the beginning of the *Reveries* Rousseau describes himself to be (996), so much as it is never to make oneself appear better than one is.[9]

With the stress on being true, bearing witness comes to rival the authority of argument. The *Reveries*, indeed all of Rousseau's "autobiographical" writings, illustrate this shift.

Now, upon once again scrupulously reviewing his conduct and his conscience, he is satisfied that, with the exception of one youthful lie which he has rued ever since, he has for all intents and purposes been truthful to the

[8]Fontenelle, cited by Helvétius in a passage commented on by Rousseau in *Notes sur "De l'Esprit" de Helvétius*, in *OC*, 4:1126; see also Grotius, *De jure belli ac pacis* III.1.ix(1); Pufendorf, *Le droit de la nature et des gens* IV.1.ix–xxi, with Barbeyrac's important note on IV.1.vii. Pufendorf correctly points out that on this definition Aristotle's categorical condemnation of lying (*Nicomachean Ethics* IV.7 1127a29–30) is a tautology—forbidden falsehoods are forbidden—and not a blanket rejection of falsehood.

[9]True as well as false is not said of propositions only: *Hamlet* I.iii.78–80.

full extent that justice requires. Yet his heart is not entirely reconciled to the many innocent falsehoods he has told without remorse or regret. Justice toward others may permit them; justice toward oneself or self-esteem does not. And "his self-esteem is what he is most solicitous of" (1032). Publicly to dedicate one's life to truth in effect prohibits all concessions to inclination, timidity, weakness, shame, or embarrassment, and hence all falsehoods, fictions, and fables that they might prompt. It would seem not to prohibit falsehoods, fictions, or fables prompted by beneficence or a concern for utility. Rousseau sacrificed his comfort and security to his dedication to truth whenever the occasion required. He now feels that he should have sacrificed his weakness and his timidity to it as well, and that insofar as he did not do so, his being "inwardly proud of his love for truth" and publicly proclaiming his "proud motto" was a boast and a deception. In adopting his motto he had denied himself the right to certain idle falsehoods. In this decisive respect his practice fell short of his professed principles.

Just as he had lied about and to others out of shame, he had lied about and to himself out of *amour-propre*. Shame and *amour-propre* are the Janus faces of one and the same phenomenon: setting stock by ourselves by how we feel that others see us. The conclusion that he had been deceiving himself confirms him in his opinion that the Delphic oracle's "Know thyself" is not as easy to heed as he had thought when he wrote his *Confessions*, and so confirms Solon's dictum that "it is never too late to learn" (1039). Yet upon realizing what he now regards as his self-deception, Rousseau is not moved to try once and for all to overcome his timid *naturel* and his susceptibility to embarrassment. The *Reveries* is in quest of self-knowledge more than of self-improvement or of edification.

Rousseau leaves it to possible readers to understand how his distinction between fictions and lies bears on his pronouncements about God and immortality in the preceding as well as in the following *Walks*, and to take this distinction into account throughout the extended discussion of happiness in the remainder of the *Reveries*.

The Fifth *Walk* is the best known of the *Walks*, and it is widely regarded as the most beautiful of them. It is also the most puzzling. It marks a clear break in the narrative of the *Reveries*. In it Rousseau tells of his stay on the Isle de St. Pierre in the Lac de Bienne a dozen or so years ago, long after the review of his opinions and ways and of his discussions with the philosophes about God and immortality that he recounted in the Third *Walk*, and long before his reflections about what truths may be owed to whom that he recounted in the Fourth *Walk*. He fled to the island directly after the "lapidation" of Môtiers. He does not tell, here or anywhere else in the *Reveries*, what might have provoked it, and he leaves it to the reader to understand why he calls it a "lapidation." He remembers and misses (*regrette*) the island as the happiest place he ever lived in, and the time he spent there as the happiest time of his life. From now on happiness is his dominant theme.

Rousseau's thought and imagination, like all of Western thought and imagination, are dotted with idyllic island and garden retreats. St. Peter's is one. It is out of the way, and little known even in Switzerland. Comparatively small, "naturally circumscribed and set apart from the rest of the world" (1048), "well situated for the happiness of someone who likes to circumscribe himself" (1040), varied, with fields, meadows, orchards, vineyards, mountains, precipitous waterfalls, and rocky, wild, and "romantic" shores. Its one house is occupied by the tax collector who manages it on behalf of the Berne Hospice, his family, and some domestic help. They are pleasant company without being interesting enough to be distracting. Still, the island is not as self-contained as it might at first appear to be. Storms erode its shores which periodically get restored with fill from a small, now deserted, nearby island. "That is how the substance of the weak is ever made to profit the powerful" (1041). He arrived on the island "alone and naked" (1042), as if newborn. His description of his stay on it forms as it were an island in his account of his life.

The happiness that he says he enjoyed during his stay on the island consisted essentially in the *dolce far niente* of someone who has dedicated himself to idleness (*l'oisiveté*, 1042) and who spends his days unfettered by obligations or duties of any kind. He lends a hand with the apple harvest, socializes with his hosts and the occasional visitors from the mainland, settles a colony of rabbits on the small neighboring island, but mostly he crisscrosses St. Peter's Island or goes out on the lake in his boat. To be *oisif* is not so much to do nothing as it is to do whatever one is doing solely for its own sake, and not because it is the useful or the prudent or the virtuous thing to do. Since he no longer wanted occupations requiring labor, he needed one that would amuse and delight him. Botanizing was his passionate *amusement*. The contrast that he draws between activity and idleness (*travail*, *amusement*) is not a contrast between being industrious and being slothful, but between engagement in public life and opinion, and detachment from them, out of the reach of dependence for good or for ill, "in the silence of the passions," and hence, at the limit, "impassible" (999). He spent his mornings collecting flowers, plants, and grasses, learning their differentia, studying their structure and the role of their sexual parts in fructification. He considered drawing up an exhaustive inventory of the island's entire flora. He was prepared to devote the rest of his life to it. He spent most of his afternoons stretched out in his dinghy, adrift on the lake, "immersed in a thousand confused but delightful reveries which even without any specific or steady object I found a hundred times more congenial than everything I had found most sweet in what is called the pleasures of life" (1044). When the weather kept him from going out on the lake, he would find a cheerful and remote nook and dream. Toward evening he would enjoy settling down in some hidden retreat (*azyle caché*, 1045) at the water's edge and immerse himself in delightful revery.

"The ebb and flow of this water, its steady but intermittently swelling sound striking my ears and eyes without letup took the place of [*suppléoient*

*aux*] the internal motions that revery extinguished in me and sufficed to make me sense my existence with pleasure without taking the trouble to think." Still, "from time to time there arose a weak and brief reflection about the instability of the things of this world, the image of which the surface of the waters conveyed to me; but soon these faint impressions faded into the steady movement that lulled me and without any active assistance from my soul so absorbed me that when summoned by the hour and the agreed-upon signal I could not tear myself away [*m'arracher*] from there without effort" (1045).

