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Posted on 08 November 2018 By Jean-Jacques Rousseau

[Free] ? Les Confessions ? MOBI eBook or Kindle ePUB free

I would never have read The Confessions had it not been for the admiration W.G Sebald expresses for the man and his works in his A Place in the Country The writing here is lucid,

often floridly emotional, but it is the density of Rousseau's memory that astonishes. His focus on a single incident or individual is uncanny; his retrospective interpretations can go on for pages. And this was a man with substantial social deficits. In Book Three, it becomes clear that the author suffered from something like autism, for he had limited social capacities, and admits that he was little more than a fool in social settings. It was only in retrospect that he could review his knowledge and come to conclusions and write. The piety becomes annoying, all the discussion of great fathers of the Church who, let's face it, were just as pederastic then as they are today. Human nature hasn't changed. Rousseau even has a story about a priest picking him up for sex one night during a bout of homelessness in his late teens. The view one gets of society at this time, too, is a contrast of extremes. Pre-industrial revolution, there is the unspoiled landscape which at this remove seems almost unimaginable. Contrast that though with the primitive medicine not much more than herbs for illnesses, the brevity of life, the impenetrable ignorance of the people, the extractive business practices, zero public education. It would not be a stretch to read *The Confessions* purely as an historical dystopia. Despite his aforementioned social incapacities, Rousseau was paradoxically highly social, or would high functioning be the accurate term. Since he knows Italian he undertakes the position of secretary to the French ambassador in Venice this during the War of the Austrian Succession as Prince Lobkowitz is marching on Naples. His devotion to his duty is impeccable, while the ambassador himself concerns himself primarily with whoring. The Venice chapter is a classic story of working under incompetent leadership all too familiar to those who have experience working in either military or corporate settings. One's heart goes out to Rousseau when he recounts how he was so basely insulted by his superior. I must finish .

OXFORD WORLD'S CLASSICS

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU
CONFESSIONS

A new translation by Angela Scholar



There are times when I am so unlike myself that I could be taken for someone else of an entirely opposite character. This book begins with a falsehood and only escalates from there. Rousseau, prone to hyperbole, boldly asserts that his autobiography is without precedent. Nevermind St Augustine's famous autobiography, which shares the same name and ignore the works of St Teresa, Benvenuto Cellini, and Montaigne. I suppose this sort of boastful exaggeration shouldn't count for much. After all, Milton began *Paradise Lost* by saying he was attempting things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme. Nevertheless, the second part of Rousseau's assertion, that his enterprise would find no imitator, is even indisputably false than the first one. This book has found nothing if not imitators. Rousseau's *Confessions* is really two distinct works, the first covering his childhood to his early adulthood, the second up to age fifty three. For my part, the first is far better, and far original. Like any modern self psychoanalyzer, Rousseau traces his personality to formative events in his childhood quite unusual at the time, I believe. Even surprising is how frankly sexual is Rousseau's story. He begins by describing the erotic pleasure he derived from being spanked by his nanny, relates a few homosexual encounters undesired on his part, and frequently mentions masturbation. Much of the first book is simply prolonged descriptions of all the women he's had anything to do with. The second part is less striking, sometimes dull, but still full of interesting episodes. Rousseau has much to say about his career as a composer, something of which I had no idea before reading this book. He begins his career as a musician as a bungler and a phony, but eventually succeeds in closing the gap between his pretensions and his abilities. It isn't long before Rousseau finds himself stitching together some musical and lyrical fragments from Jean Philippe Rameau and Voltaire into *Les fêtes de Ramire*, a one act opera and he soon becomes Rameau's enemy, because Rousseau is convinced Rameau is jealous of Rousseau's musical powers. Rousseau also relates the famous tale of his children. After taking a seamstress, Therese, as his mistress, and having several children by her, he persuades her and himself to give them up to the foundling hospital. This is probably the most infamous episode of Rousseau's life, and has provided plentiful fuel for those wish to discredit his ideas on education and child rearing. As Rousseau grows old and becomes a man of letters, he accumulates ever enemies, including Diderot and Grimm, who Rousseau asserts plotted relentlessly against him, partially because Rousseau scorned city life and modern luxuries. I can't help comparing this book with another great autobiography I recently read, that of Benvenuto Cellini. The two men are in many ways opposites. Cellini is a man of the world his eye is turned exclusively outward he is all action he is confident in high society he rarely blushes and never admits a fault. Rousseau is a man of sentiment and feeling, absorbed in his private world, often timid, awkward, and unsure of himself, and who often makes self deprecating remarks. And yet, the I read, the I saw strong similarities between these two self chroniclers. They are both massive egotists. If I were to write my autobiography, I'd hope that it would include some nice portraits of people in my life but in these books there is no

