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Stanley Corngold

Notes toward a Romantic Phenomenology of Poetic Mind: Rousseau, Wordsworth, Hölderlin, and Hegel

At key junctures in their writing careers, Rousseau, Wordsworth, Hölderlin, and Hegel left accounts of what might be called, following Hegel, a phenomenology of poetic mind, especially as it bears on the act of poetic composition. In tracing the outline of their thought, I shall be drawing on the following works: Rousseau's reflections on the composition of his *Confessions* in his *Ebauches des Confessions* (ca. 1764); Wordsworth's "Preface" to the *Lyrical Ballads* (1800, 1849); Hölderlin's *Grund zum Empedokles* (1799); and Hegel's remarks on experience in *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807). These texts assign different degrees of value to their object. For Wordsworth on lyric, and for Hölderlin on tragedy, the moment of active poetic composition brings forth the highest human product. In the case of Rousseau, the claim is weaker, since what is at stake in such confessional writing is self-preservation and not the ecstatic release of being. For Hegel, furthermore, it is not in poetry but rather in philosophy that the value of what is to be produced is highest. Yet all four accounts turn on the same terms – factors of intentionality, memory, temporal movement, metamorphosis, and renunciation – in so striking a way as to organize a Romantic phenomenology of poetic mind. The importance of Rousseau's autobiographical poetics to this project, it will appear, is wide, expansive, foundational.

A study of the poetics of the *Confessions* could well take its bearings from the empirical person of Rousseau himself, who, on his own claim, "[a] pensé plus et mieux que les Rois"¹. And so it must

1 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Ebauches des Confessions, Oeuvres Complètes*, Paris, Gallimard, 1959, 1:1150. Subsequent references to this volume in the "Bibliothèque de la Pléiade" will appear between parentheses in the body of this article.

attend to Rousseau the philosopher of ethics who opposed the practical act – the moral criterion of Voltaire and Diderot – by glorifying the intention. For it is on the basis of the pristine purity of the intention that Rousseau places his defense of the moral person for whom Rousseau himself stands as an example. In *Rousseau Juge de Jean Jacques*, Rousseau justifies his testimony:

Rien n'inspire tant de courage que le témoignage d'un coeur droit qui tire de la pureté de ses intentions l'audace de prononcer hautement et sans crainte des jugemens dictés par le seul amour de la justice et de la vérité (887).

Roland Desné comments accurately,

[Rousseau] ne compare pas ses actes à ceux d'autrui dans ce qu'ils peuvent produire, mais dans l'intention qui les motive... Il serait trop facile de dénoncer ici les sophismes de la belle âme... "Rectifier le mal de l'action avec la pureté de notre intention" est le but que, selon Molière, se proposait l'homme d'église au XVII^e siècle. Si un philosophe du XVIII^e siècle comme Rousseau paraît adopter un langage analogue, cela ne signifie pas que Tartuffe se réincarne en lui; mais qu'il y a tout simplement un problème qu'on ne peut résoudre qu'en tenant compte de l'oeuvre dans son ensemble².

Desné's comment is useful in pointing to the many explicit arguments about Rousseau's intentions found throughout his confessional writings. But the more interesting implication is that Rousseau's confessional oeuvre is itself at every point – "dans son ensemble" – an ostensive display of intentions. Just as one must grasp Rousseau, according to Rousseau, as a complex of intentions, so too must one grasp the *Confessions* as a complex of intentions – the *Confessions* amounting to a repetition of Rousseau's self-consciousness however modulated.

The intentional factor bears on all the sentences in the confessional work, no matter what subgenre (idyll, apologia, dialogue, revery). Each sentence aims not only to accomplish a certain constitution of empirical sense – the life of Jean-Jacques – but to pose the question of its intention: "What inspires such empirical pictures and

2 Roland Desné, "L'individu malheureux", *Europa*, Nov.- Dec. 1961, 24.

claims"? To realize the life, the reader is supposed to read radically to a first order of intention behind the representation of the life. The word grasped as transparent to its source becomes as such "une parole originaire"³; what guides the reading is the journey from which the act of writing returns.

