

## The Spartan Games of Jean-Jacques

To cure society, it was not enough to define the general will. Nor to make a single founding act of a whole based on a social contract. Nor was it enough to give the individual a rational conviction of the necessity of subordinating themselves to society *in toto*. In contemporary terms, we might say that the whole has to be constantly performed, for only in acts of its physical performance is there a chance for individuals submitting to the general will in an enduring way. Society must be regularly involved in physical acts of celebrating itself. This is why, in *The Government of Poland*, Rousseau suggests:

I recommend numerous public games, where Poland, like a good mother, can take delight in seeing her children at play. Let Poland's mind be on them often, so that their minds will always be on Poland. You should prohibit – even, because of this example, at court – the amusements that one ordinarily finds in courts: gambling, the theater, comedies, operas [including ballet] – everything that makes men unmanly, or distracts them, or isolates them, or causes them to forget their fatherland and their duties.<sup>1272</sup>

The now-traditional model is the rites, rituals, ceremonies, customs,<sup>1273</sup> and physical exercises of the ancient Greeks and Romans. Rousseau particularly admired the latter, and thus all manner of group fitness (in the open air!) bolstering the military potential of the state and, above all, the spirit of the nation. This was tied to his disdain for gatherings that rendered the people, and thus the subject of the general will, passive. Jean-Jacques came out against the theater – and most of all comedy, where the people were mere viewers<sup>1274</sup> – he suggested truly patriotic public games instead.

<sup>1272</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Government of Poland*, trans. Willmoore Kendall, Indianapolis 1985, p. 14.

<sup>1273</sup> Rousseau mentioned the importance of customs in *Social Contract*, calling them the fourth and most important sort of laws: “which creates the real constitution of the State, [...] preserves a people in the spirit of their institutions, and imperceptibly substitutes the force of habit for that of authority. [...] a province with which the great legislator is occupied in private, while he appears to confine himself to particular regulations, that are merely the arching of the cult, of which manners, slow to develop, form at length the immovable keystone” (Rousseau, *Social Contract...*, p. 58). Customs could not be decreed. They could only be inspired by the proper kinetic politics, thus providing occasion for physical contact in the public space, as in games or ceremonies.

<sup>1274</sup> Comedy was particularly dangerous, as “to the extent [tragedy] wants to instruct us less, it does us also less harm. But it is not so with comedy, the morals of which have a more immediate relationship with ours, and whose characters resemble men more. It is all bad and pernicious; every aspect strikes home with the Audience. And since the very pleasure of the comic is founded on a vice of the human heart, it is a consequence that the more the comedy is amusing and perfect, the more its effect is disastrous for morals [manners]” (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “Letter to d’Alembert,” trans. Allan Bloom, in: idem, *Politics and the Arts*, Cornell 1959, p. 34). On the other hand, in the *New*

The *Letter to d'Alembert on Spectacles* is Rousseau's most direct work on kinetic politics.<sup>1275</sup> At its core is a directive to maintain first-hand human contact and as strong social ties as possible. Theater, which for Rousseau symbolizes the whole of contemporary culture, does the reverse. "People think they come together in the Theater, and it is there that they are isolated. It is there they go to forget their friends, neighbors, and relations in order to concern themselves with fables, in order to cry for the misfortunes of the dead, or to laugh at the expense of the living."<sup>1276</sup> Furthermore, contemporary theater does not nurture the community, it only ingratiates itself to them: "provided that the people enjoy themselves, this object is sufficiently attained. This alone will always prevent our being able to give these sorts of institutions all the advantages they are susceptible of."<sup>1277</sup> According to Rousseau, theater cannot shape emotions, only replicate them.<sup>1278</sup> "The only instrument which serves to purge [the passions] is reason, and [...] reason has no effect in the theater."<sup>1279</sup> Yet a bit further on, we read that this impotence only means that theater cannot prompt concrete feelings. On the other hand, it could and did evoke feeling as such. "The sweet emotions that are felt [in the theater] are not in themselves a definite object, but they produce the need for one. They do not precisely cause love, but they prepare the way for its being experienced. They do not choose the person who ought to be loved, but they force us to make this choice."<sup>1280</sup> Yet it was still to be condemned. Rousseau was inclined to admit that not every sort of theater had to be bad, especially not the kind that existed in his beloved ancient Greece. However, he did stress that this too was not good in its essence, and even with fine intentions it caused more harm than good. Perhaps, with suitable restrictions, it could serve as a moralizing institution in small societies that were already molded, industrious, and disinclined to experiment. Except that Rousseau

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*Heloise* only contemporary comedies are condemned. Molière is admired for having "dared to paint bourgeois and craftsmen as well as Marquis" (Rousseau, *Julie, or...*, p. 207). What concerns Rousseau is realism, which he felt ought to have a pedagogical quality: "As for comedy, to be sure it must represent straightforwardly the manners of the nation for whom it is destined, so that the people might thereby get rid of its vices and flaws, as before a mirror one removes the spots on one's face" (ibid., p. 206).

<sup>1275</sup> Jean-Jacques wrote this in response to a suggestion by d'Alembert, in his article on Geneva for the *Encyclopedia*, that a theater be built in Rousseau's hometown, where plays were prohibited. Jean-Jacques viewed this suggestion as dangerous, seeing the ban as defending the highest values, which the Genevans, like himself, had always defended, and forever should.

<sup>1276</sup> Rousseau, *Politics and...*, pp. 16–17.

<sup>1277</sup> Ibid., p. 18. Elsewhere, he adds: "The only object is to excite the curiosity of the public. These productions of wit and craft, like most others, have for their end only applause" (ibid., p. 27).

<sup>1278</sup> Thus the moral disqualification of the theater. Rousseau writes: "The source of the concern which attaches us to what is decent and which inspires us with aversion for evil is in us and not in the plays. There is no art for producing this concern, but only for taking advantage of it" (ibid., p. 23).

<sup>1279</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>1280</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

did not believe that this sort of society would show any interest in theater: “repose alone is a very sweet pleasure.”<sup>1281</sup> There was no point in organizing artificial entertainment for them.<sup>1282</sup>

Even Rousseau’s idealized small societies had to be protected from the influence of theater, as “it would only serve to destroy love of work; to discourage industry; to ruin individuals; to inspire them with the taste for idleness; to make them seek for a means of subsistence without doing anything.”<sup>1283</sup> These concerns lay behind Geneva’s prohibition of theater, and were shared by Rousseau. Theater could corrupt morals, an important public good. “All that human wisdom can do is forestall changes, to arrest from afar all that brings them on. But, once they are tolerated and authorized, we are rarely master of their effects and cannot be held answerable for them.”<sup>1284</sup> This means pure conservatism. We recall a passage from “Preface to *Narcissus*”: “The slightest change in customs, even if it is in some respects for the better, invariably proves prejudicial to morals.”<sup>1285</sup> The theater was seemingly unproductive, it had no educational power.<sup>1286</sup> By the same token, it had to be opposed whenever possible. Lack of productivity could be contagious and corrupt morals. True, Rousseau was confident the Genevans would stand firm, but he recommended taking precautions.

Where did Rousseau’s anti-theatrical passion come from? What was behind it, at its core? It seems the response might be found in a characteristic anxiety that came from the most personal, most emotional parts of the *Letter* – his thoughts on women. At one point, Rousseau asks: “What is the profession of the actor? It is a trade in which he performs for money, submits himself to the disgrace and the affronts that others buy the right to give him, and puts his person publicly on sale.”<sup>1287</sup> This is a universally degrading mechanism, but particularly when it comes to women. Here we move beyond the field of theater, into the design of a social ideal with a strict order, founded on a clear division of roles. Rousseau explains:

there are no good morals [manners] for women outside of a withdrawn and domestic life; [...] the peaceful care of the family and the home are their lot, [...] the dignity of their sex consists in modesty, [...] when they seek for men’s looks they are already letting themselves be corrupted by them [...] any woman who shows herself off disgraces herself.<sup>1288</sup>

<sup>1281</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>1282</sup> We thus have an ambivalent stance. For some societies, theater can be advantageous, as it creates a beautiful vision that departs from miseries and mollifies customs, and, according to Rousseau, increases the flow of cash. When a society is not yet depraved, it should abstain from theater.

<sup>1283</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>1284</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>1285</sup> Rousseau, “Preface...,” p. 102.

<sup>1286</sup> In the *Letter*, at least – things are somewhat different in *The New Heloise*. See note 1274 in this chapter.

<sup>1287</sup> Rousseau, *Politics and...*, p. 79.

<sup>1288</sup> Ibid., pp. 82–83.

Even in Rousseau's day, these views sparked debate among the *philosophes*, whom Rousseau abandoned, even cutting himself off from them at one point. Women were no longer perceived as home appliances. Jean-Jacques nonetheless stood up for the sharp division. In *Emile* he wrote: "The man should be strong and active; the woman should be weak and passive."<sup>1289</sup> From this he drew a radical conclusion: "woman is specially made for man's delight."<sup>1290</sup> Being appealing to a man meant being submissive: "she ought to make herself pleasing to his eyes and not provoke in him anger."<sup>1291</sup> This was the way of nature, said Rousseau: "Women do wrong to complain of the inequality of man-made laws; this inequality is not of man's making, or at any rate it is not the result of mere prejudice, but of reason."<sup>1292</sup> Thus, after many pages, he arrives at his conclusion: "Her [woman's] honor is to be unknown; her glory is the respect of her husband; her joys the happiness of her family."<sup>1293</sup>

Rousseau wanted to shut the "second sex" in the house, to subordinate her to man, not from a desire to brutally oppress women, but to enact a sentimental ideal: "the mixture of weakness and modesty renders [love] more touching and tenderer."<sup>1294</sup> Rousseau was amorous, and very fond of women's company. His writings often declared his affection for those he adored. He wanted to protect them. He did not perceive that he instrumentalized them, sentencing them to passive roles allotted by men. Ultimately, he could always fall back on a sacramental cry: "Nature wanted it so, and it would be a crime to stifle its voice. The man can be audacious, such is his vocation. But a woman without chasteness is guilty and depraved, because she tramples on a sentiment natural to her sex."<sup>1295</sup> Thus, Rousseau sketched out a male ideal of femininity and romantic love that would come back to haunt the culture. Rousseau yearned to create a romantic patriarchy. All that remained for the revolutionaries was to draw inspiration from his writings, sending women home from the enthusiastic crowd meetings, where they were made ornaments in the processions and spectacles, as they were prohibited from participating in politics.<sup>1296</sup>

Rousseau said: "a woman outside of her home loses her greatest luster."<sup>1297</sup> The ancients knew this, which is why he said that male-female relations were so idyllic

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<sup>1289</sup> Rousseau, *Emile*, p. 339.

<sup>1290</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1291</sup> Ibid. And elsewhere: "A woman's education must therefore be planned in relation to man" (ibid., p. 346) or: "[woman] should early learn to submit to injustice and suffer the wrongs inflicted on her by her husband" (ibid., p. 351).

<sup>1292</sup> Ibid., p. 342.

<sup>1293</sup> Ibid., p. 393.

<sup>1294</sup> Rousseau, *Politics and...*, p. 84.

<sup>1295</sup> Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>1296</sup> Women, however, would not be so easily marginalized. For more on the subject: Baszkiewicz, Mel-ler, *Rewolucja...*, p. 127.

<sup>1297</sup> Rousseau, *Politics and...*, p. 88.

in their day, when a woman enjoyed adoration. Rousseau's contemporary civilization had squandered this, as exemplified, he felt, by its female actors.

Is there even need to dispute about the moral differences between the sexes to feel how unlikely it is that she who sets herself for sale in performance would not soon do the same in person and never let herself be tempted to satisfy desires that she takes so much effort to excite?<sup>1298</sup>

This lack of morality led to the immorality of the actors, and ultimately of society as a whole, as it allowed the theater to go on. Thus, on principle, women should not be permitted to show themselves in this fashion in public. They should remain inaccessible, so that men may conquer them, following the rules set by the outside world (perhaps by the Legislator?).

We believe that at the heart of the theater prohibition was an effort to monopolize morals. Jean-Jacques demanded an utterly regulated public space, with no place for rivalry, for negotiating meanings. This meant that relations between the sexes could not be left to the people. There was no room for women's initiative. This was not strictly about the sexual sphere. Patriarchal bourgeois culture strove to create mechanisms to secure the satisfaction of male desires without undue effort or risk of failure, which explains the premise of upholding the system of a strict gender divide, making relations between the sexes transparent and predictable. The same goes for the social system worked into the *Contract*. The idea of the general will is a dream of clarity, decisiveness, a lack of quandary. There is no room for uncertainty. Everything is leveled into a coherent system. There are no gaps, no threats. We thus have the germ of modern cultural totalitarianism, which Rousseau, like none other, theoretically created and promoted.<sup>1299</sup>

In Rousseau, cultural totalitarianism lurks behind the call to masculinity. In the first discourse, he devoted a good deal of space to celebrating masculine ideals. The same went for the *Social Contract* and *The Government of Poland*. *Letter to d'Alembert* offers a supplement exemplified by a picture expressing Rousseau's basic kinetic ideal:

Men were coarser in my time. The children, rustically raised, had no complexion to preserve and did not fear the injuries of the air to which they had been accustomed from an early date. The fathers took the children with them on the hunt, in the country, to all their exercises, in every society. Timid and modest before aged people, they were hardy, proud, and quarrelsome among themselves. They had no hairdo to preserve; they challenged

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<sup>1298</sup> Ibid., p. 90.

<sup>1299</sup> It was not by chance that Bertrand Russell wrote that "Hitler is an outcome of Rousseau" (Russell, *A History...*, p. 685).

one another at wrestling, running, and boxing. They fought in good earnest, hurt one another sometimes, and then embraced in their tears. They went home sweating, out of breath, and with their clothes torn; they were real scamps, but these scamps made men who have zeal for the service of the country in their hearts and blood to spill for it.<sup>1300</sup>

The patriarchal idyll was aided by properly designed clothing, a lack of attention to one's hair, but above all the correct organization of social relations. This is why certain kinds of spectacles were excluded, those that involved participation by only a part of the society. These were a threat to a uniform way of thinking. Rousseau appeals: "let us not adopt these exclusive entertainments which close up a small number of people in melancholy fashion in a gloomy cavern, which keep them fearful and immobile in silence and inaction [...] No, happy peoples, these are not your festivals."<sup>1301</sup> This meant that elite forms of theater were not to be tolerated. It was scandalous to keep anything from the general public. This was one of Rousseau's obsessions, shared with Robespierre – a mania for transparency.<sup>1302</sup> We find it in this recommendation in *Julie*: "Never do nor say anything that thou dost not wish everyone to see and hear."<sup>1303</sup> Live as though you were constantly in the public eye, and demand the same of your friends, Rousseau recommends. Between (male) citizens there could be no secrets, nothing unspoken.

The ideal of transparency presupposes that all members take part in performing the community during the mass spectacles, whose content is of secondary importance. Rousseau suggests: "Plant a stake crowned with flowers in the middle of a square; gather the people together there, and you will have a festival. Do better yet; let the spectators become an entertainment to themselves; make them actors themselves; do it so that each sees and loves himself in the others so that all will be better united."<sup>1304</sup> Probably semi-consciously, Jean-Jacques confirms the disciplinary aspect here. But this is not all, for the egotistical nature of his suggestion is also evident. The community forms a strong bond if the individual perceives not Others in the others, but himself. Thus, we have a dialectic of egoism and making oneself public. Here we give the floor to Starobinski, who explained this splendidly:

The *Social Contract* deals with the will and *possession*, the festival with the realm of social visibility. The latter does not legitimate what people have but what they are. Each person is "alienated" in the gaze of others, and each is restored to himself by means of universal "recognition." Having given itself freely, the self becomes absorbed in narcissistic

<sup>1300</sup> Rousseau, *Politics and...*, p. 112.

<sup>1301</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>1302</sup> Cf. Starobinski, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau...*

<sup>1303</sup> Rousseau, *Julie, or...*, p. 349.

<sup>1304</sup> Rousseau, *Politics and...*, p. 126.

contemplation. But what it discovers is pure freedom, pure transparency, through its intimate association with other free and transparent souls, indeed, with the “communal soul.” Now the dancing can begin, as bodies freed from worry over solitude join in the general *animation*.<sup>1305</sup>

What kind of dance is referred to here?

The kinetic politics in the *Letter to d'Alembert* are, on the one hand, a politics of equality, but on the other a hierarchy of roles tied to the “natural” differences of gender and age. Physical contact between women and men in public places were to be carefully regimented, but not excluded. Here Rousseau permits dance, which is of special interest to us. He goes against the customs of his hometown, again conforming to “nature.” He primarily saw dance as a way of allowing women and men to become familiar, which in turn would lead to marriage. In *Letter to d'Alembert*, Rousseau gets carried away: “Man and woman were formed for one another. God wants them to fulfill their destiny, and certainly the first and holiest of all the bonds of society is marriage.”<sup>1306</sup> Then he adds that we cannot allow people to pair up in secret. The community (the Legislator) must control this process. Marriage, too, should essentially be an expression of the general will. Dance was to be a tool of social control in this respect, and this is why it was to be allowed:

In what way is God offended by an agreeable exercise, one that is salutary and befitting the vivacity of young people, which consists in presenting themselves to one another with grace and seemliness, and on which the spectator imposes a gravity out of which they would not dare to step for an instant?<sup>1307</sup>

In *The New Heloise* the visibility of dance is stressed even more, its public nature being the condition for its toleration: “every time there is a participation of the two sexes any public diversion becomes innocent by the very fact it is public, whereas the most praiseworthy occupation is suspect when two people are alone together.”<sup>1308</sup>

The dance approved by Rousseau is laid out specifically – it is to be healthy,<sup>1309</sup> pleasant, and correct, unlike all those wicked, mannerist dances performed in dark dives or on court and aristocratic stages. Rousseau did not prize sophisticated dances. In *Emile* he emphatically declared: “I should dance in the barn more merrily than at a ball in the Opera House.”<sup>1310</sup> Like Diderot, he could not stand

<sup>1305</sup> Starobinski, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau...*, p. 97.

<sup>1306</sup> Rousseau, *Politics and...*, p. 128.

<sup>1307</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1308</sup> Rousseau, *Julie, or...*, p. 375.

<sup>1309</sup> Julie, explaining her affection for dance, says: “it is an activity useful to my health during the sedentary life we are forced to live here in the wintertime” (ibid., p. 377).

<sup>1310</sup> Rousseau, *Emile*, p. 335.

mannerisms. “If I were a dancing master I would refuse to play the monkey tricks of Marcel,”<sup>1311</sup> he assured. We might recall from the previous chapter that he was reserved toward dance spectacles. He was capable of accepting them as isolated frivolities. When they were part of an opera, he decried them for breaking up the action. Of the art of ballet, he wrote: “what then does [it] imitate? Nothing. It is therefore something apart when it is used only as dance; for what are minuets, rigadoons, chaconnes in a tragedy? I say further, that it would not be less out of place if it did imitate something; because of all the unities, none is more indispensable than that of language.”<sup>1312</sup> We clearly see that Rousseau showed little sensitivity toward the beauty of masterfully composed movement. This is why, fundamentally, he was only able to accept social dances that were suitably straightforward.

Rousseau most admired folk dances, such as those danced during the patriarchal, paternalistic grape-gathering holiday at Clarens, the farmstead of Wolmar and Julie. Here is an idyllic portrait of a social scene, where: “Everyone lives in the greatest familiarity; everyone is equal, and no one forgets himself. The Ladies affect no airs, the peasant women are decent, the men bantering and not coarse.”<sup>1313</sup> The common people are the center of attention here. Their simple life is the ideal. This makes it reasonable to join a peasant for a dance, and Saint-Preux and Julie do just this: “on Sunday after the evening sermon we join with them and dance until supper.”<sup>1314</sup> Let us recall the words of Guglielmo Ebreo from Chapter One about the “vile and rude mechanicals.”<sup>1315</sup> It seems that Rousseau has made an utter about-face. Those who were to be marginalized return to the center of the discourse. The people are emancipated. Or are they? Saint-Preux enthusiastically reports:

We dine with the peasants and when they do, just as we work alongside them. We eat with good appetite their somewhat coarse, but good and healthy, soup, full of excellent vegetables.<sup>1316</sup> We do not snicker haughtily at their awkward airs and boorish compliments; to put them at ease we lend ourselves to such things without affectation.<sup>1317</sup>

There you have it – the people had to be emboldened, taught to appreciate their simplicity, which, unfortunately, often seems to them a burden. The fools would like to devour meats and delicacies, but why? These were unhealthy and superfluous.

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<sup>1311</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110.

<sup>1312</sup> Rousseau, *Julie, or...*, p. 235.

<sup>1313</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 496.

<sup>1314</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 497.

<sup>1315</sup> Cf. Chapter I, note 1 in the first volume.

<sup>1316</sup> Rousseau liked vegetables and dairy products, particularly the latter, to whose assets he devoted large fragments of *Emile* and *Julie*. He was suspicious of meat, and, above all, of various kinds of sophisticated dishes, especially exotic ones.

<sup>1317</sup> Rousseau, *Julie, or...*, pp. 496–497.

They wanted to dress more finely and move more gracefully, but then they would lose their authenticity. From this they had to be protected.

Rousseau enthused about the people, not because of their real condition, but rather the authenticity he attributed to them. “The people show themselves as they are, and they are not attractive; but the fashionable world is compelled to adopt a disguise; we should be horrified if we saw it as it really is.”<sup>1318</sup> Was the point really to be like the people, or, most of all, to avoid being like the aristocracy, the fine society of the large cities Jean-Jacques so keenly despised? We believe the latter was more crucial to Rousseau. The people only interested him as a mythologized picture in which he longed to see his own authenticity. This is why an advisor was ultimately needed in dance, a dancing master who was not mannered like Marcel, but who would direct the folk dances so they were fully natural and spontaneous, “within the bounds” set by someone with more knowledge – the dance Legislator.

