



Nature and Supplementation in Julie ou La Nouvelle Héloïse

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Nature and Supplementation in *Julie ou La Nouvelle Héloïse*

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“Nature loves to hide.” Heraclitus’s enigmatic aphorism, as Pierre Hadot reminds us, probably signifies that what is born (“nature”) tends to disappear (“to hide”) or to die (Hadot 2004: 30).¹ From the beginning of the Christian era, however, Heraclitus’s sentence was interpreted in a vastly different way. It was an allusion to the secrets of a nature that likes to shroud itself in mystery, and that men can only represent beneath a veil that calls for an unveiling. In the face of the secrets of nature, Hadot distinguishes two fundamental attitudes in western thought: the first, which he calls *Promethean*, appears in Antiquity. It encourages resorting to ruse, technology, and to a form of violence to seize nature’s secrets from it and elucidate its mysteries. Encouraged by the Christian tradition, this attitude blossoms thanks to Francis Bacon and the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century, which aims to render man “the master and possessor of nature,” as per Descartes’s famous sentence derived from *Genesis*. The second attitude, which Hadot defines as *Orphic*, imagines, on the contrary, a state of immersion in nature leading to a kind of knowledge that is empathetic or merely contemplative, and that, respecting its veil, refrains from any violence against nature – the natural order of things being beyond our comprehension.

The eighteenth century seems to be a moment of extreme polarization between these two attitudes, with on the one side an encyclopedic movement that appears to actualize the scientific revolution initiated by Bacon and Descartes, aiming to make man “the master and possessor of nature” – consider for example d’Alembert’s article “Expérimental”: observation “is limited to the facts it has before its eyes, to seeing well and to detailing all the types of phenomena that *the spectacle of Nature* presents: it seeks on the contrary to *penetrate it more deeply*, [...] it does not limit itself to listening to Nature, but interrogates it and pressures it” (1756: 298) –, and, on the other, an “orphanic” movement whose power cannot be understated, judging particularly by the success of abbé Pluche’s work, which sanctified nature and invited readers to be content with simply respecting its secrets and admiring its spectacle – “*To fathom the very depths of Nature*, [...] is an arduous endeavor, the success of which is very uncertain, [...] *it is not necessary that the inner workings of the machine be open to us* [...]” (Pluche 1732: ix–x).

Where should we place Rousseau in this bipolarization? If he seems the most eloquent apologist, in the eighteenth century, of this orphic attitude towards nature, we will show that this orphic aspiration is far from excluding a promethean one, and that his thought bears witness to

¹ See also Renaut’s 1976 article, “La nature aime se cacher.”

his unique effort to apply schemas of action to nature. These schemas certainly do not come under a demiurgic kind of prometheism, but seek to understand the mechanisms of nature, to fathom its mysteries, even if it means (and therein lies the paradox) exerting a type of violence onto nature. We draw from *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, and in particular on two of Julie's practices: her horticultural activity, and her pedagogical activity. That is, the creation of the Elysée on the one hand, and the education of her children on the other. In both cases, the idea of compensating for nature appears as a paradoxical necessity, but whose deeper logic could be that of forming a compromise between the orphic interdict forbidding any violence against nature, and the yearning to observe nature in even its smallest details, even to manipulate it according to one's needs, as long as it is by following its rules.

Fatal secrets

At first glance, Rousseau clearly incarnates, in the eighteenth century, the model for an orphic attitude regarding nature.² A brief summary of some of the Rousseau's statements on the subject will permit us to measure the paradoxical dimensions of some of the expressions appearing in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*.

The third letter to Malesherbes is particularly eloquent. Describing to Malesherbes his ecstasies in Montmorency Forest, Rousseau remarks: "I believe that if I had unveiled all of the mysteries of nature, I would have felt myself to be in a less delightful situation than that stupefying ecstasy."³ Isn't that clearly saying that "the ecstasy of Being takes the place of impossible knowledge of the world," to use Starobinski's words, and that "subjective awareness of totality supplants objective discovery of nature and its laws?" (1971: 78). We should nevertheless note that the unveiling of the mysteries of nature is not for all that disqualified since it serves as a measure of the supreme pleasure that constitutes the ecstasy of being.