compelling portrait of anyone except their authors Like many narcissists, their vanity is easily wounded They are obsessed with slights, and consider anyone who doesn't show the proper respect to be, not only inconsiderate, but downright villainous They both make enemies quickly, wherever they go And yet, the fact that so many people they meet turn against them does not prompt them to pause and reflect rather, they attribute all antipathy to envy, jealousy, or pure malevolence Both have persecution complexes both are paranoid and both entertain extremely high opinions of their own virtues and abilities In Rousseau's own words, he is among the best of men It occurs to me that the urge to write an autobiography, in an age when autobiography was anything but common, requires a certain amount of narcissism What surprises me is that these two men, Cellini and Rousseau, are also quite oblivious of themselves and utterly unable to question their own opinion This is in strong contrast to Montaigne, somebody who Rousseau explicitly scorns I have always laughed at the false ingenuousness of Montaigne, who, feigning to confess his faults, takes great care not to give himself any, except such as are amiable whilst I, who have ever thought, and still think myself, considering everything, the best of men, felt there is no human being, however pure he may be, who does not internally conceal some odious vice. There may be a grain of truth in accusing Montaigne of attributing only amiable faults to himself though reports by his contemporaries coincide remarkably well with Montaigne's self report Even so, Montaigne had a quality that Rousseau eminently lacked the ability to jump out of his own perspective When playing with his cat, Montaigne paused to reflect who knows whether she is amusing herself with me than I with her And in that simple question pushing himself out of his own skull, seeing himself from the eyes of his cat he transcends all of the searching self analysis of Rousseau Rousseau's total inability to, even for one moment, question his righteousness and his enemies wickedness is what makes him, by the end of the book, nearly intolerable at least for me. So much for Rousseau's personality As a portrait of a man, this book is interesting enough but as the confessions of one of the most influential thinkers in the 18th century, it is far so Rousseau, whatever his faults, was undeniably remarkable To paraphrase Will Durant, Rousseau, with almost no formal education, abandoned early by his father, wandering incessantly from place to place, setting himself as an enemy of the dominant currents of thought and art of the time, the avowed antagonist both of Rameau, the foremost composer, and Voltaire and Diderot, the foremost writers this Rousseau nevertheless managed to become the decisive influence on the next century. Cases like Rousseau's make me stop and reflect about the nature of intellectual work Neither a strong reasoner nor an adept researcher any competent professor could poke gaping holes in his arguments and cite reams of factual inaccuracies it is Rousseau, not they, who is still being studied at college campuses all over the world, and who will be the foreseeable future Indisputably he was an excellent stylist, though this hardly accounts for his canonical status What sets Rousseau apart, intellectually at least, is his enormous originality Rousseau himself realizes this I know my heart, and have studied