In the *Ebauches*, Rousseau supplies precise bearings about the direction of this work of readerly intuition. Each word, if it is to be genuine, must be loyal to its origin according to a novel poetics of autobiography⁴. The *Confessions* will portray not a history of events but of the "états d'ame" which Rousseau felt along the way⁵. But these moods will then be doubled, with a difference – played changes on, by the mood of Rousseau's interpretation of them. If genuine autobiographical language arises from an initial abandonment of self, this moment is followed by a distinctively marked moment of recollection *and also* of renewed abandon. Rousseau writes:

En me livrant à la fois au souvenir de l'impression reçue et au sentiment présent, je peindrai doublement l'état de mon ame, savoir au moment où l'événement m'est arrivé et au moment où je l'ai décrit (1154).

The act of writing is crucial. I take this "moment" to be more than a bare temporal indicator, more than just a marker of a self-subsistent content – the content of the sentiment clocked at the time of writing. The sentiment to which Rousseau abandons himself is enveloped in a time of writing, changed by the interests of this temporal journey as a passage from the particular impression to the general truth. Rousseau's suspicion of mere "particular truth" is well-established: "La vérité particulière et individuelle n'est pas toujours un bien, elle est quelquefois un mal, très souvent une chose indifférente" (1026). The *Confessions* are meaningful as an original (i.e. an originating) form, whose originality is affirmed in the phenomenon of style:

3 In the sense used throughout by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, Paris, Gallimard, 1945.

4 "Il faudrait pour ce que j'ai à dire inventer un langage aussi nouveau que mon project" (1153).

5 "J'écris moins l'histoire de ces éve[ne]mens en eux-mêmes que celle de l'état de mon ame, à mesure qu'ils sont arrivés" (1150).

Je prends donc mon parti sur le style comme sur les choses... Mon style inégal et naturel, tantôt rapide et tantôt diffus, tantôt sage et tantôt fou, tantôt grave et tantôt gai fera lui-même partie de mon histoire (1154).

The “histoire” is thus invested with a sort of mood-driven exemplarity; it is truthful by virtue of the fact of its style, the phenomenal concretion of a rigorous reduction of subjective feeling to the general interests informing the act of writing.

What concretely would the product be of such a doubling? Moments that are perspicuous would exhibit the mechanism that produces them – the movement by which an apparent immediacy of feeling is surpassed. Scriptive generality might be grasped as an analogue of the moral, as when Rousseau writes, after recalling his unjust punishment at the hands of Mlle Lamercier, the sister of the pastor in whose home he’d been sent to board:

Ce premier sentiment de la violence et de l’injustice...relatif à moi dans son origine, a pris une telle consistance en lui-même, et s’est tellement détaché de tout interest personnel, que mon cœur s’enflamme au spectacle ou au récit de toute action injuste, quel qu’en soit l’objet et en quelque lieu qu’elle se commette, comme si l’effet en retomboit sur moi (20).

“Spectacle ou récit ...”. The tension between the memory of an emotion and the emotion entailed by the writing of it ends with the subjection of the memory to the inscription. At the same time one might insist on seeing in the intensity of an emotion that carries the negative charge of indignation a sign of the anguish accompanying the sacrifice of immediate life – anguish that, to use a Hölderlinean word, is “verläugnet”, revealed only through the intensity of its denial, the fieriness with which it hates *injustice*. Rousseau’s anguish, inexplicit here, resonates from one of the great rhetorical set pieces of the *Confessions*, where Rousseau asserts (with all due allowance for the tonality of bad faith) the inadequacy of the act of writing to imagination in its titanic, its desiderative moment, close to the source of the self.