Rousseau does not say what these internal motions may be; nor does he say whether he perceives them—has a sentiment of them—or conjectures them; nor, finally, does he detail the possible contents of the revery that takes their place. If the to and fro of the lake's waters is irregular or agitated, it wakens and "by recalling us to the objects around us, destroys the charm of revery and tears us [*nous arrache*] out from within ourselves by straightway bringing us back to the yoke of fortune and of men and returning us to the sentiment of our misfortunes" (1047). The revery by which Rousseau here describes acceding to the sentiment of existence would seem to occupy a middle ground between the "internal motions" and our shared workaday world; it would seem to be one way of being ingathered (*rentré en soi*, 1002–3); and the "sentiment of existence" would seem to be the feeling of being in touch with the fount and principle of being animate or alive.[10]

After being torn out of his revery at the water's edge by time and the bell, Rousseau would join the small island community for supper. Of pleasant evenings, they would all go for a stroll, chat, sing some old songs and retire for the night with no other wish than that the next day be no different from the last. The question naturally arises what about these daily routines causes his heart to miss life on the island so intensely that even now, some fifteen years later, he cannot think of this cherished abode without feeling swept back to it by the rush of desire.

On looking back at his long life, he finds that memories of sweet delights and of lively pleasures are not the ones that attract or move him most. His memory confirms his weak and brief reflection at the water's edge about the transitoriness of the things of this world, and he now says he would have happiness be the state about which he could genuinely say "I would

[10]See Lucretius, *De rerum natura* III.124–29, 215, 241–57; Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chap. 6, on "vitall motions"; Rousseau, *Letter to Voltaire*, para. 11, in *OC*, 3:1063 (see my "Rousseau on Providence," *Review of Metaphysics* 53, no. 3 [2000]: 593–94 = "The Religious Thought," in *The Cambridge Companion to Rousseau*, ed. P. Riley [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001], 208); and consider Rousseau's regaining consciousness after being run over by the Great Dane (*OC*, 1:1005).

like for this moment to last forever" (1046–47). Goethe has Faust wager his soul for such a moment.[11]

> The happiness that my heart misses [or: yearns for, *regrette*] is a simple and permanent state with nothing sharp [*vif*] about it, but whose duration [*durée*] increases its charm to the point of one's finally finding supreme felicity in it.…
>
> However… (1046)

It is not clear whether this "however" introduces a fuller statement of the contrast he had just drawn between the fleeting pleasures of life and supreme felicity, or whether it introduces a contrast between a supreme felicity that would not be of this world and what he goes on to call "happiness sufficient, perfect, and full."[12]

> However if there is a state in which the soul finds a seat sufficiently firm for all of it to settle in and to collect its entire being without needing to recall the past or to anticipate the future; in which time is as nought to it, in which the present lasts forever but without any record of its lasting and any trace of its consecutiveness, with no other sentiment—of privation or enjoyment, pleasure or pain—than solely that of our existence, and that this sole sentiment could fill it entirely; so long as this state lasts, he who finds himself in it may call himself happy, not with an imperfect, poor, and relative happiness such as one finds in the pleasures of life, but with a happiness sufficient, perfect, and full that leaves the soul with no emptiness that it feels the need to fill. Such is the state in which I frequently found myself in my solitary reveries on St. Peter's Island, stretched out in my boat which I let drift with the water's flow, or seated at the edges of the tossing lake, or elsewhere on the bank of a beautiful river or of a stream murmuring over gravel.
>
> What does one enjoy in such a situation? Nothing external to oneself, nothing but oneself and one's own existence, so long as this state lasts [*dure*] one is sufficient unto oneself like God. (1046–47).

[11]"Werd ich zum Augenblicke sagen / Verweile doch! Du bist so schön! / Dann magst du mich in Fesseln schlagen / Dann will ich gern zugrunde gehn!" (*Faust I*, lines 1699–1702; see 1851–67 and *Faust II*, lines 11581–86).

[12]About "However," Michael Davis, *The Autobiography of Philosophy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), 183. About "supreme felicity," the Savoyard Vicar exclaims near the end of his Profession of Faith: "Source of justice and truth, merciful and good God! In my trust in you, the supreme wish of my heart is that your will be done. In joining my will to yours … I believe that I partake betimes [*d'avance*] of the supreme felicity that is its reward" (*Emile*, 605 [294 Bloom]). St. Preux writes in an early letter that "a sensitive soul will seek supreme felicity without remembering that he is human; his heart and his reason will forever be at war" (*La Nouvelle Héloïse* I.xxxvi, in *OC*, 2:89). "I sighed more than ever after the sweet quietude of mind and of body which I had coveted so much and to which my heart had restricted its supreme felicity once it had recovered from the chimeras of love and friendship" (*Confessions*, 650). "All our projects for felicity in this life are chimeras" (*Reveries*, 1085).

"Like" God; Rousseau says nothing about feeling or experiencing "what" God might feel or experience.

Although he here speaks of the sentiment of existence ("my existence," 1045; "our existence," 1046; "one's own existence," 1047) in conjunction with his "solitary reveries," he evidently holds that this sentiment is constitutive of being human. Everyone everywhere has some experience of it. Is he suggesting that everyone has some intimation of God-like self-sufficiency? But most men's experience of the sentiment of existence is dim, diffuse, and evanescent. And it is right that it be so. They should not be acquainted with it lest they come to yearn for its sweet ecstasies and grow disgusted with the active life and the duties that their ever pressing passions and needs impose on them. "The sentiment of existence, stripped of all other affection, is by itself a precious sentiment of contentment and of peace which alone would suffice to render this existence dear and sweet to anyone who could set aside all the sensory and earthly impressions that constantly come to distract us from it and disturb its sweetness here below" (1047). Rousseau may enjoy it inasmuch as his persecutors and he himself have shut him out of the active life and its duties, and he is therefore free to lead the life of *oisiveté*, the laziness, idleness, indolence that he often attributes to the savage, to natural man, to himself, and to the philosopher.

Self-sufficiency (*autarkeia*) without need or desire for any change in one's present state or for anything or anyone is clearly one way of characterizing what is choiceworthy for its own sake. The soul's turning inward and collecting its entire being without attachment to anything or anyone here below, and without needing to recall the past or anticipating the future, is certainly compatible with its being wholly engaged in what is traditionally called thinking or contemplation. But it may seem odd to describe pure thinking or contemplation as the enjoyment of nothing but one's own existence "without taking the trouble to think" (1045).