Such is also, we know, the principle behind the great rift between Rousseau and Diderot and the *Encyclopédistes*. Jacques Berchtold has fittingly noted that beyond the controversy on theatre, the attack against d'Alembert in the *Letter to M. d'Alembert on Spectacles* was also directed at the leader of "a cyclopean enterprise whose gaze seeks to encompass everything [...], that makes science visible; the spectacle offered [by the *Encyclopedia*] is that of the cogs and the machinery left after analysis" (2006: 286).

And yet it is even more important to respect the veil of nature given that, for Rousseau, the violence exerted on nature in order to wrench its veil is precisely what places men outside of nature and brings about catastrophe. It is not for lack of having received, from nature, the clearest providential warnings, dissuading men from using violence in their dealings with her and from committing this fatal mistake:

The heavy veil with which she covered all her operations seemed to warn us adequately that she did not destine us for vain studies. Is there even one of her lessons from which we have known how to profit, or which we have neglected with impunity? Peoples, know once and for all that nature wanted to keep you from being harmed by sciences just as a mother wrests a dangerous weapon from her child's hands; that all secrets she hides from

² It is primarily as such that he is portrayed in Pierre Hadot's book.

³ Rousseau, *Lettres à Malherbes* (OC 1 : 1141; January 26, 1762).

you are so many evils from which she protects you, and that the difficulty you find in educating yourselves is not the least of her benefits.⁴

How not to deplore the “man’s blindness, which, [...] makes him run avidly after all the miseries of which he is susceptible, and which beneficent Nature had taken care to keep from him?”⁵ By what strange fatality were men not satisfied by the fruits that nature had deliberately scattered on the surface of the earth, such that they felt the need to reach into its entrails and laboriously extract the ore from them? For “it is even harder to attribute this discovery to some accidental fire, because mines are formed only in arid spots, stripped of both trees and plants; so that one would say that Nature had taken precautions to hide this deadly secret from us” (49). Much later, in the *Rêveries*, Rousseau returns to this mystery once more:

In itself, the mineral realm has nothing lovely or attractive. Its riches, sealed up within the bosom of the earth, seem to have been removed from the sight of man so as not to tempt his cupidity. They are there, as though in reserve, to serve one day as a *supplement* to the genuine riches more within his reach and for which he loses taste to the extent that he becomes corrupted. Thus he must call on industry, labor, and toil to relieve his misery. He digs in the bowels of the earth. He goes to its center, at the risk of his life and the expense of his health, to seek imaginary goods in place of the real goods it freely offered him when he knew how to enjoy them. He flees the sun and the day which he is no longer worthy to see.⁶

The “supplement” to the true riches of nature is here identified with perversion. Such is the righteous punishment that man inflicted upon himself when, instead of living in immediate proximity to Mother Nature, man sought to penetrate her entrails and take away its fatal secrets:

He buries himself alive and does well, no longer deserving to live in the light of day. There, quarries, pits, forges, furnaces, an apparatus of anvils, hammers, smoke, and fire replace the gentle images of pastoral occupations. The wan faces of the wretches who languish in the foul fumes of the mines, of grimy ironsmiths, of hideous Cyclopes are the spectacle the apparatus of the mines *substitutes*, in the bosom of the earth, for that of greenery and flowers, of azure sky, of amorous shepherds, and of robust plowmen on its surface. (*OC* 1: 1066–1067 [*CW* 8: 62])

Substitution, a supplement for the beauties of nature, definitively points to corruption. In denying oneself the spectacle of nature by replacing it by the hideous spectacle of mines, man has not only disfigured nature, but inflicts on her the violence that, as Jacques Derrida noted, is at the very origin of society (1967: 212–213).⁷ This perfectly orphic and anti-Promethean attitude is not Rousseau’s last word in his work that is, as we know, entirely irreducible to any rigid form of dualism.

L’Elysée

⁴ Rousseau, *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* (*OC* 3: 15 [*CW* 2: 11]).

⁵ Rousseau, *Discours sur l’origine et les fondements de l’inégalité* (*OC* 1 : 202; *CW* 3: 74)

⁶ *Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*, VII^e Promenade (*OC* 1:1066–1067; *CW* 8: 62), my emphasis.

⁷ See also Kofman’s comments (1982: 140–141).