Jamais je n’ai tant pensé, tant existé, tant vécu, tant été moi, si j’ose ainsi dire, que dans ceux [voyages] que j’ai fait seul et à pied... La vue de la campagne, la succession des aspects agréables, ... l’éloignement de tout ce qui me fait

sentir ma dépendance, de tout ce qui me rappelle à ma situation, tout cela dégage mon ame, me donne une plus grande audace de penser, me jette en quelque sorte dans l'immensité des êtres pour les combiner, les choisir, me les approprier à mon gré sans gêne et sans crainte. Je dispose en maître de la nature entière; mon cœur errant d'objet en objet s'unit, s'identifie à ceux qui le flatent, s'entoure d'images charmantes, s'enivre de sentimens délicieux. Si pour les fixer je m'amuse à les décrire en moi-même, quelle vigueur de pinceau, quelle fraîcheur de coloris, quelle énergie d'expression je leur donne! On a, dit-on, trouvé de tout cela dans mes ouvrages, quoiqu'écris vers le déclin de mes ans. O si l'on eut vû ceux de ma première jeunesse, ceux que j'ai faits durant mes voyages, ceux que j'ai composés et que je n'ai jamais écrits... pourquoi, direz-vous, ne les pas écrire? et pourquoi les écrire, vous répondrai-je: Pourquoi m'ôter le charme actuel de la jouissance pour dire à d'autres que j'avois joui? Que m'importoient des lecteurs, un public et toute la terre, tandis que je plânois dans le Ciel? D'ailleurs portois-je avec moi du papier, des plumes? Si j'avois pensé à tout cela rien ne me seroit venu (162).

The bad faith of this passage is the normative bad faith of all confession, the attempt to expiate a guilt in fact rudimentary and inextirpable. This is the guilt of a consciousness that has (always) betrayed itself, and here it has betrayed its fundamental desire to preserve all the moments in which the self knew an activity appropriate to it. Rousseau's *Confessions* means to remedy this harm, but it cannot suppose it does so by preserving a posited authenticity in a fresh enough inscription. This would be to repeat that most foolhardy project ever undertaken by a man, which Rousseau describes as his effort, in Paris, to live his life in perfect accord with his inner promptings as a masterly example of the functioning of the "morale sensitive" (409); here Rousseau would himself become a tract. But Rousseau's project, in his early years in Paris, of incarnating in his person the virtue of the authentic self – "le plus grand peut-être ou du moins le plus utile à la vertu que mortel ait jamais conçu" (362) – he remembers as an exemplary wreckage. Anticipating the unholy attempt at the fusion of orders destined to remain apart, Rousseau writes: "[J]e devenois un autre" (417). The origin of the fall of the self into the empirical forms of the person is not in the person or in others: it is in the self, viz.

Je l'avois trouvé passionné pour la vertu, pour la liberté, pour l'ordre, mais d'une vehemence qui souvent l'entraînoit au delà du but (932).

The imagination that wants to feel its own plenitude in overflow falls, in Hölderlin's phrase, into a self-destructive "*Übermass der Innigkeit*"⁶.

The unequal relation of these selves – the posited authentic self and any particular manifestation of the person – is the main theme of the *Confessions* and the main figure of its style. The work does not show in the manner of the *Bildungsroman* how an authentic self came to be acquired and maintained; it profiles instead the downfall of an authentic self in its empirical entrapments.

This excursus returns us to the broken line leading from the past to the present sentiment in the act of confessional writing. The attempt to evoke the posited authentic self proceeds through successive acts of self-division. Rousseau projects himself as the alterity of remembered feeling in seeking the self he was. The leap that follows from a sense of incompleteness points to the temporal hiatus that no memory can incorporate and no feeling conceal – the "vide inexplicable" Rousseau mentions in the letter to Malesherbes (1140) and "du vide" of the solitary soul (414). In seeking the present Rousseau does not find a resting place; he finds himself again ensnared – in the feeling of an exigent present: this to-and-fro forces the invention of autobiographical language as "l'appui empirique", as Maurice Merleau-Ponty puts it, "de son propre non-être".

Rousseau's poetics of autobiography evokes an irregular self-construction and self-undoing, as moments of the subject's affective life are sacrificed to a general representation that includes the consciousness of its unlivableness.

In the work of a contemporary critic one reads, "It is neither feelings, nor experiences, nor memories, nor forgotten memories that are the origin of poetry but the entire process of temporal differentiation from one to the other"⁷. The question still remains

6 Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke*, "Frankfurter Ausgabe", Frankfurt, Edition Roter Stern, 1987, XIII:869.