Still, is this sentiment of existence and of God-like self-sufficiency also an intimation of the author of things and of the end of everything Rousseau sees and the cause of everything he feels, in quest of which he had earlier said that his soul has soared incessantly and from the first (1014, 1002)? He does say now, all these many years after his stay on St. Peter's Island, that if he could return there and live out his days confined to it, his soul, freed of all earthly passions, would frequently soar above the tumult of social life and commune betimes (*d'avance*) with the celestial intelligences whose number it hopes shortly to join (1041–42, 1048–49). Is this just a rhetorical figure,[13] or is he saying that he now thinks or hopes to think what and as the divine intelligences think?

[13]See Rousseau, "Last Reply," para. 3 (*OC*, 3:72–73); *Second Discourse*, note X, para. 14 (*OC*, 3:207–8).

This is the only *Walk* in which Rousseau comes close to explicitly describing a revery, and it is the only one in which he mentions the sentiment of existence. Somewhat later in this *Walk* he speaks about "another kind of revery" in which "a naturally cheerful imagination" (1047–48) and movement from within takes the place of the waters' external to and fro, and light, sweet ideas skim the surface of the soul without stirring up its depths. He does not say what might dwell in those depths, nor does he mention the sentiment of existence in connection with this other "kind of revery." And while he does not ever go to the extravagant extreme of his ancient models and boast that he could be happy even in the belly of the bull of Phalaris (Cicero, *Tusc*. II.7.17; Diogenes, *Lives* X.18), he does say that he has often thought that he could dream pleasantly and live happily even in a dungeon or in the Bastille (1048). Even in the most disagreeable settings, agreeable chimeras would provide him with nourishment. He does not say what these chimeras may be, but he does say that he did not always draw a clear line between fictions and reality in his reveries on and by the lake—and, we may surmise, in his accounts of them (1048–49). We are reminded that in the preceding *Walk* he had called useful or beneficial deceptions "fictions" (1029, 1030, 1035–36). By the end of this Fifth *Walk* he says, as if in passing, that the sentiment of existence, in and by itself, is abstract, monotone. Certainly nothing he says about it here or anywhere else so much as suggests that he regards it as "the source of man's greatest delight," let alone "the final end of life and the root of all happiness."

When he says that St. Peter's Island is the happiest place he has ever been in and that his stay there was the happiest time of his life, he is speaking about the whole of his six weeks on the island: about its natural beauty and comparative isolation, about exploring it on foot and in his boat, about his botanizing as well as about his reveries on and by the lake, the congenial company, and retiring at the end of each day with no other wish than that the next day be like the one that is drawing to a close. After all, that is one way of saying "I would like for this moment to last forever"; as is his yearning to return to the island to live out the rest of his days on it; as is his in effect doing so by recounting his stay there as he does in this *Walk*. "In dreaming that I am there, is not that what I am doing?" (1048–49). The revery of the sentiment of existence in this Fifth *Walk* is a revery within a revery.

Gradually and especially in light of the subsequent *Walks*, it becomes evident that Rousseau's entire recounting of his stay on St. Peter's Island is filtered through years of reflection about various more or less expansive, outreaching forms of happiness, and successive withdrawals inward from them. In hindsight he says no more than that the sentiment of existence can provide some souls with compensations for all "human felicities" (1047), compensations of which fortune and men cannot deprive them. By saying this, he would seem to be saying that it falls short of "human felicities."

"Human felicity" would seem to consist in doing good (*faire du bien*), in benefiting someone "gratuitously" (1054), for the sheer pleasure of it (1053,

1054). Rousseau "knows" and "feels" that "to do good is the truest happiness the human heart can experience" (1051), and he recalls various occasions when he yielded to his "lively, true, pure" penchant for the "sweetest pleasure" (1052) of this truest happiness. Yet he has given it up.

To do a good deed is tacitly to enter into a "kind of contract": the beneficiary expects his benefactor to keep up his benefactions, and the benefactor is fully aware of this expectation. Unintentionally but inevitably, naturally, they form a "sort of society" (1053–54). Indeed, the tacit kind of contract between them is "the most sacred" of all contracts (1053–54; see *SC* I.1.ii, I.7.iii, IV.8.xxxiii; *Emile*, 520–21n [233n Bloom]). Rousseau had entered into such a "most sacred" "kind of contract" with a young beggar he passed on his regular walks, with whom he'd pause to chat, and to whom he'd give some alms. He enjoyed these visits. Yet lately he had, as it were "mechanically" (*machinalement*), followed a route that avoided the young beggar. His detour "mechanically" broke the tacit kind of contract into which he had entered with him. "There is hardly a single mechanical [*machinal*] movement of ours the cause of which we could not find in our heart if we but knew how to look for it there" (1050). When he searched his heart for why he made this detour he realized that what had begun as his pleasure and gift had, unintentionally but inevitably, turned into a "kind of duty" (1050), an obligation and "onerous subjection [*assujetissement*]" (1052). Obligation causes Rousseau to freeze. Whenever he feels its yoke, he cannot bring himself to do even what he is otherwise inclined to do with pleasure. The youngster was stationed by the *barriére d'enfer*, the gate of hell.

Rousseau used to think that his doing good by inclination and with pleasure was a clear sign of his virtue. On reflecting about the incident at the *barriére d'enfer* and similar incidents, he is forced to recognize that doing good by inclination is one thing, and doing good by virtue is quite another. Virtue requires vanquishing inclination, even the inclination to do no more than good: "the pleasure of fulfilling our duties is one of the pleasures which only the habit of virtue engenders; the pleasures that come to us immediately from nature do not rise this high" (1054). The *Reveries* probes to the inclinations and pleasures that come to us immediately from nature.

Rousseau recognizes that it may seem harsh and perhaps even unjust to break the terms that are "the natural effects" of the tacit kind of contract between benefactor and beneficiary. But breaking it is, nevertheless, "the effect of an independence that the heart loves and does not relinquish without effort" (1054). He justifies not making that effort on the grounds that in his present circumstances he is no longer in control of the outcome of his actions; that he is therefore no longer in a position to do good for others or even for himself; and that therefore his only remaining duty is to abstain from acting altogether. He recognizes that this may be excessive. One reason he gives for going too far is that he had learned long ago how burdensome some of his good deeds had grown, that once he became a public figure he was overwhelmed by requests to do good, that unscrupulous

people had taken advantage of his readiness to be helpful, and that some people who had sued for his good offices and whom he had helped turned against him when they saw that doing so might profit them. In other words, he had lost control over the outcome of some of his actions. While none of this stopped him from recently giving alms to the youngster at the *barriére d'enfer*, it has adulterated (*altéré*, 1055) his *naturel*, and once one has left one's *naturel* there are no more boundaries to hold one in check. He does not regret the cruel lessons that his false friends have taught him. He owes to them greater insight into his own conduct and motives, and further reflections about the differences—and the tensions—between inclination and duty, being good and being virtuous, heart and will. It taught him that all the inclinations of nature, including even beneficence, when followed indiscriminately or imprudently in society, change in nature and often become as harmful as their initial thrust was useful. Nor does he hate these false friends. He loves himself too much to hate anyone. Still, in order not to hate them he had no choice but to flee them. But his contempt and pity for them has made for a deeper gulf between himself and them than have all their machinations. He now looks upon them as he might view actors playing parts on a stage and not as persons with whom he is directly involved.