Let us have a look at the selection of the participants in an ideal dance. According to Rousseau, only young people in search of partners should dance. In Jean-Jacques’ world, one did not dance for the pleasure of it, in order to be together physically, to develop physical empathy and tactile sensitivity with another person. Dance only assisted natural selection, it was an instrument, not inherently good. This is why married couples did not dance, they merely watched a dance, as representatives of the general will. Rousseau fantasizes:

I wish that in general all married women be admitted among the number of the spectators and judges without being permitted to profane conjugal dignity by dancing themselves; for, to what decent purpose could they thus show themselves off in public?<sup>1319</sup>

There was to be no communal movement for the sheer pleasure in moving. There had to be a shared goal. Thus, dance was accepted and even promoted in the same manner as public holidays and military exercises. We return to the model from antiquity, to Sparta, reminiscences of which conclude the *Letter to d’Alembert*. Rousseau recalls being a child and coming across soldiers who were eating supper after their maneuvers; later they shared a dance. We cited this fragment in the introduction, but it bears repeating:

A dance of men, cheered by a long meal, would seem to present nothing very interesting to me; however, the harmony of five or six hundred men in uniform, holding one another by the hand and forming a long ribbon which wound around, serpent-like, in cadence and without confusion, with countless turns and returns, countless sorts of figured evolutions, the excellence of the tunes which animated them, the sound of the drums,

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<sup>1318</sup> Rousseau, *Emile*, p. 197.

<sup>1319</sup> Rousseau, *Politics and...*, p. 129.

the glare of the torches, a certain military pomp in the midst of pleasure, all this created a very lively sensation that could not be experienced coldly.<sup>1320</sup>

As we can see, it was not the dance itself, but the masculinity, the community of soldiers that most appealed to Jean-Jacques. A bit further on, he writes: “the only pure joy is public joy, and the true sentiments of nature reign only over the people.”<sup>1321</sup> The people *par excellence* is the company of soldiers, who draw observers in to share their world. Here the kinetic ideal is the dance of soldiers, and Rousseau drifts off to Sparta, where all men were warriors. Their dance, whose description he lifts from Plutarch,<sup>1322</sup> is one that “republics need.”<sup>1323</sup>

Thus our story comes back to an image devised by Machiavelli, later revived by Cromwell. The militarized and disciplined society is the true expression of the general will. This explains the Revolution’s interest in the idea of the general mobilization. Thus the program for the army formulated by the Committee of Public Safety, in which we find words that seem directly borrowed from *The Art of War*: “The general premise is to always operate *en masse*, and stay on the offensive; to keep up a rigorous, but not petty discipline in the army; to always keep the divisions on the move, but not to exhaust them.”<sup>1324</sup> Rousseau was no strategist. He was only marginally interested in the military. Nonetheless, we cannot avoid the impression that the Committee’s program is Rousseauian in tone. The general will is, essentially, constant mobilization. It means total vitalization, which leads to an utterly controlled stability, and in the end, passivity. “The most free society would be the most static society.”<sup>1325</sup>

We have finally reached the heart of Rousseau’s political ideal. He wanted a society where his longing to see the ruling individual sentimentally dissolve into the male unity of a social drill could come true – with the ruling individual as a Legislator. Jean-Jacques desired unanimity, one rhythm, force, and perspiration, and at the same time, he yearned to be its source. He came dressed as a conservative, but he was a modern designer of “traditional” solutions. This was openly accused when he attempted to present himself as a faithful son of his family republic. Geneva’s conservative bourgeoisie in no way saw themselves in the image of the model society he drew out. Except that Rousseau was in no way interested in the primacy of a particular community, he wanted to prove that his “self” had the strongest sense of community out of all the “selves” at that time. He did not want to conform to the existing reality, he wanted to show himself to be the fullest

<sup>1320</sup> Ibid., p. 135, note.

<sup>1321</sup> Ibid., p. 136; the note continues on the following page.

<sup>1322</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1323</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1324</sup> Quoted in: Markov, Soboul, *Wielka Rewolucja...*, p. 318.

<sup>1325</sup> Baczeko, *Rousseau...*, p. 686.

man, which meant practice ought to conform to his pointers. This aim was paradoxical, as Baczko noted: “The need to express himself as a distinct and unique personality [...] is entwined with the conviction that the content of a personality – what it should express – must have a general human value.”<sup>1326</sup> This paradox was also characteristic of Robespierre, and essentially the whole Revolution clearly tilted in one direction – toward the SELF, which imposes its humanity as a universal.

## The “Dance” of the Conscience, or: The Pleasures of a Solitary Stroll

For several years, two concepts of society battled in Rousseau. One of them – the premise of submitting to a community based on the general will – was expressed in the *Social Contract*, *The Government of Poland*, and *Letter to d’Alembert*. In the other, forecast by the first two discourses and *Emile*, the society of perfect unity was irrevocably lost. Sparta and Rome were songs of a remote past. Even the real Geneva, which Jean-Jacques glorified, was not actually the Geneva of the *Social Contract*. It had no general will in the sense of a real political body. If this will could be sought, Jean-Jacques reasoned, it was only in the hearts of scattered individuals.

Why did Rousseau believe a society of perfect unity was lost? Robert Spaemann has noted something curious:

The culprit for this collapse [according to Rousseau] is Christianity. Through the rift between politics and the Church, we read in the *Social Contract*, Christianity destroyed the unity of the state. [...] Christianity is essentially a “natural religion, a religion of man, of divine natural law,” and as such, it is apolitical, even anti-social. Yet it cannot be resisted, as its power is based on its truth. Christianity annihilates that benevolent pretense upon which ancient political unity was based, a unity that was always “supported by errors and lies.”<sup>1327</sup>

According to Spaemann, Rousseau in no way mourned the collapse of the ancient totality, he sought to celebrate a new kind of totality, a Christian totality.<sup>1328</sup> In the concluding parts of the *Social Contract*, where he speaks of a civic religion, it may still seem hidden, as Jean-Jacques is criticizing Christianity for damaging

<sup>1326</sup> Bronisław Baczko, “Paradoksy russoistyczne,” in: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Umowa społeczna...*, p. LV.

<sup>1327</sup> Spaemann, *Rousseau...*, pp. 113–114.

<sup>1328</sup> Cf. Strauss, *Natural Right...*, pp. 287–288, where we read of the necessity of replacing the original cult of the Legislator with a state religion, the only thing that could stir the emotions necessary to maintain obedience to the general will.

the powerful state system,<sup>1329</sup> but Speamann suggests we see a vital tendency here, expressed in *Emile*. “In the opening of *Emile*, Rousseau writes: ‘there is no more homeland.’”<sup>1330</sup> At the point where the ideal republic is merely a mirage, another “institution” appears: the highly individualized conscience.

In patriotism the denaturalized man shifted the basis of his existence to a particular collective “I.” In the conscience the space of identification expands to the universal, to humanity and the cosmos. But humanity and the cosmos, Rousseau stresses, are not real collectives that an individual can incorporate. They are abstractions that acquire reality only in the individual conscience.<sup>1331</sup>

Here is a recognition of a modern variety of solitude, arising from a conviction of the infallibility of a subjective view of Virtue.

Solitude in Rousseau did not solely come from Christian influences. A sense of uncertainty, or homelessness, was also rooted in a lack of unanimity in an epoch torn apart by a wide range of worldview disputes. Jean-Jacques wrote to Madame d’Houdetot in the spirit of Pascal:<sup>1332</sup>

We do not know anything, [...] we do not see anything; We are a band of blind men, cast at random in this vast universe. Not perceiving any object, each of us makes for himself a fantastic image of everything that he afterward takes for the rule of the true, and since this idea does not resemble anyone else’s, out of this appalling multitude of philosophers whose babble confuses us, not even two of them are found who are found in unison.<sup>1333</sup>

Here we come back to a theme from the first discourse, but the tone is now more lyrical, because the republican ideal also turns out to be a house of cards. The solution may initially surprise us: “Humility, about which the Christian speaks and about which man knows so little, is the first feeling that ought to be born in us from the study of ourselves.”<sup>1334</sup> But Jean-Jacques immediately adds: “Let us be humble about our species in order to be able to pride ourselves about our person.”<sup>1335</sup> We understand that humility is merely an initial stage of individualism.

An extremely individualized model of existence took a winding path in Rousseau. It was already sketched in his first writings, and the *Social Contract* tried to tame it. Yet the *Contract* contained a veiled impulse to this end when it came to speaking

<sup>1329</sup> Rousseau, *Social Contract*..., p. 157.

<sup>1330</sup> Spaemann, *Rousseau*..., p. 127.

<sup>1331</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>1332</sup> On the corresponding views of Rousseau and Pascal, cf. Cassirer, *Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, pp. 155–156.

<sup>1333</sup> Rousseau, “Moral Letters,” p. 81.

<sup>1334</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>1335</sup> *Ibid.*

of Christianity, which Rousseau both criticized and admired for its appreciation of the individual conscience. In *Julie* there was basically an open dispute between collectivism and individualism. The ideal of beautiful souls that so consumed Rousseau's contemporaries implied quite a different project for the community from the one posited in the *Social Contract*. Militarism and the collectivism of the general will were no longer central to his thinking; they were replaced by the communication of spiritual individuals in an idyllic rural Clarens. No one there had to be forced to be free, because the conditions of existence – the constant proximity of nature, economic self-sufficiency, a delicacy of manners – gave rise to individuals who were quite harmonious and free. “*La nouvelle Heloise* strikes us throughout as a kind of daydream in which Rousseau gives in to his desire for a limpidity he can no longer find in the real world or in human society: his desire for a purer sky, more open hearts, and a world at once more intense and more diaphanous.”<sup>1336</sup>

A condition for idyllic happiness is the close proximity of nature. Thus the idealization of the countryside, also found in the *Moral Letters*:

objects there are cheerful and pleasant, they incite to meditation, gathering oneself together, and reverie; there one feels oneself in the open, outside of the sad walls of the city and the shackles of prejudice. Woods, streams, greenery keep the glances of men away from our heart; flitting about here and there in accordance with their caprice, birds offer us the model of freedom in solitude.<sup>1337</sup>

The figure of the loner here does not yet dominate, yet it shines through the narrative. The absolute transparency of communication is situated in the singular SELF, and not the space between “selves.” As Julie, the real center of Clarens society and a *porte-paroles* of Rousseau himself, says: “I am surrounded by all those I care about, for me all of creation is here.”<sup>1338</sup>

True, Rousseau makes every effort to retain a supra-individual stance. We saw his captivation with people's togetherness in the aforementioned grape-gathering festival. Thoughts from the *Letter* re-emerge, though with less of a penchant for discipline. The dance in Clarens is neither flirtatious nor military, it is a spontaneous kinesis, a politics of sheer improvised joy: “a pure invention, a free creation, unfettered by any preestablished form.”<sup>1339</sup> Yet this is a mere reverie. Rousseau does not believe in the possibility of transparent communication with one's neighbor, as he is too focused on his SELF.<sup>1340</sup> In the relations formed in a community, one

<sup>1336</sup> Starobinski, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau...*, p. 83.

<sup>1337</sup> Rousseau, “*Moral Letters*,” p. 98.

<sup>1338</sup> Rousseau, *Julie, or...*, p. 566.

<sup>1339</sup> Starobinski, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau...*, p. 92.

<sup>1340</sup> “Rousseau is unwilling to accept the risks or to make the effort required to achieve authentic communication with another person, hence he loses his grip on the truth of his personal relationships” (*ibid.*, p. 175).

cannot fully be oneself. They never provide a sense of utter fulfillment and never activate the vital parts of the human soul. Starobinski comments:

In human relations there are inevitable and insuperable barriers, which protect a hidden part of our being, a part accessible only to God. This affirmation is preliminary to the affirmation of yet another kind of “immediate communication,” infinitely clearer and more direct than communication between human consciousness, namely, communication between the soul and God.<sup>1341</sup>

One had to find unity in oneself, and this was Rousseau’s focus. This was the sense of the apotheosis of the conscience in *Emile*, and the praise of solitude in his last works.

Rousseau’s reverie began expansively with the notion of a “very intimate society” in which it might be possible to achieve unclouded friendship. Then came a solitary retreat, an individual quest for a transcendent witness capable of infusing the soul with knowledge of its justification [...] the gaze of the Judge can ensure that transparency will never again be lost.<sup>1342</sup>

Yet who was this just Judge for Jean-Jacques?

In the *Discourse on Inequality*, Rousseau writes: “nature alone does everything in the operations of the beast whereas man contributes to his own operations in his capacity a free agent.”<sup>1343</sup> At this stage, he does not introduce satisfactory proof for this thesis. This is only found in *Emile*, with its sensualism typical of the Enlightenment. From the existence of impressions in him, Rousseau extrapolates the existence of his SELF and objects of sensations that are not him. Going further, he writes: “I next consider the objects of my sensations, and I find that I have the power of comparing them, so I perceive that I am endowed with an active force of which I was not previously aware.”<sup>1344</sup> This is a critical moment, as it shows the foundation of Rousseau’s worldview. Reality is divided into two

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<sup>1341</sup> Ibid., p. 116.

<sup>1342</sup> Ibid., pp. 120–121. Rousseau himself, having written his political treatises, claimed it was necessary to go further. The *polis* was not enough, no community was sufficiently good. “You torment yourselves a great deal to seek equitable Governments and to give yourselves good laws. I am going to prove to you first of all that it is your very Governments that cause the evils you claim to remedy through them. I shall prove, in addition, that it is impossible for you ever to have either good laws or equitable Government. And further I am going to show you the real way to prevent, without Governments and without Laws, all those evils about which you complain” (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Letter to Beaumont, Letters Written from the Mountain, and Related Writings*, trans. Christopher Kelly and Judith R. Bush, p. 32).

<sup>1343</sup> Rousseau, *The Major Political Writings...*, p. 104.

<sup>1344</sup> Rousseau, *Emile*, p. 245.

basic qualities: passive matter and active, non-material agency. The premise is: “motion, being an action, is the result of a cause of which rest is only the absence. When, therefore, there is nothing acting upon matter it does not move, and for the very reason that rest and motion are indifferent to it, its natural state is a state of rest.”<sup>1345</sup> The cause of motion must be non-material. There is a significant argument that points inward: “the inner voice makes this cause so apparent to me that I cannot watch the course of the sun without imagining a force which drives it, and when the earth revolves I think I see the hand that sets it in motion.”<sup>1346</sup> In this way Rousseau discovers his “God” – the Supreme Being.<sup>1347</sup> This is a god made to measure for the sensitive individual. Striving to be humble, however, Rousseau writes indignantly: “as if God and my soul were of one and the same nature!”<sup>1348</sup> And yet! “I am active. In vain do you argue this point with me; I *feel* it, and it is this feeling which speaks to me more forcibly than the reason which disputes it.”<sup>1349</sup> This is a key moment. God, the Supreme Being, is absolutely free, and man relatively so, but the substance of this freedom, so to speak, is the same. It is the original, natural, spontaneous conscience. This is why Rousseau adds: “man is the lord of the earth,”<sup>1350</sup> higher than all other beings.

In education, Rousseau forbids helping the child with anything, above all in thinking and making decisions. The child is meant to decide for themselves what is good and bad. This is meant to lead them to understand that people live in a world of necessities. Here we discover what made Rousseau attractive to Kant and Lessing,<sup>1351</sup> and later to Cassirer.<sup>1352</sup> At the end of the path of education, it seems, is freedom conceived not as arbitrary self-determination, but as an understanding of the place the whole of nature ascribes to us. “Let your duties take precedence of your wishes; extend the law of necessity into the region of morals.”<sup>1353</sup> Here is Jean-Jacques the enemy of vanity.<sup>1354</sup> Cassirer believed that Rousseau “set up a strict and lofty ideal of virtue.” Yet in the same sentence our insightful critic notes that, according to Jean-Jacques, “[the individual] demanded, as the price of serving it,

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<sup>1345</sup> Ibid., p. 247.

<sup>1346</sup> Ibid., p. 248.

<sup>1347</sup> Let us note the activist rhetoric: “This being who wills and can perform his will, this being active through his own power, this being, whoever he may be, who moves the universe and orders all things, is what I call God” (ibid., p. 252).

<sup>1348</sup> Ibid., p. 261.

<sup>1349</sup> Ibid., p. 256, emphasis – W. K.

<sup>1350</sup> Ibid., p. 253.

<sup>1351</sup> Cf. Ernst Cassirer, *Rousseau, Kant, Goethe*, trans. James Gutmann, Paul Oskar Kristeller et al., Princeton 1970, p. 14.

<sup>1352</sup> Cassirer presents Rousseau as a precursor to Kant and Fichte, an ethical rationalist, in *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, pp. 258–273.

<sup>1353</sup> Rousseau, *Emile*, p. 433.

<sup>1354</sup> “[Y]ou will not enjoy the illusions of imaginary pleasures, neither will you feel the sufferings which are their result” (ibid.).

the fulfillment of his yearning for happiness.<sup>1355</sup> Virtue is thus not only an understanding of necessity, as Kant would later have it, and Cassirer after him; in Rousseau it is also an individual sense of fulfillment in life, a fullness of existence. It is for this sense of fullness that a conscience is shaped in *Emile*.

We said at the beginning of our investigation into Rousseau that he was never satisfied with the rational viewpoint, with well-justified reason. He wanted to feel this reason deeply, for it to flow from the depths of his being. Only emotion could guarantee correctness. This translated into the absolute primacy of the SELF in his philosophy.

In the Cartesian *je pense*, the accent is shifted [by Jean-Jacques] to the *je*, as primary to thought, not *exhausted in intellectual reflection upon acts of consciousness*. Existence, *my existence*, comes before my act of thinking. In other words, along with existence, a personality is directly and intuitively given a consciousness of something other than thinking, and this consciousness, direct and evident, is an emotional act, not an intellectual one – *I feel, therefore I am*.<sup>1356</sup>

We should note that this is not pure sensualism in the spirit of Condillac or Helvétius, as Baczko stressed.<sup>1357</sup> We should distinguish the impression, taking the stimuli from the feeling, or our sense of “self.” It was this sense that was the object of concern in *Emile*, and turns out to be the just Judge – the Conscience. We quote a fragment from *The Profession of Faith of a Savoyard Vicar*, generally considered key in Rousseau’s discussion of education:

Conscience, conscience! Divine instinct, immortal voice from heaven; sure guide for a creature ignorant and finite indeed, yet intelligent and free; infallible judge of good and evil, making man like to God! In thee consists the excellence of man’s nature and the morality of his actions.<sup>1358</sup>

The Vicar avoids philosophical disputes. He sidelines discussions on the substance or principle of Being. He declares that the use of reason only condemns us to helplessness: “We have no means of measuring this vast machine, we are unable to calculate its workings; we know neither its guiding principles nor its final purpose; we do not know ourselves, we know neither our nature nor the spirit that moves us.”<sup>1359</sup> What to do? “Let me follow the Inner Light,”<sup>1360</sup> in other words,

<sup>1355</sup> Cassirer, *Rousseau...*, p. 42.

<sup>1356</sup> Baczko, *Rousseau...*, p. 386.

<sup>1357</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 388–392.

<sup>1358</sup> Rousseau, *Emile*, p. 268.

<sup>1359</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 243.

<sup>1360</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 244.

the Conscience. This standpoint leads to optimism in the spirit of Leibniz and Pope. Elsewhere, Jean-Jacques writes: “instead of saying *All is well* [or: *good*], it might be preferable to say *The whole is good* or *All is good for the whole*.”<sup>1361</sup>

For Rousseau, the whole is not merely the universe. He is not particularly interested in the physical sphere, though the above quotation addresses it. Far more essential to him is the existential-moral sphere. Here the whole is the SELF, which Rousseau would like to expand to cosmic proportions. His aim is to achieve a sense of ultimate harmony between the SELF and the world, the elimination of what Starobinski calls the “obstacle.” Society, or even simply the outside world, the world of objects, is a foreign SELF. “This foreignness is felt as contradicting the held intellectual idea, the concept of ‘order,’ and the inborn, pre-reflexive striving to experience inner peace and reconciliation.”<sup>1362</sup> Foreignness is thus to be abolished, and this is the sense of the whole.

While every physical being is “best compared [...] to the whole [of the universe],” “every reasoning and feeling being is best compared to itself.” The presence of order [or the whole] spontaneously appears in a person’s sensation of their being, their existence.<sup>1363</sup>

When we understand this, it becomes clear what this Supreme or Eternal Being, this god, was of whom Rousseau wrote.

The world is reduced to the autonomous SELF, who finds divinity within himself. The ideal pupil “thinks not of others but of himself, and prefers that others should do the same. He makes no claim upon them, and acknowledges no debt to them. He is alone in the midst of human society, he depends on himself alone.”<sup>1364</sup> This means total, overwhelming solitude, but Rousseau does not seem to mind. He is much more interested in the power the individual draws from their autonomy. “A really happy man is a hermit; God alone enjoys absolute happiness.”<sup>1365</sup> It remains for us to add: since God is a hermit, the hermit is God. Rousseau’s philosophy, as Cassirer noted, deifies the SELF: “It is an original activity, and the only evidence of such activity available to man. And this spontaneity of the self, not its receptivity, is the mark of the Divine.”<sup>1366</sup> At the heart of this worldview we find Rousseau’s last vision of the kinetic utopia<sup>1367</sup> – the stroll of the lonely dreamer.

<sup>1361</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “Letter to Voltaire,” in: *The Discourses and Other...*, p. 240.

<sup>1362</sup> Baczko, *Rousseau...*, p. 336.

<sup>1363</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 353.

<sup>1364</sup> Rousseau, *Emile*, p. 181.

<sup>1365</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192.

<sup>1366</sup> Cassirer, *Rousseau...*, p. 47.

<sup>1367</sup> The definition of the conscience in Rousseau might not just mean “that I have, thanks be to God, sentiments which accord with what I see through other means to be the universal good, but that the inner voice of my true sentiments *define* what is the good: since the *élan* of nature in me is the good, it is this which has to be consulted to discover it” (Taylor, *Sources of the Self...*, p. 362).

“The conscience is timid and fearful, it seeks solitude, the world and noise scare it,”<sup>1368</sup> Jean-Jacques wrote to Mme. d’Houdetot. Undoubtedly, psychological aspects played a role in shaping Rousseau’s model of solitary existence. But it was not only a fear of rejection or timidity that inspired him to seek isolation: “Rousseau settles in solitude so that he may speak legitimately in the name of the universal.”<sup>1369</sup> This is why he so longs to occupy the margins. As Starobinski notes, “Jean-Jacques wants to be recognized, not just as an exceptional mind or an innocent victim but as a simple man, an untitled foreigner,<sup>1370</sup> yet one who is for that very reason capable of producing a portrait of man *possessing universal validity*.”<sup>1371</sup> This universality is achieved through an increasingly radical immersion in personal idiosyncrasy. For Rousseau, universality is equivalent to absolute individuality.