7 Andrzej Warminski, "Rilke's 'Das Bett'", in *Rilke: The Alchemy of Alienation*, eds. Frank Baron, Ernst S. Dick, and Warren R. Maurer, Lawrence, Kansas, The Regents Press of Kansas, 1980, 166.

whether “temporal differentiation” as such is enough to guarantee an “original” poetry. In Rousseau’s case, the criterion for the validity of autobiographical language remains, with Lévi-Strauss, the genuineness with which an otherness, memory, is projected, and the genuineness with which that memory is sacrificed for language. The memory must be “mine” if in giving it over to language, also not my own, I am to approach the radical otherness of my posited self.

What Rousseau engenders by such procedures are in no sense “natural” entities: his poetics amounts to a deliberate undoing of the power of any one distinctive mood to create the illusion of its having an ethical or indeed any other sort of empirical correlative. Under the pressure of the act of writing, Rousseau’s moods metamorphose into complex fictive entities. The quality of immediacy cannot be counted on, and so they are unsuited to serve the function of expiation! a point which implicates the whole tissue of passages throughout the *Confessions* (and all the later confessional works) where Rousseau declares that his work is being written, not for other readers, but for himself.

How is this self-reference thinkable – justifiable – when, after all, the act of writing goes out to others? It is impossible for Rousseau to ignore the intersubjective intent. And so he also declares that he wants to construct for others a monument that will outlive him; to obtain relief, through benediction, from guilty memories of betrayal; to convince others of his uniqueness. He writes, in short, as the apologist of his life.

On the other hand, “Ma fonction est de dire la vérité”, he writes, “mais non pas de la faire croire” (199). He does not fail, in the *Confessions* and in the *Dialogues*, to undermine each of these intersubjective motives.

Thus, the project of constructing a monument to the self ceases, by the end of the *Dialogue Troisième*, to be worthy or, indeed, possible:

Ceder désormais à ma destinée, ne plus m’obstiner à lutter contre elle, laisser mes persécuteurs disposer à leur gré de leur proie, ... leur abandonner même l’honneur de mon nom et ma réputation dans l’avenir, ...; c’est ma dernière résolution (989).

Not even the perfect recognition of a future race could compensate the noisy work of building monuments: Rousseau elects “dans cette résignation le dédomagement de tous mes maux par la tranquillité qu’elle me procure ...” (996). For, “tout ce que peut faire un homme sage qui s’intéresse à son sort est de rechercher en silence les vestiges de la vérité pour diriger son propre jugement, mais jamais pour le faire adopter par la multitude...” (945).

The *Confessions* knows an expiatory intent – certainly. The burden of having “peut-être fait périr dans l’opprobre et dans la misère une fille aimable”

est donc resté jusqu’à ce jour sans allégement sur ma conscience, et je puis dire que le désir de m’en délivrer en quelque sorte a beaucoup contribué à la résolution que j’ai prise d’écrire mes confessions (84-86).

Yes this intent would, in dominating the autobiographical project, destroy it. “Grace au Ciel”, writes Rousseau, at a later juncture, “j’ai fini ce troisième aveu pénible; s’il m’en restait beaucoup de pareils à faire, j’abandonnerais le travail que j’ai commencé” (129). The expiatory intent of the *Confessions* is subordinated to a self-reflective intent that wants the *Confessions* to continue, and to continue in evoking the being that he is. Rousseau is his own expiator. The insistence that the autobiographical works are written for the writer resonates past the *Confessions* to a point early in the first *Rêverie*: “Je fais la même entreprise que Montagne [*sic*], mais avec un but tout contraire au sien: car il n’écrivait ses essais que pour les autres, et je n’écris mes reveries que pour moi” (1001).

To the extent that Rousseau’s poetics of the autobiography is an affair of an unrecoverable “dédoublement” (of a posited origin), it cannot and does not stage the confessional bent on expiation by another’s authority.