When in the fourth part of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* Julie shows Saint-Preux the garden which she calls her Elysée, she evokes the process by which men disfigure nature, suggesting in turn the image of a golden age in which nature freely unveiled its charms:

Moreover, *nature seems to want to veil from men's eyes her true attractions*, to which they are too insensible, and which they *disfigure* when they can get their hands on them: she flees much-frequented places; it is on the tops of mountains, deep in the forests, on desert Islands that she deploys her most stirring charms.⁸

Initially, Julie's discourse seems aligned with that of Rousseau's in the first *Discourse*. And yet a closer reading reveals a reversal in the function of the veil: what nature hides is no longer its secret "operations," as these have already been brought to light for man's misfortune, but its "true attractions," as though to put them out of reach and prevent their disfiguration. In other words the veil no longer constitutes a secret barrier. It is rather that which hones desire in lovers of nature.

In the following part of Julie's discourse, one sees more clearly the erotic and promethean undertone at the heart of the orphic discourse: "Those who love [nature] and cannot go so far to find her are reduced to doing her violence, forcing her in a way to come and live with them" (*OC* 2: 479–480; *CW* 6: 394). The expression is at the very least paradoxical when written by Rousseau: unable to "catch nature in the act" as Fontenelle put it, Julie is "reduced" (the term is rather indicative of the tension exerted in this moment upon an action that is in theory contrary to the principles of Rousseauist philosophy) to experimentally reconstruct a piece of nature. However the entire rest of the visit will aim to show that this violence is not in fact one, or rather that this violence is not contrary to nature.

It is well known what key principle presided during the elaboration of this garden and that Julie formulates within herself: "nature did it all, but under my direction, and there is nothing here that I have not designed" (*Julie*, 388). In this inversion of the Baconian axiom ("we cannot command Nature except by obeying her"), Julie is formulating the rules of an *art of the natural*, admittedly refusing any subjection to nature, but forcing her nevertheless to reside in a protected space and creating the conditions that will constrain nature to freely deploy its charms. Saint-Preux's error is believing that Julie's work is nothing other than "a passive abandon to the great productivity of nature" (Marin 122): "My goodness, it has cost you nothing but neglect [...] you closed the gate [...] nature alone did the rest, and you yourself could never have managed to do so well" (*Julie* 388).

It is a question neither of exploitation nor denaturing, but of healing, maintaining, and protecting a nature that is growing and developing: the birds are not prisoners of the garden, nor are they its guest, "it is we who are theirs" says Julie (*Julie* 391). While Wolmar's work in Clarens, wisely construed though it may be, comes from a rational exploitation of the wealth of nature, Julie's is removed from any relationship of domination, as Louis Marin noted: "[Julie's] direction, her order is less a commandment, the imposition of a plan or of a schema rigorously faithful to natural substance, than a connivance, a complicity of nature with *Natura naturans*" (Marin 1976: 122).

Rather than creating a model to serve as a norm for her actions, Julie focuses her attention on the course of things, seeking to find their coherence and profit from their evolution. In this

⁸ *Julie ou La Nouvelle Héloïse*, iv, 11 (*OC* 2: 479–480 [*CW* 6: 394]), my emphasis.

way, the model she proposes for a scheme of action on nature shares some links with models of effective action and the “silent transformations” that François Jullien describes when he writes about Chinese wisdom. Instead of constructing an ideal form that is then projected onto things, the idea is to focus on identifying the favorable factors at the heart of their configuration (Jullien 1997: 32).⁹ This schema of action seems to come less from the acting subject itself than from the object. As such, it is profoundly different from the one that transforms nature into culture, as is the case for Clarens’s agricultural property: the Elysée’s economy is parasitic rather than exploitative. An emblem of Julie’s garden are these “creeping, parasitic plants that, trained upon the tree trunks, surround their crowns in the thickest foliage and their feet in shade and coolness” that affect Saint-Preux so prodigiously (*Julie* 389).

In l’Elysée, nature and culture intertwine and transform each other. Julie’s garden thus appears to be the art of metamorphosis. Is this project excluded from any Prometheism? Likely not, if one considers the role played in it by ruse, artifice, and illusion: Julie arranges it so that one can no longer see “*anywhere the slightest trace of culture*.” “all this cannot be done without a modicum of illusion” (*Julie* 394). And yet, as Hadot reminded us, the Greek’s *mēkhanē*, in other words ruse, is central to the Promethean ambition: technique cunningly works with the mechanisms of nature so that it submits to the needs of men. This discrete art of transformation, under the direction of Julie, is a manipulation. “The garden is a lie because it is the height of artifice that nature is reduced to imitating: in this inverted mimesis, traces of culture have been carefully erased, grass has hidden the vestiges of work and the irregularities of nature are none other than the simulations of art.” In this perspective, Julie’s work is also one of fiction, “a fiction whose components are violence and illusion” (Marin 130).