Rousseau’s final work, *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, begins as follows: “I am now alone on earth, no longer having any brother, neighbor, friend, or society other than myself. The most sociable and the most loving of humans has been proscribed from society by a unanimous agreement.”<sup>1372</sup> This fragment sketches out an opposition – MYSELF against the world – more clearly than any before. It is not a peaceful opposition. Rousseau’s final work is not reconciled to a life on the margins. It is filled with grudges and regrets. It fully mobilizes a highly perilous mechanism, already started in the first discourse: “[Rousseau] remains, in the depths of his isolation, linked to society through his antisocial rebellion and passion: hostility is a bond.”<sup>1373</sup> His work came full circle, though it never really left its original point of departure – total discontent. Yet the energy he gathered along the way gave the confrontation an explosive potential. It was not straightforward hostility, more of a bitter retreat stoked by a radical negation. This was a special kinetic utopia – the sublimation of a highly mobilized solitude, in which the demobilization of the modern, Enlightenment community mobilized individual grudges.

To be sure, sin becomes more concrete, more serious, when it takes the form of an absolute evil of which Jean-Jacques is the innocent victim. In projecting his guilt onto others, he accuses them of crimes far blacker than any of his own. But he does so in order to grant himself, as the victim of injustice, absolute justification. He offers his neck to the sacrificial knife in order to acquire the purity of the victim.<sup>1374</sup>

<sup>1368</sup> Rousseau, “Moral Letters,” p. 96. In *Emile*, in turn, we read: “Conscience is timid, she loves peace and retirement; she is startled by noise and numbers” (Rousseau, *Emile*, p. 268). As we see, Rousseau was not immune to self-plagiarism.

<sup>1369</sup> Starobinski, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau...*, p. 40.

<sup>1370</sup> This clearly sets Rousseau apart from Montaigne, who also praised solitude.

<sup>1371</sup> Starobinski, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau...*, p. 185.

<sup>1372</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, trans. Charles E. Butterworth, Cambridge 1992, p. 1.

<sup>1373</sup> Starobinski, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau...*, p. 43.

<sup>1374</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 250.

Thus the community is nothing more than an aggregate of “selves.” Each of these selves should take their cue from the model SELF, as Rousseau suggests, to voice their dissent. This makes social life a constant dispute over authenticity. Who is more oneself, more true, more harmed, and who deserves the advantages – these are the questions in Rousseau’s politics of individual autonomy.

Rousseau’s solitude is a negative one. At its core is not ethical action, not Kantian freedom, but an effort to maintain the possibility to withdraw, to avoid restrictions. Rousseau openly confesses this in his first letter to Malesherbes: “the sort of happiness I need is not so much to do what I want, as it is not to do what I do not want. The active life has nothing that tempts me, I would a hundred times rather consent to never doing anything than to doing something in spite of myself.”<sup>1375</sup> Following attempts to build a model of satisfactory socialization, after his decree of a total community in the *Social Contract*, Rousseau confesses that this was only an illusion. His personality will not be confined. He is an elemental force, who only finds meaning within himself, only in total freedom within his solitude can he achieve a sense of fulfillment:

I have never been truly suited for civil society where everything is annoyance, obligation, and duty [...] my independent natural temperament always made me incapable of the subjection necessary to anyone who wants to live among men. As long as I act freely, I am good and do only good. But as soon as I feel the yoke either of necessity or of men, I become rebellious, or rather, recalcitrant: then I am ineffectual.<sup>1376</sup>

Here we have the quintessence of the perspective that Rousseau was the first to describe so insightfully and defend with such force – the aforementioned “be yourself.” It might seem that this is about the famous return to nature, becoming an introverted hominid, nurturing “love for yourself,” but the aim here is different. It is not the rehabilitation of simple instinctual actions that interests Jean-Jacques. He wants an ecstatic experience of his own, idiosyncratic personality. He longs for originality. This is why he is most delighted not by the mere presence of nature, which he so enjoyed, but by the use of nature as a catalyst for personality. This endeavor is sometimes dressed in pantheistic garb, but the SELF always eventually emerges:

I raised my ideas from the surface of the earth to all the beings of nature, to the universal system of things, to the incomprehensible being who embraces everything. Then with my mind lost in that immensity, I did not think, I did not reason, I did not philosophize; with a sort of sensual pleasure *I felt myself* weighed down with the weight of

<sup>1375</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Confessions and Correspondence*, trans. Christopher Kelly, p. 2. On inactivity in Rousseau, cf. Starobinski, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau...*, pp. 239–240.

<sup>1376</sup> Rousseau, *Reveries...*, p. 83.

that universe, with rapture I abandoned myself to the confusion of those great ideas, I loved to lose myself in imagination in space; confined within the limits of beings my heart found itself *too constrained*, I was smothered in the universe, *I would have wanted to throw myself into the infinite*.<sup>1377</sup>

In the sphere of kinetic imagination, Rousseau's final work seems an apology for passivity and stasis. As Starobinski writes: "Surrounded by enemies, he ceased to exercise control over the realm in which he might have been expected to act, hence was forced to 'abstain from acting.'"<sup>1378</sup> In the *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, we are always coming across phrases that declare his retreat from the world into contemplation, demobilization: "I understood that since all I had yet to do on earth was to regard myself on it as a purely passive being, I ought not to use up, in futilely resisting my fate, the strength I had left to endure it"<sup>1379</sup>; "the precious *far niente* [inactivity] was the first and principle enjoyment I wanted to savor in all its sweetness, and all I did [...] was in effect only the delicious and necessary pursuit of a man who has devoted himself to idleness";<sup>1380</sup> "I abstain from acting; and this condition, which is innocent only because it is compulsory, makes me find a sort of delight in yielding fully and without reproach to my natural inclination";<sup>1381</sup> "I abstain from acting, for all my weakness is with regard to action, all of my strength is negative."<sup>1382</sup>

The quintessence of the dream of an extremely passive existence comes in the fifth walk, in which we find the famous image of Rousseau lying motionless in a boat drifting about a lake,<sup>1383</sup> a

state in which the soul finds a solid enough base to rest itself on entirely and to gather its whole being into, without needing to recall the past or encroach upon the future; in which time is nothing for it; in which the present lasts forever without, however, making its duration noticed and without any trace of time's passage, without any other sentiment of deprivation or of enjoyment, pleasure or pain, desire or fear, except that alone of our existence, and having this sentiment alone fill it completely.<sup>1384</sup>

When we read the beginning of this paragraph, we may get the impression that it is practically a description of Buddhist nirvana, but the last words contradict this feeling. Rousseau is after a total sense of *our own* existence. "What do we enjoy

<sup>1377</sup> Rousseau, *Confession and...*, emphasis – W. K.

<sup>1378</sup> Starobinski, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau...*, p. 239.

<sup>1379</sup> Rousseau, *Reveries...*, p. 115.

<sup>1380</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>1381</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>1382</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>1383</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>1384</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

in such a situation? Nothing external to ourselves, nothing if not ourselves and our own existence. As long as this state lasts, we are sufficient unto ourselves, like God.”<sup>1385</sup> The aim is the deification of the SELF. Not dissolving in a greater whole, but elevating oneself to become the whole. In essence, this means neither passivity nor motionlessness.

Starobinski noted an important thing, upon which we will interpret the motif of the walk: “[Rousseau] proclaims his surrender to the powers that besiege him, but he does so with such energy as to belie the passivity in which he has sought refuge. The mere fact of his continuing to write proves that his passivity is not perfect.”<sup>1386</sup> This is confirmed by a new and expressive kinetic figure, the walk. Wandering aimlessly in the lap of nature, a favorite pastime of Jean-Jacques’, expresses a fundamental anxiety.<sup>1387</sup> During a stroll, a person becomes an electron, the sensation of his motoricity intensifies. Here is Starobinski once more: “He walks and he strolls. He expends energy without transforming the world or engaging in conscious self-examination, [...] walking eventually produces something like a hypnotic state; his body forgets itself.”<sup>1388</sup> He develops a “new space [...] a temporalized space, with the self at the center, and animated and populated by expansive feeling. It is through this space that Rousseau strolls.”<sup>1389</sup> Drifting in the boat is no longer pure motionlessness. The water is always changing: “he needs the babbling stream in order to perceive the stability of his *state* of repletion. He welcomes constant motion, the rocking of the cradle, only as a means of making himself feel more acutely his inner tranquility.”<sup>1390</sup> This is the logic of the stroll – though solitude seems to posit an ultimate demobilization, it comes along with a politics of the coexistence of autotelic, motionless existences: it is essentially a state of constant arousal. As Starobinski has observed, Rousseau “does not seek solitude for itself.”<sup>1391</sup> “To feel such intense desire for peace, transparency, and repose is to become involved in endless efforts of pacification, in ceaseless movement toward unattainable non-movement. Passion for the immutable requires that reverie continually start anew.”<sup>1392</sup>

When Rousseau is silent, he cries out the loudest. This is yet another paradox. Although the stroll celebrates solitude, it is not fully accomplished if it remains

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<sup>1385</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>1386</sup> Starobinski, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau...*, p. 248.

<sup>1387</sup> As a young man, Jean-Jacques spent a few years as a vagrant. “That first school – the school of wandering that lasted almost ten years – in many respects sealed his future destiny” (Albert Manfred, *Rousseau, Mirabeau, Robespierre. Trzy portrety z epoki Wielkiej Rewolucji Francuskiej*, trans. Andrzej Szymański, Warsaw 1988, p. 31). It was then that he discovered himself to be on the margins, and defined himself as a man from nowhere, tied to no class, no community, a lone entity.

<sup>1388</sup> Starobinski, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau...*, p. 233.

<sup>1389</sup> Ibid., pp. 360–361.

<sup>1390</sup> Ibid., p. 258.

<sup>1391</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>1392</sup> Ibid., p. 364.

unexpressed. Rousseau's solitude is modern because it involves a combination of these two "choreographies" – the march and the confession, it is the mobilization of the lone body to express itself.

The autonomy of the SELF cannot be merely a matter of consciousness. Rousseau reveals himself to be a mystic striving for physical ecstasy. He longs for primal emotions unmediated by language, and therefore transparent.<sup>1393</sup> Here is his utopia:

Everything remains at the bodily level, but the body has ceased to be an obstacle; it is no longer an intervening opaque object. Through its movement, its surprise, and its pleasure it becomes meaning through and through. The storm of emotion is simultaneously passion and action; what occurs is a kind of expansion, an overflowing of emotion.<sup>1394</sup>

If we recall Cahusac's delight at the primal gesture mentioned in the previous chapter, we might understand this longing. In Rousseau we also find primal expression – a cry of nature (*le cri de la nature*) that can be understood in terms of the sound, but also the body. This is how Jean-Jacques views the dance he likes best. As Starobinski writes:

In patriarchal society's celebrations, language, associated with dance and song, is inherent in the body of every passionate individual. It is not only a gesture, a specific form of behavior, but a sign that refers back to the "significator." Patriarchal language preserves the memory and power of archaic onomatopoeia. It has the immediate persuasive power of the cry of nature.<sup>1395</sup>

The physical *cri de la nature* focuses all of one's vital energies inward, it is a kind of explosion, an outburst, brooking the alienation of the SELF by bolstering it. This had to be expressed in words. Rousseau knew that without language, without discourse, this primal emotion was primitively isolated. Yet in the "state not unlike hypnosis" that stirs the confession, the difference between body, language, and emotion disappears: "The relation between writer and language ceases to be an instrumental one [...]; it is no longer a relation of exteriority. Writer, language and emotion cannot be distinguished. The emotion is the writer in the act of self-revelation, and language is emotion in its expressive form."<sup>1396</sup> The spasm, the gesture, moan, and ecstasy all stem from the same base of emotion: freedom, individual autonomy. The world vanishes, the SELF remains: "authenticity is nothing other than

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<sup>1393</sup> "Having become a writer in order to compensate for an emotional nature that makes him seem stupid, Jean-Jacques is constantly creating situations in which expressive emotion eliminates the need to write or speak; in such situations he is reconciled with his body and can present himself in person" (Starobinski, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau...*, p. 138).

<sup>1394</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1395</sup> Ibid., p. 318.

<sup>1396</sup> Ibid., p. 195.

sincerity without distance or reflection; it is spontaneity in the absence of a previously constituted object capable of commanding obedience.”<sup>1397</sup>

Rousseau takes the movement of the restless body on a stroll within the individual personality. The SELF equals the Absolute. This means declaring an ideal that impels action. Rousseau becomes a prophet of total mobilization. Being a dreamer does not prevent him from being a politician. “Nothing can be isolated. Rousseau is a *belle âme* who loses himself in his own transparency but whose plaintive voice changed the world. And that voice is never more powerful than in those passages where it seems to renounce all power.”<sup>1398</sup> In Étienne Balibar’s analysis of the *Social Contract*, we find a thought that will help us explain the logic behind Rousseau’s politics:

For the first time a proposition to found the law is constructed not on an original community (naturalism), or on divine grace (transcendentalism), or on an arbitrary convention (artificialism), but the liberty and equality that it itself implies: a kind of *self-foundation of the law*.<sup>1399</sup>

In analogous terms, we could speak of Rousseau’s postulate of the *self-determination of the SELF* as only retroactively pertaining to the people, the Supreme Being, and custom. These two processes, the self-determination of law and the self-determination of the SELF, go hand-in-hand, and are essentially a single process, striving for the total sovereignty of the individual. Agency and subject blend into one – the trembling and emotional SELF. Jean-Jacques described and theoretically grounded it, but the Revolution suggested and enacted a concrete political program based on it. As we have said, this did not mean, of course, that Rousseau was personally to blame for all the tragedies that later occurred. The point is that in him we find the most determined exponent of the Legislator seeking to build “communal” happiness through universalizing private feelings. Strauss had this to say:

The type of man foreshadowed by Rousseau, which justifies civil society by transcending it, is no longer the philosopher but what later came to be called the “artist” [or genius]. His claim to privileged treatment is based on his sensitivity rather than on his wisdom, on his goodness or compassion rather than on his virtue. He admits the precarious character of his claim: he is a citizen with a bad conscience. Yet, since his conscience accuses not merely himself but at the same time the society to which he belongs, he is inclined to regard himself as the conscience of society.<sup>1400</sup>

Robespierre considered himself to be precisely such an “artist.”

<sup>1397</sup> Ibid., p. 199.

<sup>1398</sup> Ibid., p. 265.

<sup>1399</sup> Étienne Balibar, *Masses, Classes, and the Public Sphere*, eds. Mike Hill and Warren Montag, London–New York 2000, p. 108.

<sup>1400</sup> Strauss, *Natural Right...*, p. 293.

## The Energy of the People, the Sentimentality of the Ballet Master, the Holy March

Bearing in mind Rousseau and Robespierre, seeking the subterranean rhythm of the epoch, trying to probe the nature of the cultural shift, we shall now turn to dance in Revolutionary France. What forces shaped it, how did they enter a dialogue with it, what sort of kinesis might we find here? It was surely far from uniform. Dance went on during the Revolution in various places and for various purposes, it swept up varied bodies, and those bodies used it to express their yearnings, frustrations, and interests. The Revolution's kinesis came in many colors, which means our tale will have to move in several stages.

First let us look at the Revolutionary people, at the dance of those bodies that fit no party categories.<sup>1401</sup> The Revolution was marked by spontaneity, or at least so we glean from commentaries and analyses. The Revolution engendered hope, inspiring greater or smaller groups to move, every step of the way. Its first phase in particular had a grassroots vitality. People of various classes, of various aspirations, stepped out into the streets and squares; a desire to act and be together was in the air, a celebration of a birthing unity, which was increasingly palpable. Michelet called attention to this in describing the revolutionary festivals. Mona Ozouf encapsulates his thoughts as follows:

A people setting out: this is the first image of a festival, and the first sign that one has occurred. The people set out in some unpremeditated way; no one has ordered them to do so; their movement precedes any call. Their action is subject neither to laws nor to institutions nor even to concerted direction.<sup>1402</sup>

This was a vitality characteristic of the Revolution. Its highly seductive energy, but also its menace, with which the centers of powers had to contend.

This vitality, this kinetic community of the people, was expressed in part through dance. This is among the most famous images of the Revolution – people taking one another by the hand, forming a line or a circle, moving to dance with a simple, but buoyant step (Ill. 156). In this period of historical upheaval

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<sup>1401</sup> The category of “Revolutionary people” cannot, as we have said, be reduced to the peasant strata in a regime, nor to the most impoverished. It was chiefly made of the third estate, but there also appeared priests, and even converted aristocrats. The people, for us, were all those who got swept up by constitutional, patriotic, and republican ideals, but took no active part in the power structures. The people is the energy the Revolutionary elite tried to harness.

<sup>1402</sup> Ozouf, *Festivals...*, p. 16. We will be making frequent reference to this brilliant work, quite justly recognized as the finest study on the topic.



156. Artist unknown, engraving of a Revolutionary *carmagnole*, 1792

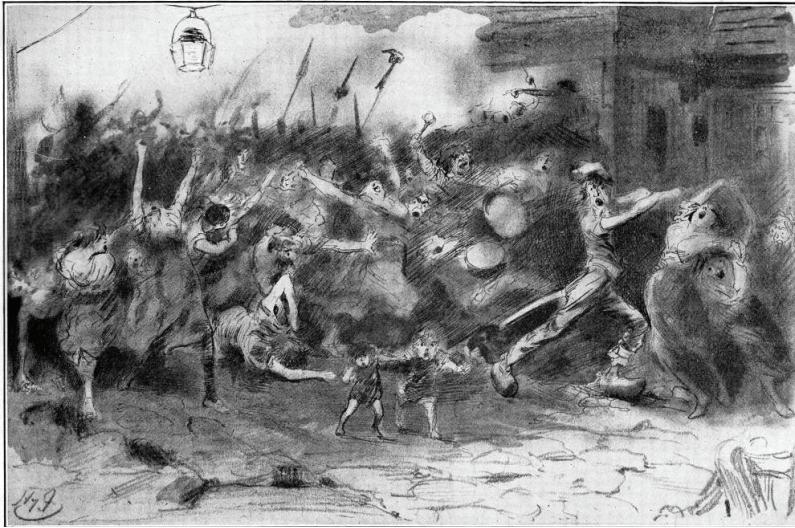
[i]mmensely long chains tore through the streets, wound round the trees of Liberty, as in happier times they wound round traditional trees in the villages of the South, catching up passers-by, magistrates, generals, to the tune which then became the Carmagnole.<sup>1403</sup>

The dance described here is the farandole, whose origins are lost in the mists of time,<sup>1404</sup> though it was unquestionably a folk dance that came to Paris from the country.<sup>1405</sup> It was very simple, not unlike the *carole*, *tresche*, or the original *branle*. It was accompanied by song, often the “Carmagnole,” the name by which this Revolutionary dance most often appears in the literature.

<sup>1403</sup> Violet Alford, “The Farandole,” *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society* 1932, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 18.

<sup>1404</sup> Alford (“The Farandole”) seeks its roots in antiquity. Carol Lee (*Ballet in Western Culture: A History of Its Origin and Evolution*, London–New York 2002, p. 17) finds them in medieval dance. The name *farandole* first appears, however, in sources from the eighteenth century.

<sup>1405</sup> Alford, “The Farandole,” p. 21.



157. Harry Furniss, illustration for *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens depicting a Revolutionary *carmagnole*, 1910

Dickens provided a famous description of the *carmagnole* in *A Tale of Two Cities*. This bears quoting:

a throng of people came pouring round the corner by the prison wall. [...] There could not be fewer than five hundred people, and they were dancing like five thousand demons. There was no other music than their own singing. They danced to the popular Revolution song, keeping a ferocious time that was like a gnashing of teeth in unison. Men and women danced together, women danced together, men danced together, as hazard had brought them together. At first, they were a mere storm of coarse red caps<sup>1406</sup> and coarse woollen rags; but, as they filled the place [...], some ghostly apparition of a dance-figure gone raving mad arose among them. They advanced, retreated, struck at one another's hands, clutched at one another's heads, spun round alone, caught one another and spun round in pairs, until many of them dropped. While those were down, the rest linked hand in hand, and all spun round together: then the ring broke, and in separate rings of two and four they turned and turned until they all stopped at once, began again, struck, clutched, and tore, and then reversed the spin, and all spun round another way. Suddenly they stopped again, paused, struck out the time afresh, formed into lines the width of the public way, and, with their heads low down and their hands high up, swooped screaming off. No fight could have been half so terrible as this dance.<sup>1407</sup>

<sup>1406</sup> This kind of cap was an attribute of the sans-coulottes.

<sup>1407</sup> Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*, London 1968, p. 324.



158. Henri Rousseau, *Le centenaire d'indépendance* (Centenary of Independence), dance around a Tree of Liberty, 1892

The powerful rhythm, the ecstatic and menacing lilt of the *carmagnole*, was perhaps exaggerated by Dickens (Ill. 157), yet looking at the drawings of the time, we are struck by the regularity of the circle-dancing motif. These drawings exude a joy in being together, a pride in collective achievements: “In the French cities and towns people gathered to celebrate the momentous times of the Revolution.”<sup>1408</sup> Perhaps at no other moment of world history were people so keen to express a social change through dance. The Revolutionary consciousness saw it differently from Dickens, who was writing many years later.<sup>1409</sup> The bright side of this dance was expressed – it meant unification, community, closeness. People stood arm-in-arm (Ill. 158). The Revolution wanted to be an egalitarian fraternity: “July 14 was a dance, a masterpiece of pure activity in which the movements of a unanimous people were miraculously ordered in the figures of a gracious, gratuitous ballet. It was while dancing that ‘the French nation, drunk with liberty, shining with liberal ideas, trod underfoot the baubles of the throne.’”<sup>1410</sup> The Revolutionary powers constantly tried to stoke this energy. This is why, for

<sup>1408</sup> Irena Turska, *Krótki zarys historii tańca i baletu*, Cracow 2009, p. 135.