He goes out of his way to say that his resolve to abstain from all activity is blameless only because it is forced on him by his being excluded from the society of his fellows. Yet even as he says this, he again adds that he finds it sweet that his present circumstances permit him to yield fully and blamelessly to his natural inclination. His natural inclination to abstain is stronger than his inclination to do good. It is one manifestation of what he calls *amour de soi*.

Rousseau began his discussion of the "greatest happiness" of doing good by considering the individual happiness that accompanies individual benefactions, the unanticipated obligations and subjections to which such benefactions inevitably lead, and his therefore increasingly abstaining from all activity in general, and from doing good in particular. By and by he goes on to tell of aspirations that he used to entertain for individual happiness that would accompany his contributions to the "public felicity." If he were to follow his natural inclinations freely, he would live readily and even with pleasure in the company of his fellows. He would exercise universal and disinterested benevolence toward them. "Only the sight of public felicity could have touched my heart with a permanent feeling, and the ardent desire to contribute to it would have been my most constant passion" (1058). He is evidently talking about a long ago past, before the time about which he said that experience taught him early on that it is not among men that he would ever find what his heart felt most in need of, the true end of life or the happiness for which it yearned (1012). "So long as men were my brothers I made projects of earthly felicity for myself; since they were always projects in relation to the whole, I could be happy only in the context of public felicity, and the idea of a private happiness never touched my heart until I saw my

brothers seek their happiness solely in my misery" (1066).[14] Is he saying that beholding, contributing to, and participating in public felicity would have made for greater happiness on his part than does doing individual good or than does the *dolce far niente* and enjoying the sentiment of his existence on St. Peter's Island?

He spins out a fantasy about one way in which he might have satisfied this ardent desire and constant passion: if he had been invisible and all-powerful like God, he would have been beneficent and good like him. He would be invisible if he were in possession of the ring of Gyges (Plato, *Republic* 359d–362b, 612b; see Herodotus, *Histories* I.8–12; *Reveries*, 1000, 1047, 1056, 1066); and if he were invisible, he could be beneficent without being manifestly subjected by his benefactions to tacit contracts or obligations. To the best of my knowledge this is Rousseau's only mention of God as all-powerful, as well as his only mention of God's enacting both particular and universal providence. He does not say why an omnipotent, self-sufficient being would trouble to enact them; and hence also not whether he himself, in enacting them, could be said to be self-sufficient like the God to whom he likened himself in recounting his experience and his recollection of the sentiment of existence (1047); or "impassible" like the God to whom he likened himself at the beginning of the *Reveries* (999). Being all-powerful he would not be bound by the natures or by nature's laws, and so could occasionally perform miracles. His only law would be his "natural inclinations" (1058). He does not say how human inclinations, even if they are the inclinations of truly good men, can be trusted to enact the laws of providence. Had he not ruled out this possibility when he observed that in society the effects of all of men's natural inclinations, including even beneficence, change in nature, and does it not then follow that in society men may not be simply and only good (1052)? Even a godlike human attending to the public felicity would have to take account of what prudence dictates. After all, the task that Rousseau describes in this hyperbolic fantasy—his "castles in Spain" (1057)—is essentially the task that he sets himself in all of his political writings and that he explicitly entrusts to the Lawgivers of the *Social Contract* who "honor the Gods with their own wisdom, so that peoples … obey the yoke of public felicity freely and bear it with docility" (*SC* II.7.x). He had alluded to this issue as it were in passing in his earlier remark that the Savoyard Vicar's Profession of Faith which men nowadays unjustly defame and revile might come to be recognized as sound and even salutary "if good sense and good faith are ever reborn among them" (1018).

Even in this fantasy of divine omnipotence Rousseau never so much as dreams of making men into what we might wish them to be, let alone of

[14] *Second Discourse*, Epistle Dedicatory, para. 22 (*OC*, 3:120–21); "the yoke of public felicity": *SC* II.7.xi–xii, III.6.iv, IV.8.xxv; see Plato, *Republic* 497a.

eliminating all evil. He explicitly expects to mete out "deserved punishments," in other words, he expects there always to be those who deserve them.

Perhaps the most startling among the many startling features of this ring of Gyges fantasy of orchestrating the public felicity is that Rousseau does not so much as consider actively involving the public in the pursuit of its felicity. The role that he assigns to himself in this fantasy suggests a beneficent tyrant. It might bring to mind Plato's philosopher-king.

Rousseau decides that even if he were all-powerful but in other respects remained human, he might lack the self-control to resist temptations to misuse his power. For "anyone whom his power places above man must be above mankind's weaknesses" (1058). He therefore decides that he had best give up wishing for the ring. In giving up wishing for it, does he also give up wishing to behold, to contribute to, and to participate in the public felicity?

Formally, his conceit about the ring of Gyges parallels his discussion (in the Fourth *Walk*) of his right to his motto, *vitam impendere vero*, as well as his discussion (earlier in this Sixth *Walk*) of the incident at the *barriére d'enfer*: in all three cases he is moved by the inclination to do something good; in all three cases he commits himself more or less publicly to do the good he is inclined to do, and so incurs an at least tacit obligation—not to tell fictions, to continue his benefactions, not to yield to temptation; in all three cases his conduct alerts him to the discrepancy between what he professed and believed himself to be doing and what he in fact does or might do; in all three cases he accommodates to his inclination by abandoning his tacit obligation.

On reflecting about these cases he is led to conclude that he "was never truly suited for [*propre à*] civil society, where everything is constraint [*gêne*], obligation, duty," that his "independent *naturel* always rendered him incapable of the subjections that anyone who wants to live among men has to make" (1059).

Not being suited for civil or political society is, of course, entirely consistent with being "the most sociable … of human beings" (995). Suited/unsuited for civil society does not correspond to sociable/unsociable but corresponds, rather, to citizen/solitary—as, for example, does the author of the *First Discourse*, A Citizen of Geneva, to the author of these *Reveries*, the Solitary Walker. Neither term is intelligible except in contrast with the other; just as "state of nature" and "civil state" are intelligible only in contrast with one another. In the *First Discourse* Rousseau had said categorically that every useless citizen is a pernicious person. Now, in the *Reveries*, in a direct allusion to that earlier remark, he says that his contemporaries may not be wrong to charge him with being a useless member of society, but that they are wrong to proscribe him as pernicious. He may not have done a great deal of good. But while abstaining from all activity may keep one from doing good, it also keeps one from doing harm.[15]

[15]*First Discourse*, para. 39; *Reveries*, 1059 and var. (b).