Julie’s negative education

And yet, this art of being natural – which represents both the ultimate height of artifice and also the fortuitous discovery of Nature as an artist who knows how to give shape to its subject – is not reserved for Julie’s Elysée. The entire pedagogical doctrine of a “negative education” that is at the heart of *Emile*, and whose essential principles have already been developed by Julie and Wolmar in the fifth part of *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, is also based upon the refusal to “correct nature,” that is, on the refusal to exert any type of violence on her. If, in many other respects, Rousseau’s debt to Locke is considerable (despite his frequent criticisms of him), the originality of his pedagogical thought here is striking.¹⁰ Locke demands that the pedagogue keep the child’s nature in highest consideration so as to avoid a frontal attack on his native propensities. He nevertheless encourages the teacher to correct them “with art [that] they may be much mended, and turned to good purpose.”¹¹ In *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, Rousseau expresses through Wolmar’s words (in the form of a reply to one of Saint-Preux’s statements), all of the indignation that this idea of wanting to correct nature arouses in him. The draft of Wolmar’s answer is even more explicit than its final version:

Correcting nature! said Wolmar interrupting me, isn’t that changing it? What instruments will you use that do not belong to nature, and by what strange contradiction can you claim to make it stronger than it is itself? Are you going to combine the mind

⁹ Voir aussi Jullien, *Les Transformations silencieuses* (2009).

¹⁰ Regarding Rousseau’s debt to Locke, see Schøsler.

¹¹ Locke, *Quelques pensées sur l’éducation* (1904, § 102).

and sentiments like those disorganized bodies, or grafting men like trees to make them bear other fruits? (*Julie* 462)¹²

The idea at play here is indeed the Lockean notion of education as a “reparation” or a “correction” of nature. The concept of negative education is not yet theorized in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, but its role is already mapped out since it defines itself as the art of managing the conditions that allow nature to blossom unfettered. Furthermore, the concept of negative education includes a collaboration between nature and man, the latter taking care to release nature’s force and sustain the conditions that allow it to continue its progress free of inauspicious deviations.

Hence the double need to which the principle of negative education responds. On the one hand, a need for protection: much like within the gates of l’Elysée, it is necessary to preserve the “process of nature” to be careful not to trouble – “do nothing and let nothing be done”¹³ or according to Wolmar’s terms, “forever abstain from doing anything at all, rather than act unadvisedly” (*Julie*, 464). On the other hand, and this need is almost inseparable from the first, a *dilatory* need: one must not act prematurely, and must abstain from any inopportune intervention. “Leave nature to act for a long time before you get involved with acting in its place, lest you impede its operations” (*Emile* 242).

As in the case of the garden, this surrender to nature is but an appearance: like in the Elysée, nature does everything, but under the direction of the Wolmar couple. Concerning the first principle, the need for protection, Julie and Wolmar do not benefit from the same privileges as does Emile’s tutor, who is guaranteed by the theoretical principle of the work a complete mastery of the child’s environment. But they do benefit from an extraordinary combination of circumstances, as Julie herself remarks:

[T]he success of my ministrations depended upon a combination of circumstances that has perhaps never been seen anywhere but here. It required the understanding of an enlightened father to sort out amidst established prejudices the genuine art of governing children from their birth; it required all his patience to lend himself to its execution, without ever giving the lie to his lessons by his conduct; it required children well born in whom nature had done enough so that we could love its handiwork alone; it required having around us only intelligent and well-intentioned domestics, who never tire of entering into their masters’ views; a single brutal or flattering servant would have been enough to spoil everything. In truth, when one considers how many foreign causes can set back the best designs and overturn the best-laid schemes, one has to thank fortune for all the good things one does in life, and say that proper behavior depends on a great deal on happiness. (*Julie* 479)

Julie and Wolmar were thus able to tame fate by turning Clarens into a protected islet. It is because the community of Clarens removed itself from the rest of the world by turning in onto itself that the parents could allow their children to develop naturally without fearing that their character be depraved or constrained: “To protect them from vices that are not in them, they have

¹² Variant of the text: “Correcting nature! said Wolmar interrupting me; that’s a fine word; but before using it, you should have answered to what Julie just said” (OC 4: 564 [CW 6: 462]).