<sup>1409</sup> *A Tale of Two Cities* was first published in 1859.

<sup>1410</sup> Ozouf, *Festivals...*, p. 172.

instance, festivals were organized with plenty of dancing. Let us have a look at the first anniversary of the storming of the Bastille, on July 14, 1790, the Fête de la Fédération: “In the evening Paris turned into a great, boisterous dance, centered around the Champs-Élysées and the square of the Bastille. On the ground orphaned by the old fortress they put a sign: this place is for dancing.”<sup>1411</sup> The Revolution wanted to dance, for it wanted to salvage its bright side. It longed to move endlessly to the rhythm of the farandole, gathering up all the members of society, and, in fact, the entire world.

The unity of a revolutionary society was obviously a pipe dream. As Turska notes, “the mass dances were a vital demonstration against those people or things that recalled the despised feudal system.”<sup>1412</sup> Dickens was quite right. There was a threat of anarchy in the vital kinetic expression of the people from the very beginning. We might look at it as a kind of merciful purification. This is how Daniel Guerin sees it, while showing the negative nature of the kinetic community:

the people in shirtsleeves gave vent to their fantasy, to their irrepressible spirits. It became a competition as to who could celebrate with the greatest brilliance, the greatest wit, the liberation of mankind. Freed from the age-old weight that oppressed them, they seemed to take wings. They danced on the overturned tabernacles.<sup>1413</sup>

There was violence behind the veil of liberation. The farandole was an expression of community, but also hatred for others – those excluded from the community. It often accompanied anticlerical events: “all such ceremonies should be embellished with carmagnoles, in which the good citizens of both sexes and every age gave themselves up to a desire to dance,”<sup>1414</sup> wrote the rabid terrorist Monestier. Here is a scene that demonstrates how thin was the line between the joy of togetherness and violence: “It started when the grenadiers offered their commander a ribbon in the national colors. He refused to carry it, but was forced to give in when his men returned en masse the next day. His acceptance was the signal for almost riotous rejoicing. The soldiers poured out into the streets, danced the farandole, and drove the monks out of their monastery and forced them to dance with the women.”<sup>1415</sup> At the height of the dechristianization inspired by Hébert, “dances on overturned tabernacles” were an everyday affair. This was a symbol of rebellion as such, yearning for kinetic release. It could take the form of open attacks – persecuting political opponents, beating and killing them – but

<sup>1411</sup> Baszkiewicz, Meller, *Rewolucja...*, p. 407.

<sup>1412</sup> Turska, *Krótki zarys...*, p. 135.

<sup>1413</sup> Quoted in: Ozouf, *Festivals...*, p. 31.

<sup>1414</sup> Quoted in: *ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>1415</sup> Quoted in: *ibid.*, p. 56.

it could also be dance. The leaders of the Revolution were fascinated by it. Yet they knew they could not leave it unchecked. “Throughout the Revolution, administrative severity increased against dancing.”<sup>1416</sup>

The first phase of the Revolution brought a release of kinetic energy, which the Revolutionary power tried to channel. This move from liberalization to discipline is highly characteristic of Revolutionary culture on the whole. We find an analogous situation when it comes to the body on stage, the theatrical politics under whose sway the “Revolutionary” ballet was shaped, which glistened in colors unlike the ludic carmagnole.

When the Revolution began, France gorged itself on freedom. One manifestation of this was the “decree of the National Assembly of January 17, 1791, which declared the right of every citizen to found a theater and stage the productions they pleased, and stood in defense of authors.”<sup>1417</sup> The royal theaters’ monopoly was undone. More and more stages cropped up, with an increasingly varied repertoire. Liberalization was underway. The largest theaters, including the Opera, were now fully operating by market rules, no longer serving aristocratic tastes or the preferences of the middle class alone. The *sans-coulottes* were attending the Opera, and the artists had to take this into account. They were no longer playing for the king, the queen, and their coterie, but for a pluralized and emotional *audience*.

In the wake of commercialization came an exacerbation of a tendency we described in the previous chapter – the sentimentalization of the theatrical message. Everyday life of the time was increasingly present on stage. It was still often set against a mythological or pastoral backdrop, but from today’s perspective we clearly see that theatrical productions were drifting toward realism on the one hand, and something we might call proto-Romanticism on the other, which matched the ferment of escapism characteristic of the time.

We see the dominance of sentimental realism quite vividly on the Opera stage, where comedy reigned supreme.

The grand opera with its classical and mythological subjects, its sophisticated tone and contempt for the mundane, its tradition of ballet and heroic declamatory recitative, had been an idealized projection of the *Ancien Régime*. [...] The *opera-comique* was a more promising vehicle for the new school, thanks to its links with real life and in particular the spoken dialogue.<sup>1418</sup>

<sup>1416</sup> Ibid., p. 334, note 31.

<sup>1417</sup> Baszkiewicz, Meller, *Rewolucja...*, p. 425. For more on the subject, cf. Foster, *Choreography & Narrative: Ballet’s Staging of Story and Desire*, Bloomington–Indianapolis 1998, pp. 145–149.

<sup>1418</sup> Winton Dean, “Opera under the French Revolution,” *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 1967–1968, p. 81.

We should add that the comic opera was itself going through a period of revolutionary changes. The most important composers of the Revolution period were artists who openly developed the Italian idiom, giving it a gravity of sorts, ennobling what had seemed trivial, or even primitive, just a few decades earlier.

The *opera-comique* of Cherubini and Méhul was a very different matter [than works like *La serva padrona*]. Its intentions were much more serious: the elements of comedy and parody soon dwindled and disappeared. It was contemporary in spirit, if not always in setting, and contained what might be called a *verismo* element. The world of pastoral make-believe has gone; instead we may be confronted by political agitators, passport inspections and resistance movements, and nearly always by inflamed passions and an atmosphere of violence and terror.<sup>1419</sup>

There were exceptions to the change in theme. Spectacles continued to be performed with Greek gods for protagonists. Yet even here, a new tone could be felt: “during the Revolution the classical myths were infused with more realism and more heightened emotions.”<sup>1420</sup> An emblematic figure for the change in tastes alongside the social upheavals might be Pierre Gardel, the brother of Maximilien Gardel, ballet master of the Paris Opera from 1787 to the Restoration.<sup>1421</sup> During the first years of the Revolution he staged premieres of ancient “heroic” ballets. In 1790 he presented *Télémaque dans l’île de Calypso* (Telemachus on the Isle of Calypso) and *Psyche*, and three years later, *Le Jugement de Pâris* (The Judgment of Paris). All remained in the repertoire until long after the Revolution. In 1790–1829, *Psyche* even set an impressive record, as it was performed five hundred sixty (!) times.<sup>1422</sup> This indicates that Gardel’s works were a perfect match for the tastes of the epoch. He used tried and tested strategies. His works were a nearly ideal balance of pantomime and dance, avoiding the extremity that cost Noverre his popularity. His spectacles were meant not only to shake the viewer, but also to please the eye. This explains Pierre Gardel’s fondness for effects, for sumptuous sets, as well as the romantic themes of his ballets, which aimed to help viewers leave behind their Revolutionary anxieties. Ballet was meant to take the viewer to a comprehensible world, a world of conflicts less complex than those that were tearing apart the political scene. What could be more reassuring than love? And so love was danced in the works of Gardel Junior, and in love the audiences

<sup>1419</sup> Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>1420</sup> Judith Chazin-Bennahum, *Dance in the Shadow of the Guillotine*, Carbondale–Edwardsville 1988, p. 64.

<sup>1421</sup> Cf. John V. Chapman, “Forgotten Giant: Pierre Gardel,” *Dance Research* 1987, Vol. 5, No. 1, pp. 3–20.

<sup>1422</sup> Ivor Guest, *The Ballet of the Enlightenment: The Establishment of the Ballet d’Action in France, 1770–1793*, London 1996, p. 420.

sought to forget. Love became central to ballet, which began its slow drift toward a romantic model.<sup>1423</sup>

It may seem Gardel affected no shift as radical as the operas of Cherubini and Méhul. The ancient dress gave the viewer the impression they were escaping their everyday problems. Gardel did not offer participation in the turbulence of the political agitators or resistance movements. And yet the way he spoke of the love between mythological figures was, to some degree, stamped by the Revolution. Here is an example supplied by Ivor Guest: “Furies and Demons had been seen on [the Opera] stage before, but never had a scene of violent outrage been depicted with such shocking effect or with such realism as Marie Miller brought to her portrayal of Psyche in distress.”<sup>1424</sup>

In ballets of the Revolution period, the amorous body was stamped with the violence of the political body. Both qualities met in the sentimental bourgeois body, which threw itself into the whirl of politics. It was shaped by idealism and violence. This could lead to the ecstasy of erotic excitement, felt in the streets, in the farandole, and on stage in the lyrical *pas de deux*, but also to a violent spasm, lashing out against the counter-Revolutionaries.

We find an intriguing mixture in Pierre Gardel’s ancient heroic ballets about love. On the one hand, they were a haven from politics. The audience left behind the here and now to be transported to an idealized world sometime and someplace far away. They contemplated charming dance arrangements of a continually improving technical standard. On the other hand, realism in emotions and the sentimentalization of content allow us to see Gardel’s ballets as a space for articulating a Revolutionary sensibility. The bourgeoisie adopted tropes of the aristocratic culture for their own. Gardel’s adaptation of ancient mythology went a step beyond Noverre’s. The latter chiefly wanted to teach rational virtues with the rationality of the Encyclopedists, while the emotional virtue of Gardel’s protagonists borrowed much from Rousseau.

The work that Gardel performed at the Opera coincided with the theatrical climate of the time. We find a large number of sentimental spectacles on nearly all the stages of Paris in the first years of the Revolution.<sup>1425</sup> There were lovers struggling against adversity or other misfortunates, most often from the lower strata of society, who nonetheless ultimately overcame all their obstacles. Under these circumstances, Marivaux and Diderot were popular, and the drift toward sentimentalism

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<sup>1423</sup> For more on the romantic ballets of the period, see: Chazin-Bennahum, “Wine, Women and Song: Anacreon’s Triple Threat to French Eighteenth-Century Ballet,” *Dance Research* 1987, Vol. 5, No. 1, pp. 55–64. We should note that the liberalization of the sphere of romance was characteristic of the Revolutionary transformation. With the fall of the old system erotic restrictions vanished, and freedom came to include the freedom to choose a partner.

<sup>1424</sup> Guest, *The Ballet...*, p. 321.

<sup>1425</sup> Cf. Cecilia Feilla, *The Sentimental Theater of the French Revolution*, Farnham–Burlington, VT 2013.



159. Artist unknown, engraving of François-Joseph Talma in the title role of a tragedy by Antoine de La Fosse, *Manlius Capitolinus*, early 19<sup>th</sup> century

was visible in Beaumarchais and André Chénier,<sup>1426</sup> primarily known to Revolution historians as the author of the anti-monarchical *Charles IX*. A dazzling performance of the title role in this play brought fame to François-Joseph Talma, who is of special interest to us, as he incarnated the physical model portrayed on the revolutionary stages.

In the most famous French actor of the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Cecilia Feilla sees the quintessence of the “sentimental body,” which began to be shaped on stage by Garrick and Lekain, and whose theorists were Diderot and Rousseau.<sup>1427</sup> This is the context in which we most often find

<sup>1426</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>1427</sup> Ibid., pp. 197–224.



160. Eugène Delacroix, *Talme comme Nero in "Britannicus"* (Talma as Nero in "Britannicus"), 1852–1853

Talma in the literature – as the man who dealt the death blow to acting mostly based on perfect declamation, replacing it with force of expression and realism (Ill. 159). He was among the first to posit the use of costumes to fit the characters, and not the fashion of the day (Ill. 160). Yet this was not all. His acting was, to a great extent, based on a deep rendition of pantomime, as an expression of

the inner movements nature instills in a person. Talma longed to merge with a character, to extract his inner truth. He was always in search of primal gestures, listening to the “cry of nature.” We find similar tropes in Gardel, particularly in the character of Psyche, which he created for Marie Miller. Nonetheless, Gardel was not so politically ambitious as Talma. The actor gave himself to the republican wing of the Revolution, while the ballet master was brilliant at navigating the political wilderness. This is why Talma interests us more. Key to his acting was sensibility combined with virtue. As Feilla writes, he believed that “only sensibility can communicate true virtue, and only virtue can animate the expressions of sensibility.”<sup>1428</sup> This conviction was instilled by Rousseau, and shared by Robespierre.

The Revolutionary stage body was to be a virtuous body. Yet in a climate of sentimentalism, it was difficult to avoid the trap of being maudlin. This is why the revolutionary body could not feed on liberty alone. It also had to be disciplined.

The Revolution promised freedom in the theater, but did not keep to its word. “The increasingly influential Jacobins tried, time and again, to directly or indirectly interfere in the theatrical repertoire.”<sup>1429</sup> From the fall of 1793 on, we are dealing with the return of censorship. The only plays that could be staged were patriotic, or, at least in theory, entirely apolitical, such as Harlequin pantomimes.<sup>1430</sup> The Committee of Public Safety followed Robespierre’s recommendation of 1790 that theater be made to serve the revolution.<sup>1431</sup> Freedom of expression was reined in. The sentimental body had to undergo a normalization process. Much as the farandoles were to be contained, so too were the pantomime and ballet. This all conformed to a principle we now know: people had to be cultivated.

Popular life swarmed with disparate intentions; but public opinion was the concrete unity of a multiplicity grasped in an indivisible act. This means that one could not be content simply to allow public opinion to emerge: it had to be formed.<sup>1432</sup>

The Jacobins broadly normalized kinetics. They wanted to mold bodies to express a unity of virtue, cut to one model. There was no place for individual expression, nor for romantic escapism. To various effects, yet quite consistently, efforts were made to make the sentimental body republican, i.e., heroic in a Spartan fashion, and not as we saw in Gardel. Impressions generated in the populace were instrumental here. Ozouf has pointed out that the Revolutionaries were indebted to Enlightenment sensualism in the spirit of Helvétius. They believed, essentially, that

<sup>1428</sup> Ibid., pp. 223–224.

<sup>1429</sup> Baszkiewicz, Meller, *Rewolucja...*, p. 432.

<sup>1430</sup> Ibid., p. 436.

<sup>1431</sup> Scurr, *Fatal Purity...*

<sup>1432</sup> Ozouf, *Festivals...*, p. 219.

“man defined by his quality of being, a being of sense, is led not by principles but by objects, spectacles, images. [...] unstable, fickle, impressionable as the French nation was, it was also more sensitive than any other to the power of images.”<sup>1433</sup> This meant that theater could be useful, especially music and dance productions, if they stoked the viewers’ emotions.<sup>1434</sup>

We now return to Pierre Gardel. When the monarchy collapsed, he was carried away by republican enthusiasm, although, as Judith Chazin-Bennahum demonstrates,<sup>1435</sup> his beliefs were far from Jacobin sympathies. Along with famed composer François-Joseph Gossec, he prepared a patriotic spectacle, *L’Offrande à la Liberté* (The Victim of Freedom, 1792). Its plot was threadbare – it merely had dancers paying tribute to a statue of Liberty to the tune of patriotic songs, chiefly the *Marseillaise*.<sup>1436</sup> Yet the point was less a fascinating narrative than a demonstration. In Gardel’s case, it was an opportunistic gesture of loyalty, though not without power of expression. Otherwise, *L’Offrande à la Liberté* could scarcely have been performed one hundred thirty times between 1792 and 1794.<sup>1437</sup> The key to its popularity was joining two seemingly contradictory qualities – spontaneity and composition. The *ad hoc* performance was not too encumbered with content, it could be regarded as refined in its simplicity, not coarse. Because the dance arrangements were not complex, it spoke to the less educated audience members. By the same token, owing to the contributions of professional dancers, *L’Offrande à la Liberté* was aesthetically appealing to the connoisseurs. It all made for a patriotic mood, generating an idyllic community.

Small wonder that preparing performance-tributes to the Republic, Liberty, and Virtue became a Revolutionary custom, and this went for dance spectacles as well. Gardel co-created *Le Triomphe de la République, ou Le Camp de Grand Pré* (The Triumph of the Republic, or: The Camp in the Great Meadow, 1793) (Ill. 161). Sébastien Gallet, the second *maître de ballet* of the Opera, had staged *La Danse autrichienne, ou le Moulin de Jemmapes* (The Austrian Dance, or: The Windmill at Jemmapes) at the front for soldiers in 1791; its topic was the might of the French forces. Two years later, in Paris, he presented a *divertissement* significantly titled

<sup>1433</sup> Ibid., p. 203.

<sup>1434</sup> “Instead of denouncing opera as an exotic and irrational entertainment, the plaything of the aristocracy, as they very well might have done, [the Revolutionaries] deliberately turned it into a vehicle for popular enlightenment and patriotic stimulus” (Dean, *Opera...*, p. 79). Herbert Josephs writes in a similar vein: “Opera during the Revolution was recalled to the function assigned to all the arts by the ancients, that of creating symbols designed for public edification. The once austere and now sterile cultural language of the operatic stage was to become the vehicle for explicitly ideological content” (Herbert Josephs, “Opera during the Revolution: Lyric Drama in a Political Theater,” *The French Review* 1989, Vol. 62, No. 6, p. 976).

<sup>1435</sup> Chazin-Bennahum, *Dance...*, pp. 88–91.

<sup>1436</sup> We find a description in: Guest, *The Ballet...*, p. 339, and Chazin-Bennahum, *Dance...*, pp. 97–98.

<sup>1437</sup> This number is quoted from Emmet Kennedy in: Guest, *The Ballet...*, p. 339, note 19.



161. Artist unknown (attributed to Jean-Jacques de Boissieu), *Le Triomphe de la République* (Triumph of the Republic), in the background, a dance around the Tree of Liberty, ca. 1793

*Le Fête civique* (A Civil Holiday). Gardel and Gallet were not alone. As Herbert Josephs writes:

For about twenty years, the stages of the Paris operas were occupied by a whole series of elaborate productions that bore a variety of generic titles such as *traits historiques* [historical sketches], *anecdotes*, *tableaux*, or finally, *scènes patriotiques* [patriotic scenes]. Most of these spectacles contained neither plot nor characters, were devoid of all dramatic interest, and enjoyed invariably a very short artistic life.<sup>1438</sup>

Neither artistry nor timelessness was pursued here. Demonstrations of patriotism on stage could not, by the nature of things, last, as the political situation was always shifting. Furthermore, their emotional release and spontaneous enthusiasm would not succumb to routine. The latter would demonstrate their insincerity, and this, at the time, was one of the worst sins an artist could commit – one could be sent to the guillotine for a lack of “spontaneity.” This would make the durability of *L’Offrande à la Liberté* seem rather suspect. The Revolution required ever-new tributes, not the repetition of the same apotheosis.

New titles were always appearing on the theater posters of revolutionary Paris. The moods, themes, and even ideals presented were in constant flux. Repertoires included “ballets and pantomimes alternating with spoken texts, or all at once, with titles like *The Revolt of the Negroes*, *Capuchins at the Border*, or *The Guillotine of Love*.”<sup>1439</sup> This diversity was an expression of the principle of liberty, but it did not endow the desired sense of unity of opinion. The theater public was divided into camps, which Rousseau condemned, contending that the darkness of the theater only created a conglomerate of isolated individuals. The Revolutionaries, following his lead, bemoaned the divisions fostered in spectacles:

the theater separates auditorium and stage, erecting the boundary of the footlights between actors and spectators; it divides up space to an absurd degree, marking off as many “private groups” as there are boxes and leaving a dark area backstage, which the Revolutionary imagination tended to people with traitors and aristocrats; it abolishes the fluidity of space, holding back communal exaltation between its walls, preventing it from irradiating freely throughout the participating throng.<sup>1440</sup>

This is why, in fact, it was necessary to leave the theater. The spectacle of the Revolution could not be behind closed doors if it were to aspire toward a Rousseauian social unity.

<sup>1438</sup> Josephs, *Opera...*, p. 982.

<sup>1439</sup> Baszkiewicz, Meller, *Rewolucja...*, p. 434.

<sup>1440</sup> Ozouf, *Festivals...*, p. 207.

It was festivals and not theatrical productions that gave the Jacobins lessons in revolutionary virtues, and, thus, they were the most important as manifestations of the Revolutionary kinesis. It was in them that the Revolution's kinetic politics were shaped. To some extent, we see a transfer operation here.

Opera within the confines of a theater was too inflexible in its conventions to assist effectively in the propagation of specific ideological views. It had to recreate itself as a vehicle for ostensibly spontaneous, improvised open-air demonstrations of public emotion on a scale vast enough to embrace the entire nation.<sup>1441</sup>

At the same time, festivals only drew from their opera models to the extent that opera itself drew from ancient models. The Revolutionaries' ideal was the public spectacle in a Greek or Roman fashion of which Diderot and Rousseau dreamed.<sup>1442</sup> But the Revolutionary festivals were far more than imitation, as antiquity was not the sole model. Baszkiewicz contends:

the Revolutionary festivals plundered old traditions freely. We find theater, with its conventions and rules, and ancient mass spectacles in the circuses, coliseums, and amphitheaters. We find a very marked echo of the folk carnival and the lyrical rural festival (*fête champêtre, fête bocagère*), with their spontaneity or even orgiastic quality, their freedom and grotesquerie, the blurring of social distinctions, dressing up, and parodies... The influence of the religious holidays, their symbols, liturgies, and processions, was just as powerful.<sup>1443</sup>

This was the complex imitative movement that shaped a new quality – the mass propaganda spectacle. Let us examine this in detail. First, we must stress the desire for transparency.<sup>1444</sup> “The people of the Enlightenment clearly felt the need to merge into a mass community, testifying to a new type of community.”<sup>1445</sup> This implied a corresponding architecture for festivals. They decided “the place chosen should be large enough for a demonstration of fraternity and easy of access.”<sup>1446</sup> The Revolutionaries dreamed of “an enormous open space, easy to approach, in which nature would not have to be distorted too much to attain a theatrical effect.”<sup>1447</sup> Ozouf

<sup>1441</sup> Josephs, *Opera...*, p. 983.

<sup>1442</sup> Cf. Baszkiewicz, *Francuzi...*, p. 249.