Initially he had said that his abstaining from the active—civil—life is innocent because his contemporaries had expelled him from their midst. Now he adds that they expelled him from their midst because his living as free as possible of having to do what he does not want to do is a constant reproach to them who put up with endless demeaning and distasteful subjections in the secret hope for a chance to lord it over their fellows.

Rousseau presents the path that takes him from seeking to contribute to the public felicity and to participate in it, to the human felicity of doing good, to solitary "idleness" and finding contentment and compensation for human felicity in the sentiment of existence, as one of successive circumscriptions.

In the seventh and the eighth *Walks* Rousseau returns to, reviews, and expands on the two "activities" that had made his stay on St. Peter's so happy: botany and solitariness. "The collection [*recueil*] of my long dreams [*rêves*] is scarcely begun, yet already I feel it nearing its end. Another amusement takes its place, absorbs me, and even deprives me of the time to dream" (1060). At the age of sixty-five Rousseau finds his passion for botany renewed, and this marks as it were a new beginning: "There I am then, with hay as my sole nourishment and botany as my sole occupation" (1060). *"Me voilà donc"* echoes the opening of the *Reveries*: *"Me voici donc"* (995). Botanizing is an *amusement* (1042, 1043), a *folie*, a *fantaisie* (1061), and an inclination. Reason permits and even dictates that in his present circumstances he follow no other rule than his every inclination so long, he guardedly adds, as nothing prevents his following it. Just as henceforth his life is not guided by any civil or other utilitarian ends, his botanizing is not guided by medicinal or other utilitarian ends. Still, why, he asks himself, botany, and what does the answer to this question contribute to his self-knowledge? His answer begins, rather unexpectedly, by expanding on his earlier contrast between thinking and revery. Although he has sometimes thought rather profoundly, he has rarely done so with pleasure, almost always against his bent and as if forced to do so. Thinking tends to tire and to distress him, whereas revery relaxes and delights him. He would seem here to reserve "thinking" primarily for practical or instrumental thinking, doing and making, in contrast to "revery" which he would seem here to reserve primarily for thinking for its own sake alone, with no determinate end or aim beyond itself. The contrast between them would seem to correspond to the distinction between *travail* and *amusement*. They differ not so much in *what* one is thinking about as in *how and why* one thinks about it. The objects of "thinking" and "revery"—God, freedom, immortality, duty, happiness, persecution—may be the same, but how and with what end in view one is thinking about them differ; and so therefore may what may be said about them.

Once he was launched on a literary career and had become a celebrity, Rousseau could only rarely recapture the dear ecstasies of revery which for fifty years had made him in idleness the happiest of mortals. He got launched

on his literary career by "foreign impulsions" (1062). He does not say what these foreign impulsions were. It seems reasonable to assume that one such impulsion was his practical desire to contribute to the public felicity and to participate in it. He feels that now, with advancing years and reduced powers, he has to refrain from revery lest his languishing imagination, startled and frightened (*effarouchée*, 1062; 997, 1066) by his misfortunes, constrict (*resserat*) his heart. He is evidently here speaking primarily about that "other kind of revery" that is set in motion by his cheerful imagination and that regularly takes him back to St. Peter's Island "on the wings of the imagination" (1049). Now his reveries—strayings (*égarements*)—during which his soul roams and soars (*erre et plâne*, 1062, 1065) through the universe "on the wings of the imagination" in ecstasies that surpass every other enjoyment (*jouissance*) (1062), give way to his bodily roaming (*errer*, 1063, 1068, 1069) through the countryside from one grass and flower to the next, seeking out, often successfully, the reason and the end of their general structure. "Attracted by the cheerful objects that surround me, I consider them, I contemplate them, I compare them, and finally I learn to classify them, and forthwith I am as much of a botanist as anyone needs to be who wants to study nature solely in order to keep finding new reasons to love it" (1068). He feels that he also has to refrain from thinking lest he fan the embers of his suffering. Botany provides an alternative to both revery and thinking. He used to seek to merge with the whole of nature, to see and to feel everything only as part of the whole (*que dans le tout*, 1063, 1066, 1003–4), just as he used to seek his own happiness only in relation to everyone else's (*ces projets étant toujours relatifs au tout*, 1066; 1058). Now his instinct to flee sad thoughts has led him to attend to his immediate surroundings, and for the first time to concentrate on the spectacle of nature in its detail rather than in general as he had always done up to then. And just as he has come to attend to nature in its detail, he has increasingly come to seek his happiness in and by himself alone: "seeking refuge in the common mother's [embrace] I sought in her arms to escape her children's assaults, I became solitary or, as they say, unsociable and misanthropic because the most savage solitude seems to me preferable to the society of wicked people which thrives only on betrayals and hatred" (1066). Had he not attended to nature in its detail and sought happiness in and by himself on St. Peter's Island? Be that as may. He cannot bear utter isolation. His expansive soul seeks to extend its sentiments and existence to other beings. "The more profound the solitude in which I then live, the greater my need for some object to fill this void, and those that my imagination denies me or my memory rejects are made up for (*supplées*) by the spontaneous productions that the earth, unforced by men, offers to my sight on all sides" (1070). On St. Peter's Island he wanted to describe all of the island's plants; now he rather extravagantly says that he would like to know all of the entire earth's known plants.

He leaves it unclear whether he views—or would wish a putative reader to view—the shift from his former reveries about the whole to his current focus

on particulars as a gain, a loss, or neither gain nor loss but simply another kind of, or access to, happiness.

The Solitary Walker's delight in his "pure and disinterested contemplation" (1065, 1062–63, 1068, 1070) arises from his openness to the world, his wonder at it, his seeking to understand it on its own terms. "Plants seem to have been strewn in profusion upon the earth as the stars have been in the sky, in order to invite man by the lure of pleasure and curiosity to the study of nature" (1069). Here, as throughout, Rousseau is in quest of nature free of artifice or convention. As he says yet again, nature does not lie (1064).[16] But neither does it tell the truth. Nature is mute. He was therefore led to argue that nature free of artifice or convention, like color without shape or disembodied soul, can only be thought—conjectured—in tandem and in contrast with the ordinary course of things: the successive stages of the state of nature in contrast with the various stages of the civil state or, as in the *Reveries*, the Solitary Walker in contrast to those who cast him out, a book dealer on a lonely mountain-top, a stocking factory on the other side of the underbrush and the brambles. However, his distinctive move in the *Reveries* is to try to catch a hold of nature unmediated by art or convention, what on one occasion he calls *nature sauvage* (1071; 1041, 1066), to lay it bare to the level of what caused him "mechanically" to avoid further encounters with the youngster at the *barriére d'enfer*, to the "independence which the heart loves and does not relinquish without effort" (1054), to whatever it is that he calls the sentiment of existence or *amour de soi* uncoupled from *amour-propre*.