mankind I am not made like anyone I have been acquainted with, perhaps like no one in existence if not better, I am least claim originality, and whether Nature did wisely in breaking the mold with which she formed me, can only be determined after having read this work. Rousseau wrote in a way no one had before His ideas were fresh, his attitude unique Although he had influences, there is nothing derivative about him The I read and the longer I live, the am I drawn to the conclusion that the ability to form new ideas genuinely new, not just re interpretations of old ones is one of the rarest human faculties Rousseau had this faculty in abundance It is impossible to read him within the context of his time and not be utterly astounded at his creativity It is just this sort of creativity, the thing we most celebrate and praise, that seems impossible to teach impossible by definition, since you cannot teach somebody to think totally outside the bounds of your own paradigm You cannot, in other words, teach someone to transcend everything you teach them You can teach somebody to solve problems creatively but how can you teach somebody to examine problems previously unimagined This is just one of the paradoxes of education, I suppose. In any case, Rousseau is another example of those canonical thinkers who could never get tenure nowadays It s a funny world. . [Free] ? Les Confessions ? In His Confessions Jean Jacques Rousseau Tells The Story Of His Life, From The Formative Experience Of His Humble Childhood In Geneva, Through The Achievement Of International Fame As Novelist And Philosopher In Paris, To His Wanderings As An Exile, Persecuted By Governments And Alienated From The World Of Modern Civilization In Trying To Explain Who He Was And How He Came To Be The Object Of Others Admiration And Abuse, Rousseau Analyses With Unique Insight The Relationship Between An Elusive But Essential Inner Self And The Variety Of Social Identities He Was Led To Adopt The Book Vividly Illustrates The Mixture Of Moods And Motives That Underlie The Writing Of Autobiography Defiance And Vulnerability, Self Exploration And Denial, Passion, Puzzlement, And Detachment Above All, Confessions Is Rousseau S Search, Through Every Resource Of Language, To Convey What He Despairs Of Putting Into Words The Personal Quality Of One S Own Existence As is true about classics, they are not only a very authentic expression of the author s views and ideas, but also by large, present a mirror for the world we live in This is one reason why it is difficult to review them For, it calls not only an undivided attention towards the ideas expressed and opinions raised, but also for a deep introspection a meditation on the relevance of ideas presented, their importance on the working of society and their necessity in the wake of everyday life. Confessions, is about this and In addition to being the first major autobiography of an individual s own life, the Confessions presents to us the various points in the life of author which determined the penning and reason of his other major works including Emile, The Social Contract and Discourse on Inequality In other words, it forms a background reading towards understanding his other works. In the words of Rousseau, the reason of writing this work was to present an honest account of his life, character and various undertakings music

composition, letter writing and essay writing and also as an answer or justification against the laments of his unjust enemies, who, in his own opinion, instigated a plot against his reputation. Amongst others, including his friends, the one name that was frequently mentioned was that of Voltaire. Disappointed with the ways of high society and suffering immensely for their disdain, Rousseau decided to live a simple, rustic life i.e. relinquishing the material comforts and leading a life with bare minimum necessities. It is what forms the background of his works, *Discourse on Inequality* and *The Social Contract*, where he emphasizes on the natural state of a human being i.e. the physical freedom and a liberty to do essentially as they wish. It must be noted here, that Rousseau believed himself to be a subject of ridicule and disdain of his friends for his decision to lead a simple life. Though, it was this stand of his, which made his account seem biased in the sense that there was a consistent rambling of the wrongs that he had supposedly suffered on behalf of his enemies. Although, Rousseau, in the very beginning state that "Since I have undertaken to reveal myself absolutely to the public, nothing about me must remain hidden or obscure. I must remain incessantly beneath his gaze, so that he may follow me in all the extravagances of my heart and into every least corner of my life. Indeed, he must never lose sight of me for a single instant, for if he finds the slightest gap in my story he may wonder what I was doing at that moment. I am laying myself sufficiently open to human malice by telling my story, without rendering myself vulnerable by any silence and is commendable in the sense that he provides incidents of his own deeds, misdeeds including theft, his being utterly romantic and state of passion evoked for many women in his life, but still, it somehow seems an exaggerating fact that the whole world barring three or four very close people were involved in a conspiracy to ruin his name this, being the reason why I gave a star less to the work. Here, I also accept that since this is my first reading of a Rousseau work and I haven't yet read any of his other works or works by his contemporaries, I might also be having an unfair view on the matter. I, therefore, request my friends to suggest me some other works which may lead to clarify my doubts. One other thing that constantly bothered and seemed questionable was Rousseau's decision of leaving his children from wedlock with Theresa with asylums for the fear that they might be exposed to inferior ways and ideas as practised by other members of Theresa's family. A man of such learning as Rousseau, taking such action and leaving his own children, display a lack of empathy, which I believe is the very basic of a natural state as proposed by Rousseau of human beings. He himself acted as a contradiction to his own views/beliefs. Though, according to him, it was for the reason that he thought his children would get a better education at asylums than at home, but, it is still unbelievable that he would renounce them and wouldn't go back even once to see if they got the education he desired for them. And the irony, that he undertook the writing of *Emile on Education* for the sole purpose of explaining the importance of education. I wonder if he ever contemplated, that abandoned children could face with such anxiety in their lives, that it may render the whole idea of purpose of education irrelevant to them. During his life, he