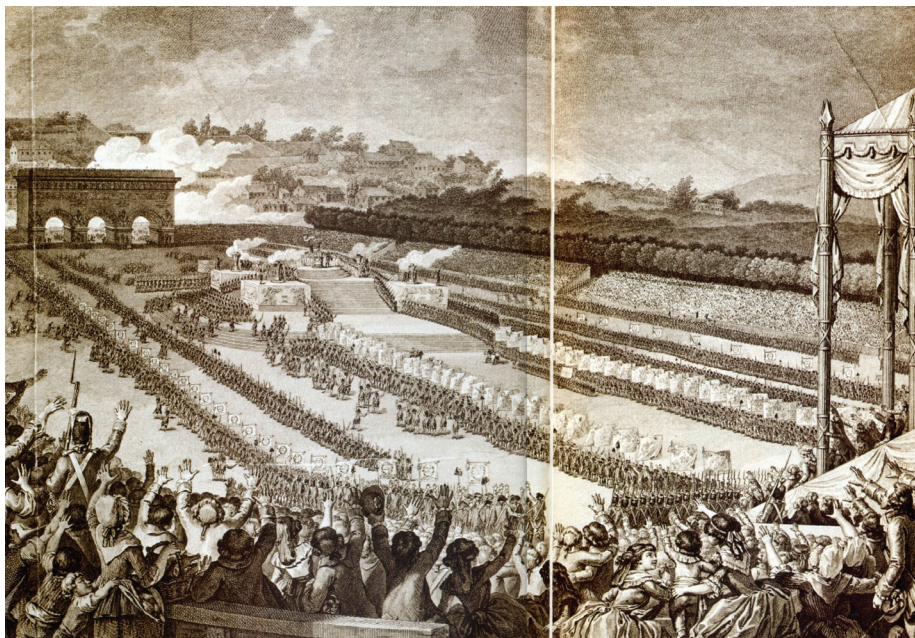
<sup>1443</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 248.

<sup>1444</sup> “The festivals' first requirement was the open air” (Ozouf, *Festivals...*, p. 127).

<sup>1445</sup> Baszkiewicz, Meller, *Rewolucja...*, p. 402.

<sup>1446</sup> Ozouf, *Festivals...*, p. 130.

<sup>1447</sup> *Ibid.* “It is not by chance that the Revolutionary festivals triumphantly stepped out into open spaces, leaving buildings, whether civil or sacred. The cultural revolution occurred under the heavens. [...] Everything was to be clear, put on public display” (Baszkiewicz, Meller, *Rewolucja...*, p. 446).



162. Isidore-Stanislas-Henri Helman (based on a drawing by Charles Monnet), an engraving of the Federation Festival, 1790

writes that the Revolution had a real “obsession with the amphitheater.”<sup>1448</sup> This is a key point – the amphitheater and, basically, a lack of theatricality. The space of the festival needed preparing. The work on Champ-de-Mars before the Festival of the Federation was the stuff of lore – Parisians built embankments en masse, upon which to put the viewers of the festivities. Why embankments? The Revolutionaries did not want to create new stages, new “dark caverns” in which atomized individuals would hunker in the gloom of their non-normative fantasies.<sup>1449</sup> The Revolution loved transparency,<sup>1450</sup> and its model was the folk *fête* (Ill. 162).

<sup>1448</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1449</sup> One of Paris’s Revolutionary dignitaries raged: “If folk festivals are to be reduced to the size of a hall and reworked into theater, who would fail to see that the masquerades would mainly become festivals of the elite, ensuring some the pleasures of isolation, avoiding participation in the national movement...” (quoted in: Baszkiewicz, *Francuzi...*, p. 255). Ozouf concludes: “Everyone dreamed of the Revolutionary festival as a village festival without spectacle, enlarged to the dimensions of the entire nation. This was to believe in the need for a divorce between theater and festival, in the possibility of a completely detheatricalized festival” (Ozouf, *Festivals...*, p. 206).

<sup>1450</sup> “Led by their sensualism to trust spectacle, the men of the Revolution dreamed not so much of the austere transparency of a festival, where, in a sense, there would be nothing to see” (Ozouf, *Festivals...*, p. 206). We return to the spectacular without spectacles below.



163. Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *De boerendans* (The Peasant Dance), 1567

Another attribute of the Revolutionary spectacle, folkishness, was idealized in the spirit of Rousseau. The Revolutionary festival did not, essentially, have much in common with village games. This is obvious when we contrast the Revolutionary iconography with the images from, for example, Bruegel's (the Elder) pictures, such as *De boerendans* (The Peasant Dance, 1567) (Ill. 163). The Revolutionaries were after a mythical ludic quality, a noble pastoral simplicity as a model cleansed of all that was bawdy and vulgar.<sup>1451</sup> The people were meant to be "natural." Baszkiewicz brilliantly captured the logic of this designed "naturalness":

Here nature had not yet been stained by culture... This was an elemental festival, without artificiality, director, ceremony, or fakery; the participants, as in Jean-Jacques, are the viewers and actors all at once. All power to fantasy, liberty, improvisation! This is a festival of infectious, free, and lightly erotic joy: it puts a hold on cultural conventions and obligations, without leading to debauchery and anarchy. The rural festival under

<sup>1451</sup> Ozouf notes: "It could hardly be said that pastoral literature, which did so much to shape the sensibility of the age [the latter half of the eighteenth century] contained festivals: it was a festival, from beginning to end [...] contain[ing] all the elements later used by the Revolutionary festival: a busy community that prefigures the activities on the Champ-de-Mars; exercises performed by joyous young bodies, anticipating the gymnastic festivals of the Directoire; tables set up under shady trees like those of the *repas civiques*" (ibid., p. 6).

the clear blue sky, connecting participants with Nature, is also a festival of unity: it cements an entire group, makes them one big family, with no hierarchies or classes. It rejects vanity, arrogance, rank, as well as envy and anger; it levels conflicts and tensions, bridging various societies and bringing reconciliation.<sup>1452</sup>

Building a pastoral model could not mean simply adopting ludic models. They had to be controlled, making the people virtuous, structuring all things elemental according to “natural” rules. Like any improvisation, the *carmagnole* could be dangerous. When the Revolutionary notables saw the joy of the people, a disciplinary impulse awoke in them at once. One of them “offhandedly notes, in July 1792, that the sans-coulottes danced ‘like savages’ at festivals.”<sup>1453</sup> If the “revolutionary period is the revenge of the carnival mentality on the fasting mentality, the vengeance of feast days on lean ones,”<sup>1454</sup> caution was necessary. The carnival flirted with anarchy. It overturned hierarchies and relaxed order. It ultimately served to strengthen it, of course, yet it clearly held a dark element: “the ‘pleasant disorder’ especially energetically entered the festival programs. Burlesque, grotesque, the macabre, parody – these genres were a great success.”<sup>1455</sup> This the virtuous Jacobins could not permit.

A director had to mediate between the theory stressing spontaneity and the practice meant to serve in building a regulated community. “Paris [tried] to discipline festivals [...] that still eluded the control of the authorities.”<sup>1456</sup> The Revolution had its festival bureaucrats, with the painter Jacques-Louis David at the forefront. They tried to create a program for a virtuous society of equals, which turned out to be society formatted and composed into a structure the authorities decreed. Ozouf writes:

the men of the Revolution also took on the task of finding an efficacious form of association for beings whom they thought of as having returned to the isolation of nature. The festival was an indispensable complement to the legislative system, for although the legislator makes the laws for the people, festivals make the people for the laws.<sup>1457</sup>

As soon as the Jacobins took charge, stress was placed on efficiency, on *creating*, or molding the People. This does not mean that the rulers failed to realize that playing director of the masses was against Revolutionary ideology. Vacillating between

<sup>1452</sup> Baszkiewicz, *Francuzi...*, p. 250.

<sup>1453</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 254.

<sup>1454</sup> An observation by Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, in: Baszkiewicz, Meller, *Rewolucja...*, p. 395.

<sup>1455</sup> Baszkiewicz, *Francuzi...*, p. 254.

<sup>1456</sup> Ozouf, *Festivals...*, p. 42. It is striking that this meant banning spontaneous celebrations. Michelet: “The new authorities had one more drawback: they made Paris gloomy. They forbade playing in playgrounds, and singers, jugglers, and magicians from performing. They condemned public street festivals, forbade shared meals, and fraternizing between the rich and the poor” (quoted from: Jean-François Fayard, *100 dni Robespierre’a*, trans. Beata Spieralska, Warsaw 2006, p. 99).

<sup>1457</sup> Ozouf, *Festivals...*, p. 9.

the two sides, François Antoine de Boissy d'Anglas clearly stated that taken too far, direction "would replace feeling and pleasure with obligation, making fun tiresome. Without it we would be ordered to play comedy, and yet we ourselves wanted to give vent to various emotions that move us."<sup>1458</sup> But these concerns could not override the fundamental anxiety – losing control of the Revolution. This is why the Jacobins decided to make the imperious gesture of taking control of the festive space. This is an evident paradox. Reading Rousseau, Robespierre understood that only a spontaneous, autotelic community was a true community. "To gather people together 'for nothing,' without the help of the slightest mediation, was to transform an audience into a people,"<sup>1459</sup> Jean-Jacques believed. Yet this Nothing was not a force that could provoke virtuous behavior. Nothingness, a spectacle without a spectacle, cannot really be imagined. What, then, to do? For the Jacobins, the answer seemed to stick in the premise of simplicity and total control over spectacles.

Here we reach the very essence of the revolutionary choreography:

the organizers of the Revolutionary festivals rejected that which constitutes the reality of the spectacle: masks, makeup, and machinery, "loaded" events, counterfeit characters – all amounting to one huge lie. For these seekers after pure presence, the slightest scenographic artifice or the most fleeting image was already *de trop*, and mimicry had something of the grimace about it.<sup>1460</sup>

We should give some attention to this last thought, as it shows the Revolution's relationship to physical expression. The body, and the face in particular, was to be transparent, it could conceal no secrets. The signals it sent were to be easily decipherable and fit in the canon as defined by the revolutionary Law.

Symptomatic works are those Pierre Gardel performed during ceremonies most often coordinated by David. We find him as the choreographer in *La Fête pour l'Inauguration des Bustes de Marat et Lepeletier* (Festival for the Inauguration of a Bust of Marat and Lepeletier, 1792), *La Fête de l'Unité et de l'Indivisibilité de la République* (Festival of the Unity and Indivisibility of the Republic, 1793) (Ill. 164), and *La Fête de l'Être Suprême, Scènes Patriotiques* (The Festival of the Supreme Being, Patriotic Scenes, 1794).<sup>1461</sup> These were all large-scale propaganda pieces, celebrating the martyrs of the Revolution (Marat and le Peletier), its administrative achievements (the establishment of the Republic), and the metaphysical unification of community

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<sup>1458</sup> Quoted in: Baszkiewicz, *Francuzi...*, p. 253. Rousseau wondered: "But what then will be the objects of these entertainments? What will be shown in them?" His response is striking: "Nothing, if you please" (Rousseau, *Letter to d'Alembert...*, p. 125).

<sup>1459</sup> Ozouf, *Festivals...*, p. 207.

<sup>1460</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1461</sup> A description of these and other festivals featuring dance can be found in Chazin-Bennahum, *Dance...*, pp. 82–127.



164. Isidore-Stanislas-Henri Helman, an engraving depicting a festival of the unity and indivisibility of the Republic, 1793

(the Supreme Being) of which Robespierre dreamed. Each spectacle's structure was mostly simple – the dignitaries spoke, the cannons boomed, the choirs sang. The kinesis in these festivals designed by the ruling powers was based on the concepts of the masses, simplicity, and order. Gardel's task, and that of other ballet masters as well, was to create sequences for large groups. They had to be simple to perform and coordinate. We are not entirely sure how they looked, as no scores have survived. Yet from the descriptions we can deduce that two kinds of movement prevailed: the march and simple dances known to all, primarily the farandole, most often around the Tree of Liberty (Ill. 165).

We should note that spectacles also engaged professional dancers, who were sometimes allowed to show off their professional skills. Gardel and others managed to smuggle in more sophisticated sequences, often in rather odd circumstances. Chazin-Bennahum writes, for example, of the artistic funeral dances in tribute to young martyrs of the Revolution: Viala and Barra. A commentator of



165. Étienne Bericourt, a drawing depicting a Revolutionary festival, 1793

the time described them in characteristic fashion: “What a curious idea to celebrate a funeral rite with pyrrhic dances performed by Vestris and ballerinas trained in the tradition of Camargo.”<sup>1462</sup> The idea was peculiar and, we may add, marginal. If more complex dance parts were performed by professionals, this was only a rather insignificant addition. They were more smuggled in rather than made the center of a whole spectacle. At any rate, virtuosity, though it could testify to the power of the Revolution, was itself a kind of “self-interest” that Rousseau described with distaste. It bore testimony to a vanity regarded as aristocratic, which the Revolution condemned to make way for its own vanity. The basic premise of the spectacles was activating the people, which meant the choreographers had to curtail their artistic ambitions. There were to be no grimaces, as Ozouf stated, and so, no ornaments either.

“The Jacobin longs to straighten out the amorphous mass,”<sup>1463</sup> for he is driven by a fear of anarchy. The anti-clerical farandole seemed close to anarchy. This is why people were recommended mainly one thing during festivals – processions, not dances. Ozouf’s book shows that this was the main motif of the Revolutionary kinesis, its basic kinetic politics. The Revolutionary body was to march in a procession. The beginning of a festival took up the march, its aim was triumphant

<sup>1462</sup> Quoted in: *ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>1463</sup> Baszkiewicz, Meller, *Rewolucja...*, p. 146.

leisure, which was never achieved, as the festival never ended. Here is a motif we reconstructed in Rousseau, but on an individual plane. The procession is simply a stroll, though with more people, structured and made into a community. We might say that the lone strollers stand arm-in-arm here to form a procession. Marching is an aim in itself. The body uses energy, but no longer to flee from people. Anxiety vanishes in the procession, replaced by a sense of the communion of bodies. This is what the revolutionaries at least seemed to believe in their marching obsession.

Ever since the Revolution, the mass procession has been a kinetic *topos* to which modernity has kept returning, trying to uncover the energy that unites society in the collective march.<sup>1464</sup> Yet an analysis of the Revolution shows that the propaganda march was not so democratic as it may have seemed from the revolutionary slogans. This was brilliantly captured by Ozouf in stressing that the revolutionary procession was based on exclusion.<sup>1465</sup> By definition, aristocrats did not have the right to participate in a march, but they were not alone. Although they could and even had to march, the people, too, were often excluded from holding important positions during festivals. This is quite evident in the first phase of the Revolution: “Around the altar of the fatherland was a circle of soldiers, around it a circle of notables. Around it were the people: they attended as the oath was taken by the first two groups and sometimes were bold enough to demand that they themselves should take an oath. Nevertheless, they had to demand it.”<sup>1466</sup> The Jacobins officially eliminated this exclusivity, but when we take a closer look at their festivals, we also see a clear division. At the famous Supreme Being Festival (Ill. 166), for instance, there was a striking division between the people, who were increasingly disgusted with the Terror and the dictatorial urges of Robespierre, and the notables, who supported him. In the full sense of the word, this was HIS, Robespierre’s, festival. He was the Supreme Being: “it seems that he conceived it, arranged every detail of its implementation, and played the starring role in it.”<sup>1467</sup>

The Revolutionary procession was always becoming more hierarchical. Let us have a look, for instance, at the role of women. They were required to symbolize the purity of virtue. They had to dress in white and march earnestly in the name of the freedom to be wives and mothers. When they tried to signal their presence, acquire a form of autonomy, they were ruthlessly criticized. Here is a voice from the epoch:

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<sup>1464</sup> Trade unions processions, Nazi marches, May First processions in communist countries, equality parades, white marches – the examples go on and on...

<sup>1465</sup> Ozouf, *Festivals...*, p. 60.

<sup>1466</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1467</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.



166. Pierre-Antoine Demachy, *La fête de l'Être Suprême, au Champ-de-Mars* (The Festival of the Supreme Being on Champ-de-Mars), 1794

A group of women followed, presided over by the Dame de Gouges,<sup>1468</sup> whose bearing recalled rather too much that of drum majors at the head of noisy troops. When the Constituent Assembly handed over the book of laws to the guard formed of mothers, it probably did not imagine that it was putting on a theatrical performance.<sup>1469</sup> This troop of ladies in white, crowned with oak, did not have the desired success. Whatever one may say, women seemed out of place on the great day.<sup>1470</sup>

There is a notable overlap with Rousseau's views here, which demonstrates that it was a typical worldview. Despite the efforts of Olympe de Gouge, for one, women never gained access to the revolutionary elite. They were assigned a supporting role, like the masses in general.

Paris's struggles against the provincial festival initiatives seem highly significant today. The people were accustomed to their kinesisis. They resisted the new calendar, for instance, as it eliminated Sunday,<sup>1471</sup> and

<sup>1468</sup> An author of plays and political activist intellectually formed in the Enlightenment salons of Paris, who formulated the famous *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen* in 1791, a founding text of feminism. As a Girondist, she was sent to the guillotine in December 1793.

<sup>1469</sup> We should note this highly Rousseauian connection between two perils: femininity and the theater.

<sup>1470</sup> Quoted in: Ozouf, *Festivals...*, p. 71.

<sup>1471</sup> The month was divided into *décadi*, each of which ended in a holiday to replace Sunday. The people were never to be persuaded by this idea.

unlike the *décadi*, which was marked by an overwhelming sense of boredom, Sunday was the day for public games, for tennis, bowls, the swing, and, above all, dancing, which the commissioners were as keen to suppress as the priests had been, but with no more success. The young people, who instigated it, felt the prohibition as an attack on their traditional prerogatives and showed yet again that no law would prevent them from dancing when they wanted to.<sup>1472</sup>

The Jacobins, like the Puritans before them, would have liked to introduce such a law. The dancing body at folk festivals terrified them. Robespierre feared its idiosyncrasy. “In his republic there would be only innocent pleasures, no frivolous distractions, no debauchery.”<sup>1473</sup> Clarens was much the same. In this way, urbanity and rurality united to make a whole, through the operation of “making it virtuous.” “Anyone who is familiar with the utopias of the century sees that the Festival of the Supreme Being created the unexpected delight of an Arcadia.”<sup>1474</sup> This Arcadian body was the Revolution’s dream destination – a body that was limber and free, doubting nothing, just participating in the collective dream of autonomy, whose meaning the Legislator gave it.<sup>1475</sup> “So, by the skillful distribution of roles, the festival achieved the equality of harmony. [...] Everyone had an indispensable part to play in the festival,” Ozouf writes.<sup>1476</sup>

This, in sum, is the kinetic politics of the Revolution – the body had no room to seek its own truth if it in any way opposed the general will. The individual was not even permitted variations. Their task was to express Virtue and nothing more. These bodies assembled to make a People marching in a tight procession. When one fell, another took their place. The column moved on, under the watchful eye of the vigilant Legislator. He knew Virtue like no other, he tirelessly taught the People Virtue. His solitude was a gift to the People, and they, as a result, would not be stopped. The virus of mobilization declared victory.

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<sup>1472</sup> Ozouf, *Festivals...*, p. 229.

<sup>1473</sup> Scurr, *Fatal Purity...*, pp. 303–304.

<sup>1474</sup> Ozouf, *Festivals...*, p. 115.

<sup>1475</sup> The physical education model the Jacobin Revolution longed to introduce was Sparta. This inspired Saint-Just to found a School of Mars to train cadets; its program gave a place of honor to gymnastics. Dance was also seen as an educational tool in a Spartan spirit, both for cadets and the population at large. Cf. Harold Parker, *The Cult of Antiquity and the French Revolutionaries*, Chicago 1937, p. 129, quoted in: Chazin-Bennahum, *Dance...*, p. 86. Once again, Rousseau’s influence on the Revolutionaries’ worldview is clear.

<sup>1476</sup> Ozouf, *Festivals...*, p. 115.

## ***La fille mal gardée*, or:**

### **The Sentiments of the Revolutionary Bourgeoisie**

We have one last task to accomplish – to see how the Revolutionary kinesis manifested itself in Dauberval's famous ballet. We have mentioned that it requires investigation. In the dramatic radical political transformation, it was truly difficult to find space for ballet, with its leaps and pirouettes. Yet the Revolution did not consign it to oblivion. Pierre Gardel remained at his post until the Restoration. Viewers never tired of applauding the technical mastery of the brilliant Auguste Vestris (Ill. 167, 168), the son of Gaetan and Marie Allard. Although the authorities were promoting patriotic spectacles, they continued staging ballets about the dalliances of characters who were perhaps human, but were certainly not experiencing the same social dramas as the people in years two and three. The amorous ballets were a flight from the gloom of the Terror, true, but how precisely ought we to understand this escapism? Was it based on a longing unlike that of the Revolution? Was the ballet at the time strictly regressive, longing for a paradise lost?

As we have seen, the Revolutionary stage was the kingdom of the sentimental body, which may have seemed utterly opposed to the republican body. This contrast, however, was only skin deep. The bodies were tied by a close bond, supporting one another in an intriguing symbiosis. The republican body derived from the sentimental body as an ennobled version, endowing the sentimental body with dignity. Owing to the Revolution, the Enlightenment emotion became a force, a political passion, never again to slip into the background in culture. The Revolution institutionalized the "order of the heart" through the concept of Virtue. Revolutionary Virtue was, for a generation fascinated by Rousseau, enthusiastic work on the sphere of emotion, which was increasingly equated with humanity. This is also why the Revolution, even the most ascetic (as represented by Robespierre), could not permit the total elimination of sentimentalism, including ballet as a kinetic paradigm.

Although in the Revolutionary period ballet was combated as a symbol of courtly manners, a sentimental "ballet" of political activity was always underway in Parliament. The literature on the subject calls attention to the fact that, in their physical expression, the Revolutionary politicians recalled actors (like Talma); we would add that they resembled *ballet d'action* as well. The links between the Revolution and ballet thus ran deep, deeper than the antagonism that was sometimes verbalized. It is only in this context that we can appreciate the success of the *La fille mal gardée*, a ballet that was apolitical in content, but in terms of its sensibility was Revolutionary bourgeois.