On St. Peter's Island his cheerful imagination and his verdant surroundings provided the "vivifying" (1047) backdrop for his sentiment of existence on and by the Lac de Bienne, and the setting for the "pleasant chimeras" and "fictions" that blend seamlessly with the workaday world. Now he makes no mention of the sentiment of existence, or of the imagination, let alone of chimeras or fictions. Instead, greenery, brooks, and birds "vivify" the earth, deck it out in its bridal gown, and offer to man a spectacle full of life (*vie*), interest, and charms, the only spectacle in the world of which the heart and the eyes never weary.

On St. Peter's Island Rousseau felt self-sufficient like God. Now he feels "grateful admiration" (1069) for the hand that lets him enjoy all this.

Both accounts end with recollections: one with dreams of his stay on the island, the other with the memories of the fields, the streams, the woods, and the peace and quiet of the settings in which he did his botanizing, the good and simple folk among whom he used to live, and the innocent pleasures of his early years.

Some commentators speak of Rousseau's "antiteleological bias." That assumes that teleology is unproblematic. Rousseau certainly does not deny

[16]See also *Second Discourse*, Exordium, para. 7; *Dialogues*, in *OC*, 1:833; *Fragments de Botanique*, in *OC*, 4:1250.

that the spontaneous productions of the earth are or have natures. On the contrary, he seeks out, "sometimes with success, their general laws, the reason and the end of their various structures" (1069). Nor does he deny that man is or has a nature: the guiding question of the *Reveries* is *Que suis-je?* (995, 999, 1001, 1015–16), and its persistent quest is for *être ce que la nature a voulu*—for *mon naturel*, for man's true end (1013, 1014, 1026). What Rousseau questions is that the uses to which men might put the natural beings, including themselves and their fellows—their domestication—are their natural, true ends.[17]

How "teleology" is understood is closely related to how happiness is understood. Happiness, as Rousseau characterizes it, does not consist in a privileged activity of a privileged part of the soul but in achieving, as far as possible on one's own, the equilibrium, balance (*assiette*, 1012, 1014, 1046, 1077), of one's natural needs and powers, in short the self-contained self-sufficiency of a well-ordered soul: for example, doing one's good with the least harm possible to others, or the *dolce far niente*. Imbalance, self-contradiction, being beside oneself, trigger discontent and unhappiness. In this sense, Rousseau's view may be said to be teleological. Since everything here below is in flux and we may not love tomorrow what or whom we love today, happiness is inevitably precarious. The wish for lasting happiness may be chimerical. One recurrent theme of the *Reveries* is that the lasting memory of happiness is a close second best.

The nature that Rousseau has depicted in this Seventh *Walk* is, as he fully recognizes, remarkably benign. It is *sauvage* in the sense in which wild strawberries are *sauvages*. He does not so much as allude to earthquakes in Lisbon or in Chile, let alone to plagues or to floods. He expressly brackets inquiries into what is not accessible to unaided inspection, and in particular into the earth beneath. Even his persecutors are not Cyclopes or Laestrygonians. As if to illustrate the benign character of the nature he depicts, he ends this *Walk* with an anecdote about an ostensibly good French friend not warning him that the berries he is eating are thought to be deadly and his not suffering any ill effect from the few he did eat (1072–73).

The Seventh *Walk* focused primarily on Rousseau's attending to the particulars of the natural world right around him, grasses, flowers, plants; the Eighth *Walk* focuses on his attending to his happiness in and by himself. It begins with a thought that recalls the thought that prefaced his earlier contrast between pleasure and happiness, but now he stresses the contrast between existing and living. In meditating about the dispositions of his soul at different stages in his life, he is again struck to find that he has savored the sweetness of existence more and really lived more in times of what is commonly regarded as adversity than in times of what is commonly regarded as

[17]1064–65; consider *Second Discourse*, epigraph; Preface, para. 6; note XII, para. 4.

prosperity and worldly success. The contrast between existing and living is a recurrent theme of Rousseau's. He had alluded to it at the beginning of the *Reveries* and he will return to it at its end (1004, 1098–99). Here all he says about it is that adversity forces us to return to ourselves, to be ingathered, concentrated.

For a long time he had attributed his persecutions to men's malignity and to their resentment at his bridling at the subjections of political life. More recently he came to think of his troubles as also one of those mysteries of Heaven that reason cannot fathom. Now he adds that when all of his attempts to make sense of what was happening to him failed yet again, he came to understand that he must view it as "pure fatality" (1079, 1010), and himself as a "purely passive" being. The formulation is strikingly cautious. He does not say that he and his life are ruled by pure fatality, but that reason counsels that he view them as if it did.

His viewing himself and everything that affects him as "pure fatality" may not contradict outright the extremely general and vague conclusion about God and immortality that he said that he had reached a quarter of a century or so earlier, and to which he said that he has steadfastly adhered as a rule of conduct and of faith ever since: conformity between his nature and the physical order of the world; but it does significantly affect how that conclusion is understood. It also significantly affects how his recent, equivocal conclusion—that God is just, knows that he, Rousseau, is innocent, wants him to suffer, and that "in the end everything must return to order and my turn will come sooner or later"—is understood. This formulation suggests that, in the final analysis, everything is ordered with a view to what is best for man, and perhaps even for Rousseau himself. "Fatality" says that it is not.[18] It emphatically contradicts the "approximately" similar views to his own views that Rousseau attributes to the Vicar. At the time at which he reached his own few fundamental principles, his heart, his reason, and his inner assent confirmed them (1018, 1020, 1022). Now his heart and his reason differ, and he says nothing about inner assent: while his reason tells him to understand everything that is happening to him as "pure fatality," his heart murmurs. *Amour-propre* rebels and resists reason (1079). *Amour-propre* is the "factitious passion" or "sentiment" that causes us to derive our sense of our own and everyone else's worth from how we believe we and they appear in one another's eyes. Its medium is opinion. What reason leads Rousseau to understand, then, is that insofar as his suffering is due to *amour-propre*, it is self-imposed, like the all-seeing and all-knowing fate (*sort*) that the gambler "imagines" and blames

[18]"It were better to credit the myths regarding the gods than be enslaved by the physicists' fate; for the first leaves the hope that we may sway the gods by honoring them, while the other is inexorable necessity" (Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus* [Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 10.134]; see Plutarch, *Nicias* 23.5).

for his losses.[19] It leads him to recognize that what he took to be his pure love of justice—his indignation at being treated like an evildoer although he is innocent of doing or even wishing anyone any wrong—was, in fact, his petty pride offended. In short, reason leads him to understand that his heart had misled him and that he must root out or at least subdue *amour-propre* together with all "the social passions and their sad train" (1083), subjugate opinion (1078, 1081), shake its "yoke," bear without a murmur "the laws of nature" (1065), "the yoke of necessity" (1077, 1010), "blind necessity" (1078), "pure fatality" (1079), and submit and resign himself to his destiny.