¹³ *Émile* ii (OC 4: 322 [CW X: 226]). Je ne peux pas répondre à cette question; je n’ai pas les CW

[...] a prophylactic more powerful than speeches they would not understand, or of which they would soon tire. It is the example of the morals of all those about them..." (478).

The second requirement of the inactive method demands multiplying the *dilatory* strategies. It is imperative to ban any corrupted social customs from inopportune intrusion in an education based on nature: "Leave nature to act for a long time before you get involved with acting in its place, lest you impede its operations" (*Emile*, 242). However, allowing nature to act does not mean leaving children to their own devices, any more than the work on l'Elysée consisted in closing the gates and allowing it to grow freely. Just as in the case of Julie's garden, it falls upon Saint-Preux to represent the bad reader, or perhaps Julie's foil, the one who confuses her patient work, as well as Wolmar's, by abandoning children to the forces of nature:

That all would seem to me very fine, said I, if I did not see in it a disadvantage which greatly countervenes the advantages you expect from this method; it is to allow children to acquire a thousand bad habits that can only be prevented by good ones. Look at those who are left to themselves; they soon contract all the shortcomings they see exemplified, because those examples are convenient to follow, and never imitate the good, which is harder to practice. Accustomed to obtaining everything, to working in every circumstance their indiscreet will, they become rebellious, headstrong, uncontrollable... (*Julie* 465).

Negative education is anything but laissez-faire.¹⁴ It is essentially the art of not perturbing nature's temporality, according to Alain Grosrichard: "If one wants to imagine the mechanisms of perversion in general terms, one can simply say it is a lack of recognition of nature's temporality. [...] Man is the one who fore-warns nature and forces it to cover itself up" (1978: 52). It is an art skillfully practiced by Julie, in her garden as with her children. "Nature [...] would have it that children are children before they are men. If we want to pervert that order, we will produce precocious fruits lacking both maturity and savor, which will soon rot" (*Julie* 461). It is particularly important not to seek to develop knowledge in the child before having sought to ensure the development of the instruments of knowledge, meaning the education of the body and of the senses: "Reason begins to take shape only after several years, and when the body has assumed a certain consistency. Nature's intention is then that the body be strengthened before the mind comes into play" (*Ibid*). Wolmar repeats the precept later on: "In any event, let the body mature, until reason begins to bud: Then is the moment to cultivate it" (*Ibid* 465).

This art that relies on the perfect effacement of the educator as well as his omnipresence also consists in selecting the most efficient *stimuli*. This art is so essential for Rousseau that it is the only passage in the letter on education of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* that he copies almost word for word from *Emile*:

All that surrounds him is the book in which, without thinking about it, he continually enriches his memory while waiting for his judgment to be able to profit from it. It is in *the choice of these objects*, it is in the care with which one constantly presents him the objects he can know, and hides from him those he ought not to know, that the true art of cultivating in him this first faculty consists; and it is in this way that one must try to form

¹⁴ "If one had only to listen to the inclinations and follow where they lead, the job would soon be done" (*Émile* 485).

in him a storehouse of knowledge which serves his education during his youth and his conduct at all times. (*Emile* 248)¹⁵

The art of educating thus consists in large part in choosing not only the right objects, but more importantly the right moment for experiences.¹⁶ The educator manages the rate of learning. He must know how to recognize propitious moments and the ideal frequency of the experiences. It is crucial to be able to seize the moment, the occasion (Rousseau often underscores the irreversibility of certain processes). This art should not however be confused with Aristotelian *Kairos*. Rousseau sketches out an entirely different notion of “occasion:” not as the opportune moment that comes up, by lucky chance, to incite action and favor its success; but as “the most opportune moment to intervene in the course of a process in action.” (Jullien 2002: 87).

If Julie and Wolmar as pedagogues are not to be taken as demiurges, they remain guides that redirect circumstances or control the setting of experiences. Hence the intertwinement of a vocabulary of non-intervention and that of labor and shaping. Thus for Julie, the child “will always [have the time] to learn, but there is not a moment to lose for shaping a good natural disposition in him” (*Julie* 581). Wolmar’s explanations are an even clearer evidence of this interweaving: “Once again the question is not to change the character and bend the natural disposition, but on the contrary to push it as far as it can go, to cultivate it and keep it from degenerating; for it is thus that a man becomes all he can be, and that nature’s work is culminated in him by education” (*Julie* 464).