Who was Jean Dauberval, the author of *La fille mal gardée*? A pupil of Noverre's, later a dancer at the Paris Opera specializing in character roles. Small in stature, fairly stocky, he was adept at the lighter genres, such as pastoral ballets. He was



167. Francesco Bartolozzi and Benedetto Pastorini (based on a design by Nathaniel Dance), an engraving depicting Auguste Vestris during performances in London, 1781



168. J. Thornthwaite (based on a drawing by J. Roberts), engraving of Auguste Vestris in the ballet *Les Amans Surpris* (The Surprised Lovers), 1781

admired for his gift for comedy and natural thespian abilities. He swiftly showed he was capable of being not only a performer, but also had ideas for staging, as we mentioned in the previous chapter. Yet Noverre's appointment as *maitre d'bal-let* foiled Dauberval's plan to become Opera ballet master himself. This led him to take a risky decision – he decided to move to the provinces, taking a post in Bordeaux that the capital had denied him. Far from the anxieties of Paris, from the pressure of success and the animosities of the art scene, he created his own variant of *ballet d'action*, which time proved to be more lasting and influential. This was the spirit behind Charles Didelot's watershed works, above all *Flore et Zéphyr* (1796), which ballet historians call “pre-Romantic.” And Dauberval's pupil was Salvatore Vigano, famed for dramatizing Italian ballet, creating the modern genre of *coreodramma*.<sup>1477</sup> Yet let us not get too far ahead of ourselves.

In Bordeaux, Dauberval chose sentimental themes, showing a predilection for characters who overcome adversities through “purity of heart.” We might quote a few telling titles from this period: *Le Bonheur est d'aimer* (Happiness Is Loving, 1785), *L'Heureuse Rencontre* (A Happy Encounter, 1785), *L'Amitié cède à l'amour* (Friendship Gives Way to Love, 1795). Yet for our purposes, it is particularly interesting that, during his stay in Bordeaux, Dauberval decided to prepare a ballet adaptation of Beaumarchais's *Marriage of Figaro*. This play was highly popular at the time, partly because there had been a royal ban on its performance for several years; this means Dauberval's decision could have been strategic. At any rate, the program says he selected it because its plot was widely known, noting at the same time that, in his adaptation, titled *Le Page inconstant* (The Inconstant Page, 1786) “there is nothing in this play to offend morality or theatrical propriety.”<sup>1478</sup> On the other hand, when he presented his ballet, Bordeaux was still prohibiting the staging of *The Marriage*, by decree of the local parliament. Could Dauberval have had political aims? Ivor Guest, an outstanding authority on his work, thinks otherwise. Ultimately, in removing the characters' ability to speak, Dauberval silenced the play's critical potential. Nonetheless, the selection itself commands our attention – there were many widely known plays during that period whose ballet adaptations could have drawn crowds, yet Dauberval chose Beaumarchais's work...

Even if Dauberval's adaptation did not have the conflict between social classes so characteristic of *The Marriage of Figaro*, nor the biting critique of aristocratic customs, in the ballet master's libretto we find a similar sympathy for simple and honest folk, getting by on their wits, not their privileges. In Beaumarchais, the revolutionary content was dressed up in comedy. The general mood of the play remained gentle, foregrounding the *qui pro quo*, but in the background the social

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<sup>1477</sup> For more on the topic, see: Giannandrea Poesio, “Vigano, the Coreodramma and the Language of Gesture,” *Historical Dance* 1998, Vol. 3, No. 5, pp. 3–8.

<sup>1478</sup> Quoted in: Guest, *The Ballet...*, p. 367.

forces continually claiming a dominant place in culture could be felt. As they could in *La fille mal gardée*.

The ballet's plot was much simpler than Beaumarchais's intrigues. Dauberval was not using a literary work as his basis this time.<sup>1479</sup> This makes it difficult to speak of him hopping on the bandwagon again. We can assume, it seems, that the ballet was a sincere expression of his interests and social sympathies. This makes it all the more interesting to us.

*La fille mal gardée* is the story of a village girl who manages to oppose an arranged marriage, to marry the man she pleases. The setting is a small, provincial society. On the surface, it is egalitarian,<sup>1480</sup> but when we look more closely, we see inequalities. Competing for the hand of Lison<sup>1481</sup> are the farmer Colas, whom she loves, and the bumbling Alain, the son of a wealthy vineyard owner, Thomas. The girl's mother, Ragotte,<sup>1482</sup> prefers Alain, as we might have guessed. The whole ballet presents the struggle of the pair of lovers to gain Ragotte's acceptance of their autonomous decision, made in spite of all the circumstances, which Dauberval clearly applauds. The plot says that the heart, not property, should decide. The individual is to make the choice, not the people around them. At any rate, these people, understood as a greater whole and not just the immediate family, support the lovers. After all, they belong to the mythic People, made up of equal individuals. In Dauberval it is symbolized by the rural workers, from whom Colas derives and who are natural allies in the lovers' plight. We should pay close attention to the appreciation of "rural work" in *La fille mal gardée*. The work's original title was: *Le Ballet de la paille* – The Straw Ballet. The whole performance resounds with an affirmation of village work. Even Ragotte praises it. She makes her daughter feel guilty for avoiding employment at a homestead. This motif seems to show that Dauberval, though raised in a family with ties to the Opera, sympathized with the third estate. As a dancer, he never felt right in the typically aristocratic noble style. He preferred a simpler, more direct form of expression. This bore fruit when he became a ballet master. In the older ballets, the third estate was always expressed via a comedic, not to say mocking, kinetic language. *La fille mal gardée* broke with this approach. Guest notes that

<sup>1479</sup> Inspired by an engraving based on a gouache by Pierre Antoine Baudouin, *Le Réprimande / Une jeune fille querellée par sa mère* (The Reprimand / A Young Daughter Quarreling with Her Mother, 1764) (Ill. 169), which Dauberval saw in Bourdeaux in a shop display.

<sup>1480</sup> This is how Guest sees it: "the characters could hardly have been more classless. Not an aristocrat was involved, nor even an uncouth peasant. They were timeless country characters in a bucolic setting [...], blissfully untroubled by the hardships which farmers and peasants were enduring in 1789" (Guest, *The Ballet...*, p. 386).

<sup>1481</sup> Later versions give her the name Lise.

<sup>1482</sup> In later stagings the mother is named Simone.



169. Pierre-Philippe Choffard (based on a picture by Pierre Antoine Baudouin), *Le Réprimande / Une jeune fille querellée par sa mère* (The Reprimand / A Young Daughter Quarreling with Her Mother), a lithograph that inspired Jean Dauberval's *La fille mal gardée*, 1789

it may not have been the first ballet in which common people were depicted in a realistic fashion, but it was the most successful and has therefore survived to represent ballet's emancipation from the artificial style of the eighteenth century, with its preoccupations with gods and heroes of classical legend and its tendency to sentimentalize.<sup>1483</sup>

Dauberval was also sentimental, but his sentimentalism turned out to be far closer to Rousseau than the emotionality of the Gardel sort.

*La fille mal gardée* was based on a realism of a particular kind. Dauberval tried to convince the viewer that real village life was being shown on stage:

food baskets are carried here and there, butter churners do their vital work, pots of cream are put in their rightful places, laborers haul farm tools through the vast fields and spinning wheels and distaffs occupy important spaces in the home. All these indications

<sup>1483</sup> Quoted in: Chazin-Bennahum, *Dance...*, p. 146.



170. Thomas Rowlandson, *The Prospect before Us, Charles Louis Didelot & Mme. Theodore in Dauberval's ballet "Amphion et Thalie,"* etching, 1791

of farm life bring us into closer contact with the real world of the French peasant, as opposed to the idealized world of perfect shepherdesses such as might be seen in Watteau's *Fêtes Galantes* or in Marie-Antoinette's dairy farm, where the ladies dressed in satins and brocades.<sup>1484</sup>

This realism seduced Revolution-era audiences, as it does today, while also being a staging tactic. Or perhaps it seduces precisely *because* it is a staging tactic. In his scenes of rural life, Dauberval seems to replicate the folk culture, the vivacity of the countryside, but in fact he only creates a utopia more transparent than the aristocratic pastoral idylls. In this transparency his utopia is modern. The old plays about country folk were openly paternalistic. They were defined by distinction. The viewer did not identify with a real village inhabitant. They laughed at caricatures or sympathized with a polite, idealized version. In Dauberval – much as in *The New Heloise* – we have a far more complex operation.

The fully bourgeois culture that Dauberval represented no longer sought its identity in opposition to folk culture (Ill. 170). The modern bourgeois no longer spoke in the terms we quoted from Ebreo, which still echoed in Noverre. The modern bourgeois, such as Robespierre, considered himself a man of the people. At the same

<sup>1484</sup> Ibid., p. 147.



171. Charles Hénard, *Rose Didelot dans le caractère de Calypso* (Rose Didelot as Calypso), Calypso is a character from the ballet *Télémaque dans l'île de Calypso* (Telemachis on the Isle of Calypso) by Jean Dauberval, 1794

time he believed that people's rough edges needed refining, not in the name of aristocratic elegance, but for bourgeois virtue. Here realism takes the stage, to ennoble the people without disposing of its sincerity and vivacity (Ill. 171). The Revolutionary festivals adopted a similar tactic. They, too, dreamed of realism in urging transparency. Realism was to remedy the grimace. Transparency dealt with theatrical artificiality, and without slipping into an unhandsome conventionality. A similar aspiration informs *La fille mal gardée*.

In creating his most famous ballet, Dauberval was indebted to Rousseau, who, as we have shown, defined the bourgeois political ideal, gazing jealously at folk revelry. Jean-Jacques's rural descriptions were the quintessence of sentimental "naturalness," which the Revolution put in the center of culture. A new concept of theatrical truth emerged, largely influenced by Rousseau's notion of "nature" – life as authentic, free, and, above all, emotional.<sup>1485</sup> This meant that simple folk appeared as important characters on stage; not exhausted by back-breaking work or starving, of course (the Revolution brought a dramatic rise in the price of bread), but well-dressed, moderately wealthy, plucked straight from Greuze's canvases.

While Noverre dramatized a tension that could not be defused,<sup>1486</sup> and his characters struggled between two orders (reason and emotions), Dauberval suggested

<sup>1485</sup> Dramas of feeling were to be a common subject of ballets in the Napoleonic epoch, such as *Paul et Virginie* (1806) by Pierre Gardel or *Nina, or: Love Crazy* (1813) and *Country Rehearsal* (1815) by Louis Milon.

<sup>1486</sup> Baczkó thus describes the Enlightenment dilemma, which can also be ascribed to Noverre: "The alienated nature of the world of human relations, its non-transparency, makes it unequivocal for

a cure, staking his bets on emotions. Noverre was Diderot from *Rameau's Nephew*, Dauberval was Rousseau from *The New Heloise*.

Emotions have an ambiguous status in Dauberval's most famous ballet. On the one hand, the illusion of realism is nurtured, while on the other, reality is stylized. This makes Dauberval more than a humble reporter. He not only depicts emotions, he also designs them. He lets himself get carried away by the power of emotion, but also manipulates feelings. The choreography of external movements translates into the choreography of internal feelings. We should end by looking at *La fille mal gardée* in terms of power. Dauberval's politics then are revealed to be Jacobin in some respect, almost reminiscent of Robespierre – ruling with an iron fist under the guise of democracy. Dauberval was among those who created an “author figure” in dance. *La fille mal gardée* is HIS ballet. He was the creator, he arranged the steps. The dances of the rural workers were surely based on folk dances, but just as surely, they were appropriately polished. The whole spectacle was meant to build a sense of commonality, but creation in Dauberval's version of dance had little in common with the collective spirit.

In the time of the Revolution, creating dances was now a stable profession. Soon thereafter the word “choreographer” came to be used in its present sense: the creator of the dance, not the person who inscribed it.<sup>1487</sup> The choreographer became an individual whose mode of expression was dance. The choreographer began hiding behind every movement, like a shadow. The choreographer as a subject working in the name of bourgeois agency conceived in terms of talent, genius, and thus, in fact, a force of nature. As we have seen, it was just a small step from here to Romantic ballet, and, thus, a paradigm that lives on to this day. The transformation was performed by Dauberval's pupils: Didelot, Vigano... As such, we might say that the Revolutionary choreographer is the first full-fledged protagonist of modern dance. Much as Rousseau's philosophy undermined the centuries-old primacy of the objective order, as Robespierre's politics undermined the power of tradition, the choreographer rejected the dancing master.

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man, a world that is his and alien all at once. A free personality manifests itself in an aspiration to overcome this nature of the world and make one's own existence stable and unambiguous. At the same time, as long as the world maintains this nature, every individual self-definition remains ambiguous, thickens the lack of transparency around them, and makes their ‘return to themselves’ incomplete and tentative” (Baczko, *Rousseau...*, p. 89).

<sup>1487</sup> Changes in meaning assigned to the word “choreography” in the period under discussion, from the Renaissance to the Revolution, are traced by Susan Leigh Foster in *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance*, London–New York 2011, pp. 15–40. It was only in Carlo Blasis in the early nineteenth century that this term began to be used in the present sense. This was possible due to the Enlightenment reforms of Noverre, Gardel, Dauberval, and others.

## The Revolutionary Darkness

Let us take one more look at the century that was the catalyst for modernity. The eighteenth century intrigues us, for the closer we observe it, the more ambiguous it becomes. We have long ceased to look at the “age of light” as an era of pure reason that expelled the irrational once and for all. On the contrary, we are starting to perceive that this century was saturated with an energy that is hard to rationalize – a century of mystery, even darkness. We might risk the premise that the eighteenth century was a time when European culture began to discover the power of irrational life, which is essentially associated with the end of the following century. It is true that the Renaissance was a culture of vitality, of renewed interest in the present, a remarkably fertile period. Yet at the same time, the Renaissance saw life as a manifestation of the cosmic order. This meant it was both abundant and harmonious, kept in proportions. The culture of the Baroque upset this image. Darker tones emerged – we can feel them in Caravaggio’s compelling *chiaroscuro* – though balanced by a classicist rationalism. This means we can only really speak of cracks forming on the surface of the Order. Harmony was broken, but it still held as the model for reality. El Greco painted his Toledo with a sense of unspeakable mystery, of the dark remains enchanted in nature. Pascal felt the wretchedness of the individual existence in the teeming universe. Milton sympathized with Satan, making him a proud warrior. None of them inhabited the regions of heresy for good. The last word remained the eternal Order. The eighteenth century changed all this.

If the Enlightenment brought something remarkable, it was liberating life from the shackles of static eternity. This was an essential shift in stress. In place of a stable order to which, in one way or another, people would compare their lives, progress and the power of change emerged. This stood behind the discovery of History, which marked the advent of relativistic thinking. Relativism is nothing other than recognizing the dynamic nature of human existence. The human being has no one inner, unchanging essence, it shapes this essence at every stage. A person simply must act. From this perspective, contemplation utterly stops making sense, for the beauty of order must be independently created, not only discovered as the gift of some transcendental power.

Most characteristic of the Enlightenment breakthrough is the gradual flourishing of the natural sciences. We are speaking not only of the growing significance of biology, of the evolutionary perspective slowly forming within it, which was to develop in the organicism that triumphed in the late nineteenth century, but of a moment just before – of a quality shift in mechanicism. We recall that, in the seventeenth century, it was perfected by Newton. He had created a theory which seemed to explain everything. Its basic attribute was elegance, while maintaining fidelity to religious thinking. God operated like the Great Watchmaker, the First Mover, who built the framework for all of life, one that was both solid and unsurpassable. Man could uncover this framework while remaining a servile being. This was much the same

as the world described by Descartes and Leibniz. In each case, the motionlessness of the transcendental being translated into the constant laws of mechanics was the last word. In the eighteenth century, this changed. Enlightenment mechanicism, as Ernst Mach observed,<sup>1488</sup> was saturated with remarkable energy. Although reality was still perceived as an order that could be mathematically reconstructed, and thus constant at its core, the aim was no longer to stress the power of the Great Watchmaker, creator of cosmic harmony, but the initiative that man achieved in discovering the laws of mechanics. Suddenly, the individual creator was at the very heart of mechanicism: “Laplace imagines that a genius could know the state of the world at any moment in the future if only he knew all the masses composing it, and their positions and speeds.”<sup>1489</sup> This is why the God hypothesis proved unnecessary.<sup>1490</sup> We might see the arrogance of rationality here. This arrogance was born in concrete circumstances – centuries of the human worldview becoming more dynamic.

The Enlightenment, anthropocentric mechanicism expressed a holistic shift in the cultural paradigm, even if its aim was not yet a vitalist narrative such as in the nineteenth century. The change in the story’s main protagonist from Newton to Laplace was fundamental. The transition from the Great Watchmaker to the Demon who makes do without the God hypothesis basically expressed the limitless dynamism of the European approach to the world, which was visible in all fields of human activity in the eighteenth century. At least in some social strata, humans were clearly coming to life. The call to act rang out louder and louder. External reality was no longer a place for testing ingrained ideas, it was for the active transformation of stimuli into a fluctuating narrative. Man did not execute a calling encoded by some external agency, he was always producing reality himself through sensory engagement with his surroundings, adopting the role of the Agent as a force of nature.

The pro-vitalist vision was most prominent in France. Its insightful chroniclers were the Rococo painters, whose canvases were crammed with sensual vitality. Even in Watteau we perceive this pulsing life, though cloaked in melancholy. Bodies touching one another, lush nature, movement – all this fascinated this loner anticipating the culture of *sensibilité*. Let us have a look at his *La Danse Champêtre*, or the sumptuously light *La Fête d’amour* (The Festival of Love, 1718–1719) (Ill. 172). The Enlightenment was only beginning, and already we could feel the energy flowing from the vivacious bodies, their organic substance, which has nothing to do with the Cartesian extended substance. Similarly sensual, though more puckish, Boucher saw fulsome nudity as the most natural state under the sun. The body filled with inner strength, the body beyond shame and ostentation, the body

<sup>1488</sup> Ernst Mach, *Die Mechanik in ihrer Entwicklung historisch-kritisch dargestellt*, quoted in: Jean Starobinski, 1789: *The Emblems of Reason*, trans. Barbara Bray, Charlottesville 1982, pp. 245–246.

<sup>1489</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1490</sup> Asked by Napoleon about God’s place in his theory, Laplace is said to have replied: “[Sire,] je n’ai pas eu besoin de cette hypothèse” (“Sir, I have no need for that hypothesis”).



172. Jean-Antoine Watteau, *La Fête d'amour* (The Festival of Love), 1718–1719

blossoming in the comfort of natural poses, in contact with other bodies – this is the world shown to us by the *Le Triomphe de Vénus* (The Triumph of Venus, 1740) (Ill. 173), which fairly pulses with life. And finally, the incomparable Fragonard, in whom we perceive the lightness and sensuality of every move, whether in *Les hasards heureux de l'escarpolette* (The Swing, 1767–1768) (Ill. 174) or the series *Les Progrès de l'amour* (The Progress of Love) (Ill. 175). These were all traces of the new anthropology. A kind that said yes to the body, to sensuality and organic life. Here we find none of the rationalism that reigned in Poussin's France, none of the classicist restraint. We see a straining toward liberty, toward a modern concept of freedom.

We should bear this in mind when we look at the foundation of the Revolution, and of Revolutionary culture, including a ballet like *La fille mal gardée*. More than one debate has been waged over the causes of the Revolutionary uprising. For years, the prevailing stereotype spoke of a class conflict. The Revolution was said to be the revolt of the downtrodden third estate against their noble oppressors, the triumph of capitalism over feudalism. And yet, as Tocqueville has demonstrated, this is a simplification, and basically it is an ideologically colored viewpoint. The Revolution was not a major social breakthrough; ultimately, it was not the expression of a profound transformation. It more finished a tendency that was initiated by the absolutist politics of Richelieu and Louis XIV.



173. François Boucher, *Le Triomphe de Vénus* (The Triumph of Venus), 1740

The absolute monarchy tore the aristocracy from its essence and centralized the political and administrative power. To destroy aristocratic freedom, it appealed to egalitarian passions and ultimately became a tool of culture and public democratic opinion, though with no taste of freedom. The Jacobins, and later Robespierre and Bonaparte, operated in the same way.<sup>1491</sup>

This meant the real revolution occurred far before the Revolution. According to Tocqueville, it involved the long dismantling of the traditional order of the estate society, based on the cooperation and mutual support of people of the soil, people of faith, and people of arms,<sup>1492</sup> to be replaced with a superficial democracy that boiled down to equality at all costs, a yearning to reduce everything to the lowest common denominator.<sup>1493</sup> In this regard, the Revolutionary democracy was degenerative, the peak of a much earlier tendency. It was highly unnatural, though it

<sup>1491</sup> François Furet, “Wstęp,” in: Tocqueville, *Dawny ustrój...*, p. 21.

<sup>1492</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>1493</sup> Marvin Zetterbaum, “Alexis de Tocqueville,” trans. Grzegorz Czemieli, in: Leo Strauss, Joseph Cropsey (eds.), *Historia filozofii politycznej*, trans. Paweł Armada and others, Warsaw 2010, p. 782.



174. Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *Les hasards heureux de l'escarpolette* (The Swing), 1767–1768

endlessly preached about nature. Does this mean that we might see the Revolution as a crucial transformation only if our thinking is clouded by Revolutionary propaganda? Tocqueville's pupil, François Furet, begged to differ. Even if in a socio-economic sense we were not dealing with a sudden coup, with the Revolution an



175. Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *Les Progrès de l'amour: La Poursuite* (Love's Progress: The Pursuit), 1773

utterly new quality emerged in politics. This quality is a modern vision of power. “The Revolution is a historical space dividing one power from another, where the idea of human effects on history takes the place of the endurance of a system.”<sup>1494</sup>

The Revolution period saw a fundamental remodeling of convictions about what was possible and, most of all, desirable. In the socioeconomic sphere we might join Tocqueville in speaking of continuity, yet culture, and with it, the political imagination, was profoundly transformed in the spirit of extreme dynamism, eliminating all firm points of support. Whereas previously the continuity of the institutions of power was valued, in the Revolution this continuity became an obstacle, and change was increasingly understood as a necessity. The work of forming modernity was underway.