He had surely reined in his *amour-propre* in the course of the review of his beliefs and ways that he had conducted at the age of forty. Yet he clearly had not uprooted it. He had acknowledged that his review had left unresolved innumerable questions regarding God and immortality, and that his heart had rebutted these objections better than had his reason, adding that even at his present advanced age he would not let reason defeat the conclusions that he had reached at that time (1016, 1020). Now he does allow his reason to challenge his heart and to silence its murmurings: "regardless of one's circumstances, persistent unhappiness is due solely to *amour-propre*. When it is silent and reason speaks, reason eventually consoles us for all the ills we could not avoid" (1080).

Yet no sooner has he said so than he corrects himself. It is misleading to honor reason with this victory. Reason may mitigate the passions. It does not rule them. Only once they are spent, and his *naturel ardent* gives way to his *naturel indolent*, is equanimity restored, *amour-propre* reverts to being *amour de moi-même* and is "returned to the order of nature" (1083–84). In the place of his *amour-propre* and of the vengeful fate that his gambler had created for himself, he now creates for himself benign imaginary beings that conform to the sentiments for which his heart was born: "I spend three quarters of my life absorbed by instructive and even agreeable objects to which I abandon my mind and my senses with delight, or with the children of my fantasies whom I have created in conformity with my heart and whose company nourishes my sentiments" (1081). He does not say what the

[19] "In all evils (*maux*) that befall us we look to the intention more than to the effect. … Material pain is what one feels least in the blows of fortune, and when unfortunate people do not know whom to blame for their miseries they blame destiny which they personify and endow with eyes and intelligence with which deliberately to torment them. Thus a gambler distraught by his losses grows enraged without knowing against whom. He imagines a fate (*sort*) that deliberately sets out to torment him and, finding fuel for his anger, gets wrought up and infuriated at the enemy he created for himself. The wise man … feels only the material impact of the evil of which he is a victim, and while the blows that strike him may hurt his person, none reaches his heart" (1078 and var. (a); 1029). See *Second Discourse* II, para. 57; *Dialogues*, 669; Cicero, *De finibus* I.xii.40–46 ; Spinoza, *Ethics* I, Appendix.

"instructive and even agreeable objects" with which he spends three quarters of his life might be. Nor does he say what the imaginary creatures—the children of his fantasies—might be, any more than he had said what might be the pleasant chimeras, fictions, and imaginary beings with which he peopled his reveries on St. Peter's Island, or what, if any, might be their relation to his ring of Gyges castles in Spain.

Once he is free of *amour-propre* and has cast off the yoke of opinion, Rousseau no longer has any reason to hope or to fear: no reason to hope to be restored to the community of men, or for fame or honor or for the immortality of his soul; no basis for shame or embarrassment; and no reason to fear persecution or any other suffering. To give up hope and fear is in effect to say "abide" not just to *this* moment, but to any moment. He has "recovered serenity, tranquility, peace, even happiness, since every day of my life reminds me with pleasure of the day before, and I don't wish for the next day to be different" (1077). He says nothing now about wishing to return to St. Peter's Island.

Souls purged of *amour-propre*, stripped layer by layer to their *naturel*, free of attachment to the world and all things worldly, and hence subject solely to "pure fatality," with their only love being *amour de soi-même*, might be thought of as might any natural beings free of artifice or convention. They would be the end result of the *épluchage* (1025) of beliefs, opinions, expectations, needs, and passions that the *Reveries* traces. Rousseau does not, in the course of it, so much as allude to the gradual build up of beliefs, opinions, expectations, needs, and passions that the *Second Discourse* conjectures. The way to and the way from the principles is not one and the same.

Rousseau viewing himself and everything that affects him as "pure fatality" mitigates his suffering and helps him to attain the impassibility, the self-sufficiency, and the tranquility that his natural man and his Solitary Walker seek and claim to achieve. It is best read as the culmination of his sustained meditation on the classical Wise Man's happiness as self-sufficiency (*autarkeia*, 1047, 1074–75, 1077, 1078, 1094), and in particular on the Epicurean and Stoic Wise Man's tranquility of soul or *ataraxia*.

He ends this Eighth *Walk* by saying that he now enjoys "a happiness for which I consider myself made. I have described this state in one of my reveries" (1084). The remark is commonly taken to refer to the Fifth *Walk* with its account of or about his reveries on or at the edges of the Lac de Bienne, twelve or so years earlier. Maybe it does. But it seems more plausibly to correspond to the state that he says in the first two *Walks* is the state in which he is "now." In this Eighth *Walk* he describes himself as beyond hope and fear. In the First *Walk* he had said that it has been only two months since he gave up hope and achieved a quietude that he has reason to believe will not ever again be disturbed. That First *Walk* ends on the same defiant note—"they will not keep me from enjoying my innocence and to end my days in peace in spite of them" (1001)—on which the Eighth *Walk* ends: "I enjoy my self in spite of them" (1084). The structure of the text suggests that the first eight *Walks*

form a completed whole, beginning and ending with the confrontation between a solitary Rousseau and "them."

The Ninth *Walk* again marks a new beginning. Rousseau prefaces it with an almost word-for-word restatement of the reflections with which he had introduced his initial discussion of happiness and his account of the sentiment of existence. "Happiness is a permanent state that seems not to be made here below for man. Everything on earth is in a constant flux that does not allow anything in it to assume a stable form. Everything around us changes. We ourselves change and no one can make sure that he will love tomorrow what he loves today. Hence all our projects for felicity in this life are chimeras" (1085; see "Ébauches des *Rêveries*," no. 3, in *OC*, 1:1166; see also 1046 and n. 12 above). He had ended the earlier statement by contrasting happiness and pleasure. He ends this restatement by contrasting happiness and contentment. He had distinguished them all along, but now he expands on the difference between them. He is not sure that he has ever seen a happy person. He does not say that he may not ever have known one. After all, he has at various times described himself as happy. But he has often seen contented hearts, and the sight of them has caused him the greatest contentment. Contentment falls short of happiness. Happiness is strictly one's own. It has no outward sign. It is not shared and, Rousseau intimates, it cannot be shared. Contentment, by contrast, has outward signs. It can be shared. Since lasting and shared happiness is not for us, we should seize contentment when we experience it. We should not drive it away or try to cling to it. Projects to do so are pure folly. Being content with other people's contentment and contributing to it is clearly a fellow-feeling. It is the privileged form that sociability or sociality comes to assume in the *Reveries*. Pity plays no role in it.