In his “Preface” to the *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth, like Rousseau, identifies memory as the effective origin of his language while giving this assertion a wide authority. Whereas Rousseau makes the memory of a sentiment the source of the language of autobiography, Wordsworth calls it the source of poetic language in general. “Poetry”, he writes, “takes its origin from emotion recollected in tran-

quillity". His statement goes on to qualify the temporal differentiations of this process.

The emotion is contemplated till, by a species of re-action, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins, and in a mood similar to this it is carried on; but the emotion, of whatever kind, and in whatever degree, from various causes, is qualified by various pleasures, so that in describing any passions whatsoever, which are voluntarily described, the mind will, upon the whole, be in a state of enjoyment⁸.

In "Tradition and the Individual Talent", T.S. Eliot glosses this passage with such historical efficacy but so misleadingly, that to do Wordsworth even the slightest justice it will be worthwhile questioning Eliot every step of the way. In the course of arguing against the view which holds the emotion in poetry to express the novel emotions of the writer, Eliot takes the passage from Wordsworth to be representative of the view he is opposing. According to Eliot, Wordsworth misrepresents the emotion in poetry as personally experienced emotion and then misrepresents the degree of activity in the moment of poetic composition – which is, for Eliot, "a passive attending upon the event"⁹.

Eliot writes: "The emotion in [the poet's work] will be a very complex thing, but not with the complexity of the emotions of people who have very complex or unusual emotions in life"¹⁰. Certainly Wordsworth nowhere suggests that the original emotion must be complex or unusual: rather, the poet's "passions and thoughts and feelings are the general passions and thoughts and feelings of men". "The business of the poet", Eliot continues, "is not to find new emotions, but to use the ordinary ones and, in working them up into

8 William Wordsworth, *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads, The Poetical Works of Wordsworth*, a new ed. rev. Ernest de Selincourt, London, Oxford University Press, 1956, 740.

9 T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent", *Selected Essays*, London, 1932, 21.

10 *Ibid.*

poetry, to express feelings which are not in actual emotions at all"¹¹. But this point is wholly consistent with Wordsworth's theoretical procedure: the emotion which finally overflows into poetry is not the original "actual emotion". It is the result of an original emotion that develops by undergoing a "species of reaction". The final emotion in the poem is disconnected from the original emotion by two intermediate analogues. The original emotion is modified first by the mood of tranquillity to an "emotion kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation". This emotion is in turn changed by the onset of "composition" into a new mood "similar to this". It is finally this mood which, qualified by "various pleasures" associated with "voluntary description", overflows into poetry. For this reason Eliot's blanket criticism of Wordsworth's formula doesn't cover it at all. Eliot and Wordsworth both affirm that the emotion in poetry is not an emotion previously experienced by the empirical person: the feelings that Wordsworth "describes" compound "his feelings" with "those of the persons whose feelings he describes". Eliot concludes,

[E]motions which ... [the poet] has never experienced will serve his turn as well as those familiar to him. Consequently, we must believe that "emotion recollected in tranquillity" is an inexact formula. For it is neither emotion, nor recollection, nor, without distortion of meaning, tranquillity¹².

Listen to Wordsworth again. "Poetry takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity". He does not say that poetry is any of these things. He says that poetry is the result of successive mediations of an original, remembered emotion by contemplation and then by the onset and execution of the poetic act. Here Wordsworth's view of poetic activity, though it is not the expressive or personal view which Eliot claims it to be, is in a crucial sense opposed to Eliot's own. For, according to Eliot, "poetry is a concentration which does not happen consciously or of deliberation"¹³.

Now it is true that Eliot goes on to add:

11 *Ibid.*

12 *Ibid.*

13 *Ibid.*

Of course this is not quite the whole story. There is a great deal, in the writing of poetry, which must be conscious and deliberate. In fact, the bad poet is unusually unconscious where he ought to be conscious, and conscious where he ought to be unconscious. Both errors tend to make him “personal”.