In this unpredictable and hasty drift the aims of human action are the reverse of the traditional principles of social order. [...] an ideology of radically breaking with the past is born, an extraordinary cultural dynamism of notions of equality. From this point on, everything – the economy, society, politics – will give way to the pressure of the ideology and the activists who bear it; faced with this endlessly surging torrent, every line, every institution is temporary.<sup>1495</sup>

<sup>1494</sup> Furet, *Prawdziwy koniec...*, p. 34.

<sup>1495</sup> Ibid.



176. Claude Lorrain, *La Fête villageoise* (The Country Festival), 1639

The Revolution postulated that thought should almost immediately and always become action. Where did this dynamism come from, if not the class conflicts? Furet indicates the legacy of Rousseau and, most of all, his idea of the natural equality of people, which was taken to heart by the most important figures of the Revolution. Yet Rousseau, for all his genius, did not arrive at his ideas independently. They grew in a cultural soil nurtured by various tendencies, including those we mentioned in our discussion of Rococo painting. There is something that joins Rousseau to Boucher and Fragonard – the perception of nature as an element, an appreciation of spontaneous bodily expression as a manifestation of omnipotent life. All three men were intoxicated by the woods, and praised festivals in the bosom of nature. In Rousseau, we may not find something so carefree as *The Swing*, and we search in vain for the free eroticism of the kind embraced by the portraitist of Miss O’Murphy, but they all share the same yearning – for organic abundance, burgeoning life, the rhythm and dynamics of the Elements. France was consumed by nature long before the Revolution. Could we imagine a more beautiful illustration for *The New Heloise* than Lorrain’s *La Fête villageoise* (The Country Festival, 1639) (Ill. 176)?

We might risk the hypothesis that the Revolution itself was condensed vitalism. It was driven, after all, by a dream of a practically biological social rebirth.

“Metaphors of light triumphing over darkness, life being reborn out of death, and the world being brought back to its beginning were to be found everywhere in the period leading up to 1789,”<sup>1496</sup> Starobinski observes. Its patron was the same Rousseau who believed in nature alone, who loved solitary strolls among the trees, who idealized the countryside, as the city, with all its conventions, struck him as unnatural, devoid of real life. The Rousseauian revolutionary act was therefore a radical testimony of eighteenth-century awakening, a release of energy that had been gathering for decades. It was elemental. Its participants believed that the “Revolution is a ‘raging sea,’ a ‘flood,’ a ‘volcano spewing lava,’ a ‘terrible storm,’ an ‘avalanche that gathers strength as it falls,’ an ‘electric shock,’ a ‘surging river’...”<sup>1497</sup> This was the preferred way of expressing the might of the Revolution, as well as the fact that it was a natural force, and that behind it was a natural necessity. The Revolution occurred because it had to, there could be no discussing with the Revolution – this is how Robespierre saw it. Lenin would later think very much the same.

The elements will not be controlled. The more insightful Revolutionaries understood this:

We calculated anarchy to be a necessary force; we felt that without it, the revolution would perish for lack of support. We were only concerned that its actions bring the desired effect. Yet what had to happen has happened, just as one cannot control the height of the grain one sows: the current of the revolution, which we channeled into a fortuitous rut, overspilled everywhere and broke the banks with which we sought to brook its ravaging course.<sup>1498</sup>

This allows us to explain the darkness in the work of the Revolution from its very inception. Again, we give the floor to Starobinski:

In some people both passions [yearning for the end of the Revolution and longing to rebuild its ideals] may have existed, either together or one after the other; or they may have lent to the same penchant for violent action both its destructive and its creative aspects, in a contradiction more apparent than real. Indeed, all the evidence suggests that the same energy, the same radicalism, could be put to the service of both death and resurrection.<sup>1499</sup>

The overpowering urge, energy, and radicalism were the Life the epoch had discovered, foreshadowed by such terms as *conatus*, straining, and appetite, of which Hobbes, Locke, and Leibniz had written. The element of life could be portrayed in rosy colors, but the experience of energetic existence did not necessarily show an optimistic face. The elemental is not strictly the domain of light and lush vegetation.

<sup>1496</sup> Starobinski, *1789...*, p. 43.

<sup>1497</sup> Baszkiewicz, Meller, *Rewolucja...*, p. 144.

<sup>1498</sup> A statement from a representative of the “Montagnards,” René Levausser, quoted in: *ibid.*

<sup>1499</sup> Starobinski, *1789...*, p. 43.

The Enlightenment was conscious of the dark side of nature, it was saturated with a sense of the mystery of the world. Surprisingly enough, this was also a profoundly mystical era. The soil prepared by Deism bore not only a progressive secularism, but also the first efforts to re-enchant reality, as in the fashion for secret societies (the eighteenth century is, after all, the era of masonry). Starobinski cites a characteristic voice from the time:

The secret associations, fanatical tone and language, spirit of allegory, and study of antiquity performed during the century, along with a lack of principles and true knowledge, introduced a fashion for the mystical sciences and stirred an attraction for everything vague and concealed. In Paris there are people who squander vast sums of money on these studies, convinced that nature holds forces, invisible spirits and sprites with which man can communicate, that most natural phenomena and all of our actions are ruled by hidden springs and the will of unknown creatures; that it is enough to put their faith in talismans, astrology, and magical studies; that our destiny, our very fate is in the hands of spirits that guide us, albeit without our knowledge, though we do not see the threads that bind us; and that finally, all of us in this vale are like marionettes, blind and ignorant slaves.<sup>1500</sup>

An interest in all that was hidden, dark, terrifying, and perverse flourished in the Enlightenment, like its sinister flip side. A darkness accompanied the light. In this context we might have a look at the paintings of Johann Heinrich Fussli. He was a Swiss man living in England who showed a restless mind in the Revolution era, fascinated by Shakespeare and Milton, poets for whom humanity was an endless struggle between light and darkness (Ill. 177). His compositions are drenched in a semi-darkness that the rays of the Enlightenment sought to banish. This does not mean that Fussli's nocturnal world is devoid of life. On the contrary, it depicts figures in dynamic poses. Darkness is bestowed with enormous energy here. It is a source pulsing with life. Yet the fullness of life means the necessity of doing justice to darkness, which comes at a vital cost.

Here we come upon one of the characteristic features of the late eighteenth century. Reason, conscious of its powers, sure of its prerogatives, welcomed the forces of feeling and passions and looked to them as sources of additional energy. In this way, it sought to unify man in the light of good and intellect. It thought it could turn everything into light. But, once having granted desire all its rights, reason found it had acquired elements of darkness and dream that it had hitherto excluded.<sup>1501</sup>

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<sup>1500</sup> J. J. Paulet, *L'antimagnétisme ou Origine, progrès, décadence, renouvellement et réfutation du magnétisme animal* (Anti-magnetism or: The Origins, Development, Decay, Renewal, and Refutation of Animal Magnetism, 1784), quoted in: *ibid.*, pp. 117–118.

<sup>1501</sup> Starobinski, 1789..., p. 136.



177. Johann Heinrich Fussli, *The Nightmare*, 1781

This consciousness was burgeoning in France as well, becoming part of the justification for the Revolutionary violence – for the work of the Revolution, the Apollonian energy of legislation and gatherings was insufficient, the philosophy of progress was not enough. “Theoretical reason and the enthusiasm that disseminated it had to face the play of ‘real forces.’ Thus they would witness the rebirth of a dark enemy whom they would have liked to be

rid of once and for all.”<sup>1502</sup> This is why action was always necessary, essentially tinged with darkness, brutal as nature. This was a fight against the chaos of the element of life, part of which was the Revolution. This is the epic of the revolt, at the center of which is the concept of emotionally-charged individuality and freedom at all costs.

Here, too, the idea of nature acquires a modern tinge, eluding rational categories, structures grasped mathematically. Nature reveals itself to be unpredictable, chaotic, extravagant, even dark. While from a conservative perspective this diagnosis tended to make the individual static, in progressive thought the elemental individual was a source of endless *dynamis*. This was born of a “Promethean voluntarism.” While the “Renaissance and Baroque period restricted themselves to a search for the enduring principles of rational life, built on eternal values,” modern voluntarism subordinates everything to earthly existence: “his horizon is nature, which man harnesses, and history, which he creates. The will acts and materializes itself in the new spatio-temporal universe it creates. Nature and time are the coordinates in which the mind inscribes its actions.”<sup>1503</sup>

The modern revolt did not begin with the Revolution, but it gradually seeped through the fabric of eighteenth-century culture. It lurked in the crannies of the Enlightenment. Was it not, as a whole, an act of disobedience? If we look at its concepts of nature, we struggle to affirm this diagnosis. The predictable nature of the materialists, the idyllic nature of Rousseau, even the heroic nature of the Jacobins that Robespierre sought to praise in the cult of the Supreme Being – all these constructs built on a longing for accord with nature resonated with a dream of a timeless Arcadia. History was, from this perspective, a distortion, while the norm was an ahistorical order. They rebelled against the world in the name of nature. This is not yet the modern revolt described by Isaiah Berlin.<sup>1504</sup> A fully modern rebellion is against nature conceived as a rational construct, a rebellion in the name of a non-discursive life, speaking up for total energy. This is found in its infancy, however, in the Enlightenment.

Its precursors might be sought in numerous places. We have chosen the figure of the Marquis de Sade, because it is in him that we clearly see the shaping of the worldview we are after.<sup>1505</sup> In his first writings, the nature to which the Marquis appeals is still that of Enlightenment systems. It is a world in which good and

<sup>1502</sup> Ibid., pp. 60–61.

<sup>1503</sup> Jean Starobinski, *Wynalezienie wolności. 1700–1789*, trans. Maryna Ochab, Gdańsk 2006, p. 230.

<sup>1504</sup> Isaiah Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism*, London 2000.

<sup>1505</sup> Our analysis is based on Bogdan Banasiak’s splendid monograph, *Integralna potworność. Markiz De Sade. Filozofia libertynizmu, czyli konsekwencje „śmierci Boga”*, Łódź–Wrocław 2006, which is filled with quotes both from de Sade and his leading commentators. Of special interest to us is chapter two of part eight, “Kwestia natury,” pp. 187–234. On de Sade’s ties with the Revolution, see Fayard, *100 dni...*, pp. 113–117, and Starobinski, *1789...*, p. 37.

evil balance one another, a world of complementary forces that various individuals use. With the right dose of reflection, one might reconstruct its laws and submit to them, accepting the light and the darkness in oneself. We find a similar tone in La Mettrie and Holbach, whom de Sade often read.

In this system, God was a dispensable hypothesis, replaced by man – this was an utterly enlightened, but also utterly predictable world of physical and emotional mechanics. This, however, was only a point of departure. Sade understood over time that there was something naive in the mechanistic gaze. Voltaire, for one, understood this as well. The same problem gave them no rest: evil.<sup>1506</sup> The Marquis also placed it at the center of his investigations. Yet he approached evil unlike Voltaire – he succumbed to its perverse charms.

In de Sade's early works, evil was essentially reduced to an absence of goodness, as in optimistic theology. Over time, however, the Marquis began to see it as a creative principle. This is of key importance. De Sade was, perhaps, the first thinker to speak in favor of evil, to see reality from its perspective. The impulse derived from a discovery we have mentioned – in the Enlightenment, people increasingly spoke of the inner urge, of passions as a motor behind human behavior. We traced this through Diderot, Helvétius, Condillac, and Rousseau. In de Sade, however, this trope went much further than in the other Enlightenment writers.<sup>1507</sup> He was interested in everything extreme. If it was desire, it had to be insatiable. If it was a passion, it had to be grand. Why, according to the Marquis, were such extreme desires and passions worth examining? Because they exist, and thus they are manifestations of human nature. Wars, abuses of power, sins of the clergy – all these testify to the crucial role of the desires and passions in history, and thus oppose the hypothesis that evil is simply the absence of good.

Evil, according to de Sade, is a principle of human existence. All that is human perishes, must be destroyed. It is in this context that God appears in the Marquis – as a *bête noir*, but one with consequences for human life. Sade's "theology" has been splendidly described by Baczko:

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<sup>1506</sup> Bronisław Baczko has this to say on the Enlightenment's approach to the problem of evil: "The epoch cannot be reduced to a few slogans more or less approved by the 'philosophes': its essence is a deep, intellectual, and cultural struggle, which puts the very notion of evil on a new plane, opening up to modernity. Thus, evil leaves the dawn of time, whose symbolic matrix is Paradise and the tale of the fall of our predecessors, and occupies historical time, in a secular emergence, where the materialization of freedom and the century's occurrences give the mind an exceptional chance to eliminate barbarity. In this new temporal order, reflection abandons a single Evil to delve into diverse evils, abandons the absolute for relativity, the source for causes, and metaphysics for history and politics, confession for group and individual therapy" (Baczko, *Hiob...*, p. 153).

<sup>1507</sup> It remains an open question if this was purely because of his personality, which made the Marquis a model of pathologies encountered in various epochs, or if its emergence, through its form and the influence it exerted on many authors who came after, could be seen as a cultural fact. It seems that the truth is somewhere in between.

The Supreme Nefarious Being created [...] the world for its own pleasure of savoring evil and for the forces driving the world, and it is forever providing examples of destruction – thus, he is entirely evil, without a trace of goodness, and so one ought to incontrovertibly succumb to the passions and, following God’s example, make “others attend to all your whims and needs.”<sup>1508</sup>

Here we come to the very heart of Sadism. The world of the Marquis is one of sexual violence, abuse of the weak, subjecting them to the passions of the perpetrator. The powerful individual is the absolute master, a theoretical base, and all his tendencies, since they appear, are natural (all-powerful nature would not allow something that could harm it), and thus should be nurtured – things considered crimes are leveled with virtues, and in fact, become them.

De Sade makes human logic a part of the logic of all of being: “The madness of desire, insane murders, the most unreasonable passions – all are wisdom and reason, since they are a part of the order of nature.”<sup>1509</sup> And nature, according to the Marquis, is a force of permanent destruction. Nature is blind and insatiable. It merely swallows, digests, and spits out. This is also a process that facilitates constant rebirth. Life and death meet at one point. Evil, in fact, turns out to be merely an arbitrary term opposed to an equally arbitrary good. De Sade claimed the distinction, when carefully examined, could not be maintained. It is not a characteristic of being, merely a human response to it. From this amoral springboard, the perverse soul of the Marquis soared into regions of a sort of mysticism of energy, which many commentators have investigated.<sup>1510</sup> “If, as de Sade’s protagonists claim, ‘evil’ is omnipresent and necessary, as it is the driving force of the world, then in fact it emerges as ‘good,’ even creative goodness, and is merely a name for natural dynamism.”<sup>1511</sup>

This is how we find the key to de Sade’s dungeon. We are beginning to understand how he fits into our discussion. The Marquis declared a principle that is essentially the foundation of modernity. Here is a quote:

The most superficial study of nature convinces us of the eternity of its movement, and a careful examination of its laws helps us see that nothing in it ever perishes, that it regenerates incessantly as the sole effect of what we believe harms it or appears to destroy its work. [...] there is no such thing as extinction, only transmutations.<sup>1512</sup>

<sup>1508</sup> Ibid., p. 198.

<sup>1509</sup> Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard, London–New York 2005, p. 268.

<sup>1510</sup> Banasiak, *Integralna potworność...*, pp. 209–211.

<sup>1511</sup> Ibid., p. 205.

<sup>1512</sup> This fragment comes from a note to the poem “La vérité” (Truth), trans. S. G., [http://les.tresors.de.lys.free.fr/poetes/marquis\\_de\\_sade/2\\_la\\_verite.htm](http://les.tresors.de.lys.free.fr/poetes/marquis_de_sade/2_la_verite.htm).

Being has neither beginning nor end. The world, and thus matter and energy, was never created, and as a whole will not perish. It exists endlessly, and movement is the basis of its existence. De Sade repeats *ad nauseam* – MOVEMENT. This is the main feature of his insatiable imagination, always working like mad, frenetic as elementary particles. Essentially, he believes that everything comes down to the play of blindly stimulated, eternal molecules. Each of us is merely a temporary mosaic of them, which is why none of us counts in the game of eternity. This is an extremely pessimistic diagnosis, and modernity would do everything to combat it. Thus the murderous passions of the Marquis, as well as Robespierre's. Their form is repellent, tailored to the smallness of humanity (to read everything through the diminishing lens of sex, to see conspiracies in everything), yet they come from a modern concept of agency. The cosmos conceived as energy has no concern for man whatsoever. Man is

utterly caught in Nature's trap: not only can he not permit himself any crime, and particularly any crime against Nature, as – stripped of the remains of his sovereignty – he is, at best, a cog in its all-encompassing mechanism, but it is also a perilous challenge to him, as “acknowledging eternally moving matter to be the sole and exclusive universal principle means consenting to *live as an individual in a state of eternal motion*.”<sup>1513</sup>

The might of perversion or terror in an environment thus defined is purely illusory. There is no gesture that could annihilate the universe. The more insanely man casts himself into the whirlwind of actions, the more he longs to identify with the sinister power of amoral agency, to become an utterly autonomous subject. This is the canvas upon which the modern revolt was painted.

Nature as eternal motion is beyond good and evil. It cannot be condemned. One cannot appeal to its sense of justice. One can, however, glean its immorality and use it for one's own ends. We are cast into this world like shards of eternal energy. Our task is to serve it. We cannot go beyond nature, revolt can only involve a rejection of servitude. Instead of expending our strength, it should be accumulated. This is why, at the end of de Sade's path, as outlined by Bogdan Banasiak, energy is not continually squandered on endless excesses, but is condensed in a state of apathy, i.e., satiety, as the individual becomes a virtuoso of their own desires. The Sadist “superman” does not succumb to desire, is no slave to his passions;

this is why the libertines especially admired [...] a person who “was only stoked by seduction.” [...] he was dependent on no one and nothing, not even on his own nature: he had achieved a state of indifference to his tendencies and needs. Being fully polymorphous, expressing himself as opportunities would allow [...] and not in the scope of his

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<sup>1513</sup> Banasiak, *Integralna potworność...*, p. 212.

own preferences, in the tight framework of his perversities, and wholly coherent (regardless of the circumstances, conquering even the “determinism of ecstasy” [...]), he achieves a state of self-expropriation.<sup>1514</sup>

Seduction as apathy – what does this entail? Perhaps merely that the cure for the indifference of nature is Virtue, in Robespierre’s sense of the word. A response to the inexhaustible movement of being is the equally inexhaustible movement of appropriation. A revolt is power. Orgies and tortures are merely a pale pretext to savor a rule unrestricted by morals: “This is the highest level of indoctrination in the arcana of libertinism: extreme insensitivity and supreme self-consciousness. ‘This principle of energy leads to sovereignty.’”<sup>1515</sup> The most radical modern revolt is totalitarianism under the guise of Virtue. This lays a crucial stone in the edifice of modern politics. Our point is not to claim that all revolutionaries in early modernity are offsprings of de Sade. Yet we cannot ignore his connection to the Revolution. He belonged to the same section of the Piques as Robespierre. It may have seemed that aristocratism and plebeian sympathies were irreconcilable. And yet... “The man of pleasure rushing to his doom collides with a famished people hurling itself on the hated citadels. At the meeting point of these two forces beats the black heart of the Revolution and there ferments its fertile chaos.”<sup>1516</sup>

Would this be the common denominator we have sought for the Revolution, Rousseauism, *La fille mal gardée*, and Sadism – this chaos? Everything in us rejects this conclusion. Amusing, bright Dauberval and terrifying, dark de Sade in one ensemble? Yet the same culture shaped them, preparing variations on the same theme – the boundless spark of energy in every person, discovered by the Enlightenment. Between them stood Rousseau and Robespierre, sentimental totalitarians who also flirted with darkness.

The Revolution is a blackout. As Starobinski, once more, brilliantly observed, it was expressed by Jacques-Louis David. The same David whom posterity remembers for his almost constantly fluctuating political views. He may have been a band-wagoner, but he also had a great sensitivity to the spirit of the times, in which he recalled Goya, to some degree. Both of them captured a watershed moment, widespread chaos, slumbering forces awakening. In Goya this bore fruit in grotesque, brutal etchings.

The denunciation of darkness brought forth a crowd of bestial beings. Recourse to origins meant a turning toward the deepest springs of life. And here we come to the point of hybridization, the strange confluence where in Goya’s work the colors of life merged

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<sup>1514</sup> Ibid., pp. 310–311.

<sup>1515</sup> Ibid., p. 311.

<sup>1516</sup> Starobinski, *1789...*, p. 48.

into the shadows of evil. Small wonder if the shapes condemned by reason are full of impetuous vitality, if images of origins are tainted by mocking horror.<sup>1517</sup>

David seemingly went in the opposite direction. His classicism was a compositional structure that chiefly recalls Poussin. Yet behind this classicism was a vast disquiet, expressed in his use of color. This explains the almost monstrous tension we feel in *The Oath of the Horatii* and, most of all, in *The Death of Marat* (pl. VIII). Both pictures seem to emerge from the gloom, which seems lurking in wait to smother them. *The Death of Marat* is not only the figure in the foreground; it is, above all, the black of the background commanding the viewer's gaze and the dead body. The frame of the picture is almost torn apart by the energy of material forces, which man can only oppose with tragic heroism. Starobinski writes of David: "strong shadows and intense colors were also to be found in his work. They gave the rational energy that controlled them a chance to manifest itself; they bore witness to the strict determination that tamed and disciplined them."<sup>1518</sup> Total victory was not, however, possible. David – like Rousseau, like Robespierre – made this tangible, for all his life almost desperately fleeing from darkness. *The Death of Marat* shows he did not succeed. Here is the vast power of this picture, that it provides a testimony to the "inhuman" nature of the Revolution. David intuitively understood it was pure energy.

What was to emerge in nineteenth-century Europe as the ultimate consequence and final betrayal of revolutionary thought was the will to will, the will to power, the dark will that refused to make common cause with the light of reason, which it regarded, superficially, as "superficial."<sup>1519</sup>

Modernity tried to dance this "dark will."

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<sup>1517</sup> Ibid., p. 199.

<sup>1518</sup> Ibid., p. 151.

<sup>1519</sup> Ibid., p. 66.