In the course of this Ninth *Walk*, Rousseau, "the most sociable and loving of men" (995), recounts nine episodes that illustrate his sociality. Its most immediate forms would be one's relations with family and friends. The first three episodes of the *Walk* seek to refute the charge that he is an unnatural (*dénaturé*) father who does not care for children or they for him.

The next three episodes tell of his doing good by distributing goods:

Of a Sunday, four or five years ago, Rousseau and his wife were sitting on a lawn, when a group of twenty or so girls settled nearby. Before long a vendor appeared who was selling chances to win a few wafers. Some of the girls had the money to play, others did not. Rousseau quietly tells the vendor to let everyone play and win at least something, and that he will pay for the whole thing. His wife suggests to the girls with the largest winnings that they share them with their less lucky companions. Here, as on several other occasions, Rousseau stage-manages the entire scene by enlisting compliant intermediaries. When differences arise, he is the judge of last resort. They part very content with one another, and for the thirty coppers it cost him he derived a hundred silver pieces' worth of contentment.

The episode reminds him of a much earlier episode, when he was living among the rich and powerful. A large formal party at a chateau near Paris turned into a fair in which the gentry and the country folk mingled. One of the hosts got the idea of tossing some ginger-breads into the crowd and watching the people scramble for them. Others of his party joined in. In embarrassment (*fausse honte*), so did Rousseau. But he soon wearied of spending money to see people trample one another, and so wandered off.

By and by he came upon a stall where a peasant girl was offering apples for sale. Some boys eyed them longingly but couldn't afford to buy them. After enjoying this spectacle for a while, Rousseau pays the girl for her apples and asks her to distribute them to the boys. "Whereupon I enjoyed one of the sweetest sights apt to gratify a human heart, seeing joy combined with youthful innocence spread all about me. For even the spectators shared in it on seeing it, and I, who shared this joy at such small expense, had the added pleasure of feeling that it was my doing [*œuvre*]" (1093).

All three episodes recall, and enact on a reduced scale, the project of personal happiness as part of the public felicity that Rousseau entertained at the time when he thought of men as his brothers. The main differences between that earlier project and the episodes he recounts now are that earlier he had spoken of happiness whereas now he speaks of a significantly weaker contentment; earlier he had spoken of public felicity on a political and possibly even on a cosmopolitan scale whereas now he speaks of the contentment of small face-to-face groups of people; in two of these three episodes he enacts on a reduced scale his earlier conceit of being all-powerful, implementing the laws of providence and remaining the judge of last resort of all differences that might arise, without himself incurring any of the attendant obligations and responsibilities. In all three cases the way to ensure that goods are distributed equitably is to have the money to make sure that they are. Money is the real-life ring of Gyges.

Rousseau goes out of his way to remark that he did not plan any of these episodes, or act as he did for the sake of doing good or for the sake of the pleasure he might derive from his actions. While he may enjoy others' contentment more if he caused it, he enjoys it regardless of whether he did or did not cause it. His actions are "disinterested."

The Ninth *Walk* recalled instances of shared contentment. The Tenth and last *Walk* recalls something close to shared happiness. Until now all of the Solitary Walker's accounts of happiness were shadowed by the persecutions and ostracism of the preceding fifteen or so years. Now Rousseau looks back a full half century, to the few years of "full and pure" happiness that he spent in the company of Mme de Warens, loving and beloved, solitary but not alone, "when I was myself fully, without admixture or obstacle, and when I can truly say that I lived" (1098–99). He had recently come to view himself as a "purely passive" being and to understand everything that happened to him as "pure fatality" (1079; *presque passif*, 1099). The moment he met Mme de Warens

"determined my entire life and by an inevitable chain of circumstances brought about the destiny of the rest of my days" (1098). In her company and under her tutelage "I did what I wanted to do, I was what I wanted to be, and by the way I filled my free time, helped by her lessons and her example, I was able to give to my still simple and new soul the form that best suited it and that it has retained ever since" (1099). It was the time about which he had earlier said that he had spent it fully absorbed in the study of good books, and that "meditation in retirement, the study of nature, contemplation of the universe, force a solitary person forever to soar up to the author of things and to search … for the end of everything he sees and the cause of everything he feels" (1014). Not a day goes by without his recalling that time with pleasure and emotion.

He has said from first to last that he is and wants to remain without attachments to anything earthly, and he said very emphatically that he was always unsuited for civil society because he cannot suffer its subjections (1059). But now he immediately adds that in the company of Mme de Warens he was "perfectly free and more than free" because subjected solely to his attachments or affections. Subjection to what is expected of one, duties, rules, and laws may be oppressive; subjection to what one expects of oneself, strives for, or loves is elevating.

His description of how he spent those long-ago years at the Charmettes recalls his earlier descriptions of those years. It recalls as well his description of how he spent his days on St. Peter's Island with no other wish for the next day than that it be like the day before, and, more recently, how he spent his days in botanizing. He recalls them as periods of unclouded happiness and tells how much he misses them. Recently, many years after his revery of the sentiment of existence on St. Peter's Island, on again meditating about the different dispositions of his soul in periods of worldly prosperity and in periods of solitariness, it seems to him that he really lived more when his sentiments "so to speak clustered around his heart by his destiny did not get dissipated on all the objects of men's esteem which in themselves deserve it so little and yet are the sole concern of people who are believed to be happy" (1074). He was not moved genuinely to say about his stay on St. Peter's Island that he "lived" there.[20]

To live is, as he says, to be all there, to exercise one's most precious faculties to the fullest, to be entirely absorbed in what there is. The contrast that is frequently drawn between Rousseauan happiness as sentiment and happiness as activity (e.g., Aristotle, *Poetics* 1450a17) is misleading. Is the full and pure happiness of those early years contemporaneous with his wish for the public felicity that would make for his own happiness as part of the

[20]"I was made to live" (1004 with nn.); "living is the craft [*le métier*] I want to teach him," i.e., Emile (*Emile*, 521–22, 543, 253); "My craft [*métier*] and my art is living" (Montaigne, *Essais* II.6); wisdom as the art of living, *ars vivendi* (Torquatus the Epicurean in Cicero, *De finibus* I.xiii.42).

communal happiness? Does the lasting memory of it "compensate" for having given up on this public felicity?

The *Reveries* is widely believed to have remained unfinished. Perhaps it did. Still, it began with Rousseau despised and rejected and as if answering a summons or a call—"Here I am then"—evoking the great biblical Founders and Prophets: Abraham (Gen. 22:1, 22:7, 22:11), Moses (Exod. 3:4), Isaiah (Isa. 6:8), among others,[21] and it ends on Palm Sunday.

[21]More fully, Robert Sacks, *The Book of Job with Commentary* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 297–99.