No one would want to dispute this formulation (or could dispute the first part of it, since Eliot does not specify what dimension of the act of writing “must be conscious”). Certainly it is Wordsworth’s view that consciousness (“contemplation”) figures actively in the act of writing poetry, as it is also his view that “personality” does not, in serious poets, establish the limits of poetic expression, unless “personality” is taken in the Kantian sense as the moral person or transcendental subject, at the level of which the utterance of all poets strives towards the same unity. But it is startling that in the first part of his critique Eliot makes Wordsworth the exponent of the position that neither of these poets shares.

The point should be clear at which Wordsworth and his critic part company significantly. This is the view that the moment of composition occurs in a mood to be defined as “a passive attending upon the event”. What Eliot minds in Wordsworth’s description of the poetic act is its degree of self-consciousness. For Wordsworth a steadily maintained degree of consciousness and deliberation is the hallmark of the poetic process. And it is in this light that Wordsworth can “criticize” Rousseau’s view of the autobiographical process, because this factor is more insistent in Wordsworth than in Rousseau, who doubly “se livre”. The steady focus in Wordsworth on contemplativeness is striking. Yet his delineation of the various structures of consciousness successively mediating the original emotion matches Rousseau’s account.

Wordsworth has been talking about the movements of inwardness, from an original emotion to a poem, in terms of moods. Moods or “Stimmungen” – read, “die existentialen Möglichkeiten der Befindlichkeit” – are, for Heidegger, too, a fundamental category of “der ‘dichtenden’ Rede”¹⁴. But there is no language with which to talk other than formally about the mediation of one mood by an-

14 Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, Tübingen, Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1963¹⁰, 162.

other. On the other hand, as Heidegger writes, “[Die Befindlichkeit] ist eine existentielle Grundart der *gleichursprünglichen Erschlossenheit* von Welt, Mitdasein und Existenz”¹⁵. A state-of-mind always has its understanding, even if it merely keeps it suppressed. Understanding always has its mood. To the moods that constitute Wordsworth’s description of the poetic process there correspond definite structures of poetic consciousness.

Wordsworth “contemplates” his emotion in the beginning by immediate memory. The emotion is accompanied by its objective correlative – in Eliot’s own phrase “a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion”¹⁶. But this emotion is not one, contrary to what Eliot says, that can ever be “immediately” evoked¹⁷.

The naive memory is an ostensibly self-disclosing, sensuous content attuned by a particular mood¹⁸. The condition of naive memory does not last: in the end the memory has to be “described”. For this to happen, consciousness must detach itself from the object in which it is absorbed, so as to confront it. But the new object which consciousness now knows is not the object it experienced but the experience of that object. It becomes aware not of an original memory but of a present remembering.

The experience of remembering is different from the original memory, for it includes the consciousness which remembered (as the mood it was in when it had its memory) as well as the present consciousness (as the consciousness of not being the object, i.e. the experience of remembering). The mood which accompanies the experience of remembering is what Wordsworth called “the emotion kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation”.

15 *Ibid.*, 137.

16 T.S. Eliot, “Hamlet”, *Selected Essays*, 145.

17 *Ibid.*

18 Certainly there is no such actual entity within the movement of confessional writing as the wholly naive memory: from the start it is intended with an eye to its renunciation for poetic language. The expression “naive memory” designates an analytic category, a limiting possibility of consciousness, which no individual act of consciousness ever wholly realizes.

Hegel, in the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, describes this process perfectly:

indem das, was zuerst als der Gegenstand erschien, dem Bewusstsein zu einem Wissen von ihm herabsinkt und das *Ansich* zu einem Für-das-Bewusstsein-Sein des *Ansich* wird, [ist] dies der neue Gegenstand, womit auch eine neue Gestalt des Bewusstseins auftritt, welcher etwas anderes das Wesen ist als der vorhergehenden. Dieser Umstand ist es, welcher die ganze Folge der Gestalten des Bewusstseins in ihrer Notwendigkeit leitet¹⁹.

He calls this process a “*Bewegung und Werden*” – a “movement and a coming into being”.