# Conclusions

In this book, we have portrayed early modernity as a gradual departure from making the Christian God the sole possessor of agency. As the epoch unfolded, human beings began increasingly participating in agency. They initially sought a point of reference in God, with whom they hoped to share responsibility for reality. For man, God was a guarantor, a first cause. Yet in the Enlightenment we reach a point in which appealing to God essentially came down to conformism. Agency was perceived in purely human categories. It was the individual, and particularly the outstanding individual, the genius however understood, who acted and had the right to intervene in the world, to manipulate reality for their purposes, and carry out their projects. Man became fully autonomous. Modernity fused movement of matter (physics), existence (ethics), and society (politics) into one structure, managed by the emotional ruling subject. We have called this connection and its expansion the virus of mobilization.

From our standpoint, early modern history has primarily been a tale of shaping a specific form of subjecthood in culture; we are calling it modern. It is marked by an insatiable appetite for movement, action, and change. In the sphere of politics, mobilization made power secularized and public, it individualized the perception of man. As we have shown, this occurred in stages. In the Renaissance, agency was tied to the Cosmos, which soared infinitely above the individual, yet the human being was its model, helped create its harmony. This was not every individual, of course, only those who had the proper refinement and knowledge. The Renaissance elite that exerted a fundamental influence on culture, though drawing inspiration from its ludic forms (inspiration which attempts were made to negate through mechanisms of distinction), were still basically aristocratic, albeit not in the same way as in the Middle Ages – now manners and intellectual capabilities were pushed into the foreground. In this ideological environment

the model personality was the humanist, the dignified man praised by Pico della Mirandola. This man reached for power, became a Prince, an individual still, to some extent, empowered by the medieval strength of arms, but most of all, seeking power by rationally controlling their domain, which the Cosmos (Absolute) ascribed to them – politics.

In the seventeenth century, the figure of the Prince underwent intriguing transformations, for the view of reality was essentially changing. An important role was played by the scientific revolution, whose luminaries, drunk on discoveries, were extending the power of rationality to the entirety of creation. The Cosmos became Order, the Absolute, and Reason was established. Reason was applied in various fields for the same cultural work of ordering, disciplining, to rein in the extremely restless social sphere, consumed by conflicts, primarily religious ones. In the seventeenth century, humanity began to see itself as a representative of divine Reason, the Cartesian *Cogito*, while the guarantor of political peace was the absolutist Monarch. Even if the individual felt themselves to be little more than a frail reed, they were a thinking reed, which allowed them to preserve their dignity. This dignity remained aristocratic, though not by blood – by abilities, convictions, and initiatives. The aristocracy was systematically and unstoppably turning bourgeois.

A culture of stability was forming on the foundations of the classicist Order, which was a corset binding individual initiative. The ruling subject gave rise to resistance, which initially supplemented the power of reason with an emotional aspect (Rococo senti-mentalism), then assigning the passions the key role in culture. The model personality was no longer the rational man, it was the feeling and creative man, endowed with an aesthetic sensitivity and imagination – the Artist. This is the perspective from which the most important figures of the next stage of European development – Diderot, Rousseau, and Robespierre – apprehended one another. They were all model members of (Enlightenment) society, fully bourgeois, seeing man not as a part of a larger whole, but as the heart and motor of that whole. The subject adopts the role of Agent – this was the SELF, no longer merely reacting to reality, but creating it, designing the world from the ground up.

The most vital project of this SELF was the Revolution, the founding act of modernity. We have broken down its sentimentalism loaded with the cult of Virtue, and how this Virtue was monopolized by the SELF, which curtailed any true democracy, celebrated in the discourse in every manner. In the realm of power it was the Legislator who triumphed, the political genius, casting a shadow of totalitarianism over society.

This encapsulates the history of the infection in the title of this book. Modernity's point of departure is elevating man as a worldly being, and its endpoint is the cultural hegemony of this elevation. To conclude, we must stress once more that we have not discovered anything new here. In the literature on modernity, it

would seem that at least one point in common has been reached. One of the most critical breakthroughs in human history was the shift of focus to human agency that occurred in the first stages of the modern era (in the Renaissance and classicism), to become a main motif of mature modernity (from the Enlightenment onward). This does not mean that man had never before had a sense of his own power. The point is more that modernity put the issue front and center, making it seem an evident truth. Man created reality instead of just dwelling in it, he was captain of destiny, not fate's plaything.

As an epoch of a subjecthood that was forever striving for something, modernity was grounded in the principle of representation. The subject produced images of the world as their own reality. Kant was the first to render this brilliantly. The human world was nothing more than the *human* world. It was given life only through us, and only exists in us. While admitting that objective knowledge is impossible, modernity affirms this impotence, and thus stresses creativity. This is a key symptom of the virus of mobilization – the culture emphasizes activism by focusing attention on the subject/agency who creates representations. As an epoch, modernity does not face the world in mute terror or humble delight. Nor is it indifferent. It becomes an endless search, subversion, dissection, discussion, debate.

Wolfgang Iser writes of intellectual criticism, which

makes the dynamic of the modern era. This dynamic [...] drives [...] us to pose questions. Progress occurs on the strength of those questions in the modern era, not only in terms of quantitative spread, but also modifications of quality and growth. To some degree, all these oppositions might be seen as modern self-development strategies. It is these that make the modern era what it is, the dynamic era, developing through self-critique.<sup>1520</sup>

This approach, however valuable, strikes us as incomplete. It reduces humanity to thought. It denies human physicality as a centerpiece of experience, even though a person always acts as a physical being. This is why we have put movement in the center of our study, attempting to explore it at least as deeply as other thinkers have examined reason. As Habermas has observed, modernity is described by “dynamic concepts that either emerged together with the expression ‘modern age’ or ‘new age’ in the eighteenth century or acquired then a new meaning that remains valid down to our day are adapted to this – words such as revolution, progress, emancipation, development.”<sup>1521</sup> He is seconded by Sloterdijk’s thesis of modernity as being-toward-movement. Stressing this dynamism that is absolutely

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<sup>1520</sup> Wolfgang Iser, *Nasza postmodernistyczna moderna*, trans. Roman Kubicki and Anna Zeidler-Janiszewska, Warsaw 1998, p. 106.

<sup>1521</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. Frederick Lawrence, Cambridge 2007, p. 5.

fundamental to modern culture may seem a truism, but its roots run deep, with far-reaching social, political, and aesthetic consequences. To understand this, we have shown dance constantly engaging in how modern culture has been created. Throughout the period under discussion, it remained, to use Andrew Hewitt's terminology, a laboratory in which agencies and subjecthoods were rehearsed, and communities along with them. Observing dance, we also observed competing strategies for setting the body in motion. The movement of dance reflected processes taking place in the sociopolitical realm – debates over symbols, over power. The prevailing visions were adapted, developed, or negotiated, even contested. How might we describe the dance of modernity after our journey? This is a manifestation of a kinesis that was fully articulated in the Enlightenment, but whose groundwork was prepared in the prior centuries – the kinesis of elemental, individualized feeling. In this new sensibility, dance was mainly to express the existential dramas of the individuals performing it. Dance was no longer a simple expression of joy, nor a lesson in discipline. It was not meant to adore authority figures, it was the apotheosis of an individual's inner world. Through the Enlightenment's reflections on dance in the sphere of movement, the emotional depths of existence clamored for their rights, as equal to the rational. This was, it seems, the mission of pantomime which John Weaver and others dug from the store-rooms of history. Attention to geometrical form faded into the background, but so did the collective pleasure that arose from a shared kinetic experience. People kept dancing with one another, yet this was no longer a community; the individual was now central to the dance experience.

The transition from the kinesis of rationalism to the kinesis of sentimentalism symbolically expresses a characteristic shift in dance training. In the Renaissance and classicism the legs received the most attention – for the dancing masters, dance meant mainly steps, as confirmed by the textbooks written at the time. The feet, seeking the floor's support, were the main protagonists, holding up the static, majestic body. The distinguished body longed to step strong and sure, expressing a higher order. We might speak of the kinetic ascendancy of the courtly steps. The Enlightenment was a kinetic revolution, it animated torsos, and most of all, hands. The modern bourgeoisie put the gesture in the center of the dance culture, as personalized, opposed to the normative nature of steps. Though steps can be dynamic and highly complex, they are incapable of expressing the complex nature of the emotional subject. Not so for gestures, which were admired in *ballet d'action* and later played an enormous role in Romantic ballet and in many variants of modernist dance. The gesture is a “cry” of the SELF, a manifestation of individuality.

The kinetic triumph of the gesture is connected to the triumph of the choreographer, whose beginnings we might seek in the education of a professional caste of dancing masters of the Renaissance and classicism. A key development in

establishing the importance of the gesture was the *ballet d'action*, whose enthusiasts saw the creative individual less as a compiler of steps than as a person expressing the depths of human existence. Dance acquired an author in the modern sense of the word. The dance genius appeared, and their cultural impact eclipsed collective forms of creative dance, simultaneously causing any dance that was mere replication to take a back seat in culture.

Modernity in dance postulated expressing the SELF on stage – it meant delving within to find movements to stoke the viewer's emotions. For many centuries, dance had had a quite different task – to integrate a society, entertain the people, or confirm a political authority. In the Enlightenment, stage dance became individualized, discussions were held on styles of specific dancers, and eventually choreographers as well. In this context, the artist's main task was to stand out in the crowd, to leave the competition far behind, to reach the top of the ladder of dance.

The individualization of stage dance in the Enlightenment involved revitalizing group forms of social dance. We have mentioned the popularity of country dances, and then, for instance, the quadrille, in the eighteenth century. Later, throughout the nineteenth century, balls remained a space for collective pleasure in moving. Yet the increasing virtuosity in dance and the related Romantic cult of the brilliant artist, whether a prima ballerina or a choreographer, were not without their impact on social dancing. Everyday dance culture became simpler with the growing complexity of the performance idiom. The body on stage was striving for mastery, and the amateur body gradually shed its technical refinement. This does not mean that modern social dances are inherently simple to perform. This view is contradicted by the contemporary waltz, samba, or tango virtuosi. All we mean to say is that this virtuosity was retroactively built on a kinetic model that was substantially simplified with regard to the complicated aristocratic idiom embodied by the minuet.

Does this mean we can speak of a return to the roots, of social dance returning to its ludic nature? It seems we cannot. Dance modernity means dance experience entering a phase of individualism, whose present manifestations are various types of stage dance virtuosi – from the stars of ballet to the charismatic choreographers of dance spectacles or geniuses of conceptual dance. Individualism is also present in dance for entertainment – we find masters of breakdance, tap dance, and tango. Essentially, every type of dance has its pantheon – as moderns, we feel the need to establish who is the best dancer, who best embodies the spirit of a type, who is the best dancing SELF. Behind this individuality that dance has sought to express is an atomized bourgeois society. The flip side of the dance virtuoso is the talentless individual fearing to stray on the dance floor. It is remarkable indeed that we live in a world where social dancing is mainly associated with a profession that requires athletic training. At the same time, it is a world in which some dance schools offer lessons in “practical dance,” meant to fill the place of the old sort of social dancing: formally established, but danced by ordinary people.

Social dancing has been reified – extremely formalized in its professional version, becoming a spectacle for display, but essentially a discarded form in everyday life, requiring an ersatz version: “practical dance.” In the modern world, unlike in folk culture, communal kinetic pleasure is a deficit commodity. Our kinesis is split into niches, there are more dance styles than ever before, but no ground upon which to create an organic kinetic collective. A truly group-based dance, in which the individual focuses on providing pleasure to others, on building social bonds, seldom occurs spontaneously in everyday life. This is why we seek kinetic togetherness in various kinds of courses that are offered, or in fact sold, by profiled communities. Social dance as an element of *Lebenswelt* – everyday, familiar, and acquired through the very fact of being a part of society’s community of movement – has, perhaps, become a thing of the past.

The modern era has meant the gradual elimination of the spontaneity of the dance community, the reification of dance. To conclude, let us try to look at this process through the eyes of Hannah Arendt. In *The Human Condition*,<sup>1522</sup> she notes that, ever since the Renaissance, Europe was gradually conquered by a mania for production, which left its mark on work and on civil action. We were infected by the logic of production. This meant that, in the mature modern era, work became toil, and action bureaucracy. In place of life and the community, the product appeared. The modern *vita activa* is organized around production for production’s sake, movement for movement’s sake. We feel compelled to add that the dance community itself has also seen transformations. The ancient Greeks danced to give praise to the community, to nurture a sense of togetherness. In their world, physical culture came in contact with political culture, creating the culture of life. In the modern era, dance has gradually lost its communal nature, breaking off from the sphere of action. Discovering their autonomy, the individual lost the sense of security that came with living in a traditional society. The bourgeois tried to fill this gap with consuming cultural products. Offering dance products in various forms – from the Romantic ballet spectacles and modern dance to professional waltz and tango shows or the atomized communities of ticketed night clubs – kinetic modernity is a clear testimony to this. The carousel of dance fashions keeps turning, ruled by the same logic of production, the same market laws that rule life (work), action (politics), and beauty (art).

An insatiable appetite for movement, a constant straining for the future, the imperative to make progress, is the essence of modernity. Its name is: instability. Essentially, none of the institutional changes it proposed proved satisfactory. Modernity is not a movement of establishment, but of destruction, it is not constructive, it tears free from the manacles of structures. This is why it is always radicalizing. The pursuit of a vague ideal that was the Revolution remains a mandatory kinetic

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<sup>1522</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago–London 2018.

ideal. Ever since the Revolution, the Westerner has found satisfaction in motion, of simply being in motion. Motion is not a means of reaching a goal – it does not bring satisfaction, for there is no such thing. Peace is an obstacle to movement, and so movement is to continue, always negating calm. In the society of the *ancien régime*, movement led to immobility, contentment, stability. Modernity deprecated motionlessness. With it came a total mobilization, which continues to this day, shaping our sensibility of dance as well.



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## Dance

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117. William Hogarth, *Analysis of Beauty*, plate I, engraving, 1753. Source: [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Analysis\\_of\\_Beauty\\_Plate\\_1\\_by\\_William\\_Hogarth.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Analysis_of_Beauty_Plate_1_by_William_Hogarth.jpg)

118. William Hogarth, *Analysis of Beauty*, plate II, engraving, in the center an elegant crowd dances a country dance, 1753. Source: [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Analysis\\_of\\_Beauty\\_Plate\\_2\\_by\\_William\\_Hogarth.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Analysis_of_Beauty_Plate_2_by_William_Hogarth.jpg)

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157. Harry Furniss, illustration for *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens depicting a Revolutionary *carmagnole*, 1910. Source: <http://victorianweb.org/victorian/art/illustration/furniss/116.jpg>

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162. Isidore-Stanislas-Henri Helman (based on a drawing by Charles Monnet), an engraving of the Federation Festival, 1790. Source: [http://www.amolenuvette.it/root/image/abrupt\\_clio\\_team.folder/iconographie%20de%20la%20r%C3%A9volution%20fran%C3%A7aise%201789-1799.folder/040%5Bamolenuvette.it%5D1790%2007%2014%20la%20f%C3%AAte%20de%20la%20f%C3%A9d%C3%A9ration%20gravure%20d%27helman%20d%27apr%C3%A8s%20monnet.jpg](http://www.amolenuvette.it/root/image/abrupt_clio_team.folder/iconographie%20de%20la%20r%C3%A9volution%20fran%C3%A7aise%201789-1799.folder/040%5Bamolenuvette.it%5D1790%2007%2014%20la%20f%C3%AAte%20de%20la%20f%C3%A9d%C3%A9ration%20gravure%20d%27helman%20d%27apr%C3%A8s%20monnet.jpg)
163. Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *De boerendans* (The Peasant Dance), 1567, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pieter\\_Bruegel\\_the\\_Elder\\_-\\_The\\_Peasant\\_Dance\\_-\\_WGA\\_3499.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pieter_Bruegel_the_Elder_-_The_Peasant_Dance_-_WGA_3499.jpg)
164. Isidore-Stanislas-Henri Helman, an engraving depicting a festival of the unity and indivisibility of the Republic, 1793. Source: [http://www.amolenuvette.it/root/image/abrupt\\_clio\\_team.folder/iconographie%20de%20la%20r%C3%A9volution%20fran%C3%A7aise%201789-1799.folder/120%5Bamolenuvette.it%5D1793%2008%2010%20f%C3%AAte%20de%20l%27unit%C3%A9%20et%20de%20l%27indivisibilit%C3%A9%20de%20la%20r%C3%A9publique%20gravure%20de%20helman.jpg](http://www.amolenuvette.it/root/image/abrupt_clio_team.folder/iconographie%20de%20la%20r%C3%A9volution%20fran%C3%A7aise%201789-1799.folder/120%5Bamolenuvette.it%5D1793%2008%2010%20f%C3%AAte%20de%20l%27unit%C3%A9%20et%20de%20l%27indivisibilit%C3%A9%20de%20la%20r%C3%A9publique%20gravure%20de%20helman.jpg)
165. Étienne Bericourt, a drawing depicting a Revolutionary festival, 1793. Source: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8412170z>
166. Pierre-Antoine Demachy, *La fête de l'Être Suprême, au Champ-de-Mars* (The Festival of the Supreme Being on Champ-de-Mars), 1794, Carnavalet Museum, Paris. Source: [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:F%C3%AAte\\_de\\_l%27Etre\\_supr%C3%A8me\\_2.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:F%C3%AAte_de_l%27Etre_supr%C3%A8me_2.jpg)
167. Francesco Bartolozzi and Benedetto Pastorini (based on a design by Nathaniel Dance), an engraving depicting Auguste Vestris during performances in London, 1781. Source: <http://images.fineartamerica.com/images-medium-large/auguste-vestris-1760-1842-granger.jpg>
168. J. Thornthwaite (based on a drawing by J. Roberts), engraving of Auguste Vestris in the ballet *Les Amans Surpris* (The Surprised Lovers), 1781. Source: [http://johndurang.yorkheritage.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/Vestris.Les\\_.Amans\\_.Surpris21.jpg](http://johndurang.yorkheritage.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/Vestris.Les_.Amans_.Surpris21.jpg)
169. Pierre-Philippe Choffard (based on a picture by Pierre Antoine Baudouin), *Le Réprimand / Une jeune fille querellée par sa mère* (The Reprimand / A Young Daughter Quarreling with Her Mother), a lithograph that inspired Jean Dauberval's *Wayward Daughter*, 1789.

- Source: Ivor Guest, *The Ballet of the Enlightenment. The Establishment of the Ballet d'Action in France, 1770–1793*, London 1996, Ill. 52.
170. Thomas Rowlandson, *The Prospect before Us, Charles Louis Didelot & Mme. Theodore in Dauberval's ballet 'Amphion et Thalie'*, etching, 1791. Source: [http://www.vam.ac.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/image/0013/183010/2006AN9345\\_rowlandson\\_ballet\\_etching.jpg](http://www.vam.ac.uk/__data/assets/image/0013/183010/2006AN9345_rowlandson_ballet_etching.jpg)
  171. Charles Hénard, *Rose Didelot dans le caractère de Calypso* (Rose Didelot as Calypso), Calypso is a character from the ballet *Télémaque dans l'île de Calypso* (Telemachis on the Isle of Calypso) by Jean Dauberval, 1794. Source: Ivor Guest, *The Ballet of the Enlightenment. The Establishment of the Ballet d'Action in France, 1770–1793*, London 1996, Ill. 54
  172. Jean-Antoine Watteau, *La Fête d'amour* (The Festival of Love), 1718–1719, Gemaldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden. Source: [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Antoine\\_Watteau\\_-\\_The\\_Feast\\_of\\_Love\\_-\\_Google\\_Art\\_Project.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Antoine_Watteau_-_The_Feast_of_Love_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg)
  173. François Boucher, *Le Triomphe de Vénus* (The Triumph of Venus), 1740, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm. Source: <http://uploads2.wikiart.org/images/francois-boucher/triumph-of-venus-1740%281%29.jpg>
  174. Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *Les hasards heureux de l'escarpolette* (The Swing), 1767–1768, Wallace Collection, London. Source: [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fragonard,\\_The\\_Swing.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fragonard,_The_Swing.jpg)
  175. Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *Les Progrès de l'amour: La Poursuite* (Love's Progress: The Pursuit), 1773, Frick Collection, New York. Source: <http://uploads2.wikiart.org/images/jean-honore-fragonard/the-progressof-love-the-pursuit-1773.jpg>
  176. Claude Lorrain, *La Fête villageoise* (The Country Festival), 1639, Musée du Louvre, Paris. Source: [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Claude\\_Lorrain\\_012.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Claude_Lorrain_012.jpg)
  177. Johann Heinrich Fussli, *The Nightmare*, 1781, Freies Deutsches Hochstift, Goethemuseum, Frankfurt. Source: [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Johann\\_Heinrich\\_F%C3%BCssli\\_053.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Johann_Heinrich_F%C3%BCssli_053.jpg)

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## Volume II

# Bourgeois Gestures

*The Virus of Mobilization* is an attempt to construct an original approach to the history of dance in early modern Europe. This is not a history of choreographic works, though these do, of course, have their place. Nor is it a history of techniques and styles, though these too are given due attention. The main aim is to analyze the powers that summon dance to life and to respond in part to the question of why people danced the way they did at various stages of modernity's development. What values were expressed through dance, what models of humanity and society were enacted by its means? In search of a reply, the author analyzes texts from the Renaissance, Baroque, Classicism, and the Enlightenment: most of all these are dance treatises, but also philosophical, political, and scientific papers, and works of art. The book has been furnished with numerous illustrations, following the author's intent to reveal the kinetic imagination at various stages in the shaping of modern culture.

Wojciech Klimczyk works as a professor in the Centre for Comparative Studies of Civilisations at the Jagiellonian University. His research focuses on the relationships between culture and embodiment, putting special emphasis on studying dance in its social and political contexts. His books include *Postmodern Eroticism* (Universitas, 2008) and *Visionaries of the Body: A Panorama of Contemporary Dance Theater* (Ha!art, 2010). *The Virus of Mobilization: Dance and the Shaping of Modernity 1455–1795* was originally released in Polish in 2015 by Universitas publishers, and, one year later, was nominated for the prestigious Polish Society of Theater Studies Award and the Prof. Tadeusz Kotarbiński Award for Poland's best work in the humanities.