also witnessed and was tormented by the wide gap between the rich and poor class of the society That is, of the ways in which sometimes, the people from poor class were exploited by rich class And also of the ways in which rich or royalty engaged while conversing or dealing with people from lower strata of society Here he also cited the various incidents, where he felt, that his friends from royalty acted disparagingly This, being the reason why he wrote Discourse on Inequality Rousseau, during his later years, was expelled by the governments of various places he resided at So that, his life became a constant changing of places and sufferings he endured, each time he had to move from a place It is actually very disheartening to note that the governments royalty of various states and countries were intent on expelling a man, who was not afraid to put his ideas into words, or as Rousseau himself says, was a victim of a conspiracy designed against him by his enemies Owing to my little knowledge on the subject, I cannot be a judge of that. On the whole, the journey through Confessions was not only an insight into the life of Rousseau but also into the ways of the society he lived in It left me with a keen sense of perplexity and a still bigger question Has the society improved as a whole, on the views raised in the work or is it an altogether lost cause . This book is a revelation as it seemed to me a portrait, or perhaps a mask, of the heightened sensibilities of the interior monologue of a genius Since my name is certain to live on among men, I do not want the reputation it transmits to be a false one Indeed, his honesty is remarkable as he writes about the abandonment of his children, his relationship with lovers and his intimate proclivities Rousseau s life was a fascinating study of an extraordinary and innovative mind He dined sometime with princes at noon and supped with peasants at night Musically self taught, he invented an alphabetical code for writing music and wrote an opera performed with it in The Village Soothsayer His Social Contract inspired constitutions in nations struggling with revolution against monarchies to become democracies which earned him threats of sedition and cruel acts of political scorn His books were burned, the church sought to excommunicate him, his house was stoned and he escaped in exile en route to Berlin through the good graces of philosopher David Hume to England toward the end of his life At times, often enough, he seems the narcissist subtly engrossed in his many virtues masked in false humility and yet the final, lasting impression is of a masterpiece forged from the crucible of a tormented soul bent upon the diligent and inspired study of the journey of the maturing human heart Like Voltaire toward the end of his life but before his exile, we find Rousseau living on a lake isle longing only to finish his life in the practice of avid gardening and intellectual pursuits The translation here by Angela Scholar is richly, gorgeous prose which reminded me of Proust, who I m confident must have been influenced by Rousseau This book is, as Rousseau described it, the most secret history of my soul and ranks highly on my Top 25 Novels of All Time among the holy literary trinity of France s Proust in The Remembrance of Lost Time and Balzac s Lost Illusions I really can t urge you strongly enough to carve out the time to read this brilliantly conceived autobiography. 500 1000. .

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