In the process which Wordsworth describes, this consciousness and its emotion are swiftly transcended. For the emotion to be “described”, consciousness must once again detach itself from its object in order to discriminate it from the objects which, at the “onset of composition”, arise as the significance of the possible words of the poem. This act of guarding the original object and letting it become articulated so that (in Emil Staiger’s phrase) “es in die Sprache aufgeht”, that is, “‘goes up’ in language”, as, say, logs go up in flame, itself transforms the object²⁰. This is the specifically poetic or imaginative transformation that for Wordsworth happens in “a state of enjoyment” and which Rousseau describes as “le plaisir d’écrire”.

The passage from memory, to the consciousness of remembering, to the sheltering and articulating of this consciousness and its transcendence in language is, for Wordsworth (adapting Hegel’s phrase) “the carrying forward of the whole succession of the attitudes of poetic consciousness in their necessity”. For Hegel, Wordsworth, and Rousseau the outcome of the process preserves the truth of the moments that constitute it, at the same time that it sacrifices these moments in their immediacy. Thus the significance “housed” in the poem surpasses the significance of the original memory by the meaning it acquires through its passage through consciousness. In sacrificing the memory, the poetic word preserves

19 G.W.F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Hamburg, Felix Meiner, 1952, 74.

20 Emil Staiger, *Grundbegriffe der Poetik*, Zürich u. Freiburg i.Br., 1963, 16.

the character of a subjectivity. In a sentence of Rousseau's, "Quand on veut arrêter, fixer les objets, les ordonner, les arranger, c'est autre chose: on y met du sien" (845). The poetic word mediates the consciousness of a thing and the consciousness of a subjectivity – in Merleau-Ponty's language, "un certain style d'être et 'le monde' qu'il vise"²¹.

These results are modulated in the remarkable poetics of tragedy that Hölderlin composed while at work on the unfinished drama *Empedokles* – a poetics that centers on the word "Verläugnung" (disavowal). For Hölderlin "Verläugnung" is more than a concept: it is a field of relations situating the interinvolvements of his empirical identity, the "fremden analogischen Stoff" of his poetic *topoi*, his states of so-called divine possession, and the fate of this "Übermass der Innigkeit" in the tragic work. All these terms are caught up in a turmoil of doublings and denials, especially vivid in the "Allgemeiner Grund", whose theme is the "Verläugnung" of the poet's personal intensity:

Auch im tragischdramatischen Gedichte spricht sich also das Göttliche aus, das der Dichter in seiner Welt empfindet und erfährt; [...] aber wie dieses Bild der Innigkeit überall seinen letzten Grund in eben dem Grade mehr verläugnet und verläugnen muss [...] je unendlicher, je unaussprechlicher, je näher dem nefas die Innigkeit ist, je strenger und kälter das Bild den Menschen und sein empfundenes Element unterscheiden muss um die Empfindung in ihrer Gränze vestzuhalten, um so weniger kann das Bild die Empfindung unmittelbar aussprechen, es muss sie so wohl der Form als dem Stoffe nach verläugnen, der Stoff muss ein kühneres fremderes Gleichniss und Beispiel von ihr seyn. [...] Die fremden Formen müssen um so lebendiger seyn, je fremder sie sind, und je weniger der sichtbare Stoff des Gedichts dem Stoffe der zum Grunde liegt, dem Gemüth und der Welt des Dichters gleicht, um so weniger darf sich der Geist, das Göttliche, wie es der Dichter in seiner Welt empfand, in dem künstlichen fremden Stoffe verläugnen. [...] Denn die innigste Empfindung ist der Vergänglichkeit in eben dem Grade ausgesetzt, in welchem sie die wahren zeitlichen und sinnlichen Beziehungen nicht verläugnet [...] Eben darum verläugnet der tragische Dichter, weil er die tiefste Innigkeit ausdrückt, seine Person, seine Subjectivität ganz, so auch das ihm gegenwärtige Object, er trägt sie in fremde Personalität, in fremde Objectivität über ...²².

21 Merleau-Ponty, 214.

22 Hölderlin, XIII:869-70.

This litany of negations – especially of the immediate “physische und intellektuelle Zusammenhang” of the empirical person – jeopardizes a certain assured empirical visibility, the visible matter at the basis of the world of the poet. The tragic denial of empirical visibility aims principally at the poet’s “Person, seine Subjectivität ganz, so auch das ihm gegenwärtige Object” – “die wahren zeitlichen und sinnlichen Beziehungen”; yet this disavowal takes place under a condition that in fact jeopardizes its work of negation, for

jedes Gedicht, so auch das tragische [...] aus des Dichters eigener Welt und Seele hervorgegangen seyn muss, weil sonst überall die rechte Wahrheit fehlt, und überhaupt nichts verstanden und belebt werden kann, wenn wir nicht das eigene Gemüth und die eigene Erfahrung in einen fremden analogischen Stoff übertragen können²³.

How could “die eigene Erfahrung” be preserved when “die wahren zeitlichen und sinnlichen Beziehungen” are annihilated? Hölderlin constructs an aporia, whose thrust, on the one hand, is to keep intact the “karakteristische Innigkeit”, “die innige Verwandtschaft des Gleichnisses mit dem Stoff”, and on the other to represent the distinctive experience of an empirical personality in the work of images so “severe” and “cold” that they must border on the unintelligibly (in)human and hence invisible.

Hölderlin’s dilemma focuses a problem latent in the account given of Rousseau: how could a moment of lived experience be at once authentic *and* particular? Hölderlin attempts to distinguish the content of the authentic moment – the “Übermass der Innigkeit” – from its particularity by stripping it of its “wahre”, i.e. its empirically actual “zeitliche und sinnliche Beziehungen”. But the outcome, with its strange, inhuman visibility – its virtual invisibility – marks a disruption, marks the most extreme estrangement, of the original sentiment from its inscription, a state of affairs reproduced in the fact of Hölderlin’s not being able to finish and stage his work.

This gives us the opportunity, after we have noted what is common to the various projects of these writers, to stress the differ-

ences. In Hölderlin the negative, the broken moment implicit in the Rousseauian trajectory comes to the fore. The anguish of the loss of personal intensity is apparent in the tense opposition in Hölderlin's account between what must and what must not be renounced. In Rousseau the continuity of the trajectory from sentiment to language is more mixed: it contains moments of abrupt breakage figuring within an implied continuity. Hegel spans Rousseau and Wordsworth: The truth of the original memory of an emotion is carried forward through its mediate forms. Wordsworth stresses the "kindred", the "similar" character of these forms within the process of poetic composition; Hegel, the fact that the construction of experience produces "etwas Anderes". In Hölderlin's severe and cold imagery, however, something radically "Anderes" has come to the fore that points to a post-Romantic, modern poetics of rupture.

Résumé

Cette étude tente d'esquisser une phénoménologie romantique de l'esprit poétique, notamment dans ses liens avec l'acte de composition, en s'appuyant sur les réflexions de Rousseau sur la rédaction de ses *Confessions* dans ses *Ebauches des Confessions*, la "Preface" de Wordsworth aux *Lyrical Ballads*, le *Grund zum Empedokles* de Hölderlin et les observations sur l'expérience de Hegel dans sa *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. Ces quatre auteurs rendent compte de leur activité en recourant aux mêmes termes: intentionnalité, mémoire, mouvement temporel, métamorphose et renonciation. Chez Hölderlin, le "moment" négatif interrompu, implicite dans le parcours de la poétique autobiographique de Rousseau, est placé au premier plan. L'angoisse suscitée par la perte de l'intensité personnelle apparaît à travers l'opposition des temps dans la façon dont Hölderlin relate ce à quoi il faut ou ne faut pas renoncer. Chez Rousseau la continuité entre sentiment et langage est plus troublée, marquée par des moments de rupture abrupte insérés dans une continuité implicite. Hegel englobe Rousseau et Wordsworth: la vérité du souvenir originel d'une émotion passe par ses formes intermédiaires. Wordsworth met l'accent sur le caractère "apparenté", "similaire" de ces formes dans le processus de composition poétique; Hegel souligne le fait que la reconstitution de l'expérience produit "etwas Anderes". Dans l'imaginaire austère et froid de Hölderlin, surgit quelque chose de radicalement "Anderes" qui annonce une poétique postromantique de rupture.