Even if education must supplement nature as late as possible in order to respect its particular rhythms, there is no education, whether it be natural or not, without supplementation or supplement.¹⁷ And the educator is the indisputable presence of this supplementation. That is to say that there is in negative education, just as in l’Elysée, an art of the natural, a collaboration between nature and man in which man is in charge of releasing the power in nature and manage the conditions that allow nature to continue its progress free of unwanted deviation.¹⁸ The concept of negative education as it is proposed by Rousseau tends towards a negative art: the educator’s task “is only to let it arrange its work” (*Emile* 370). But in reality “one must use a great deal of art to prevent social man from being totally artificial” (*Emile* 485).¹⁹ The work of the educator is to be found at the intersection of nature and culture, controlling a power that already exists, and inserting himself into a pre-existing process in order to better complete it.

It is not surprising that Rousseau carefully avoids the artisanal metaphors found in Locke’s pedagogical texts. The Rousseauist governor is nothing like a craftsman who adjusts machines or winds up springs, he is not a tinkerer who creates things from nature. It is not a question of composing and recomposing matter but of forming a living being, and Rousseau’s technical metaphors belong to the language register of culture and gardening: “Plants are shaped by cultivation, and men by education” (*Emile* 162).²⁰ The art of cultivation mentioned here does

¹⁵ *Émile* ii (OC 4: 351 [CW X: 248]), my emphasis. See *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, v, 3 (OC 2: 580–581 [CW 6: 475]).

¹⁶ “If there is a favorable moment in life for this study, it is the one I have chosen for Emile” (*Émile* 399).

¹⁷ “Without childhood, no supplement would ever appear in nature. Yet the supplement is here both humanity’s good fortune and the origin of its perversion” (Derrida 1969: 211).

¹⁸ The “systematic portion” of *Émile* is nothing other than the “course of nature” (*Émile*, preface, OC 4: 242).

¹⁹ “It is through the perfection of culture (and thus by pushing “denaturation”) that harmony with nature can be regained, and this second nature, resulting from art, no longer defines itself as an obscure and distinct equilibrium: it is illuminated by reason and supported by moral sentiment, unknown to the primitive brute.” (Starobinski 1969: 25).

²⁰ “A vicious phrase in their mouth is a foreign plant whose seed the wind brought in; if I cut it off with a reprimand, it will soon sprout again: instead I quietly look for its root, and take care to pull it. I am, she said to me

not of course refer to a rationalized and passive exploitation of nature's gifts, nor to artificial grafting which is only capable of producing monsters, and even less the murderous cultivation that insists on "fashion[ing man] in keeping with his fancy like a tree in his garden" (*Emile* add volume and ref. 161), but rather ultimately to the same art that allowed Julie to create her Elysée.²¹ It is in this light that one can understand Rousseau's choice to raise Emile in the countryside, in a small village, in other words at the heart of a nature that is already cultivated, among men that culture has not yet monstrously denatured.

Rousseau's attitude, seemingly orphic, does therefore not exclude all promethean aims: you don't always find in Rousseau a reluctance to exhibit the "Opera's machines" or to want to "penetrate the depths of nature" to use abbé Pluche's words. Thus, visiting the Elysée constitutes also, and above all, an invitation to demystify Julie's persistence in unveiling the hidden side of the garden. The secrets of its creation have some similarities with the opening of *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes*, as Jean-Philippe Gersperrin noted (1995: 29). As to the pedagogical project, it is indissociable from an anthropological examination that implies both observation and experimentation – an essential convergence manifested even more openly in Julie's words than in those of *Emile*'s author. Rather troubling indeed, is the manner in which the tender mother, Mme de Wolmar, admits to listening to her children with more attention than they know, and keeping an "exact record" of their slightest movements. Julie explains that she has engineered a pedagogical method corresponding "exactly to the two objectives she had in mind, that is, letting the *children's natural disposition develop, and studying it*" (*Julie* 477–478, my emphasis). This statement really helps to understand the dual nature of Emile's project, which is pedagogical *and* anthropological. For there is absolutely no doubt as to the exact nature of this study on which Julie embarks. Clarens is indeed, in its own way, a laboratory of origins providing access to Nature's best kept secrets: "so it is that the character [of children] develops daily before our eyes without restriction, and we can *study the impulses of nature in their most secret principles*" (*Ibid*, my emphasis). Enough to compel us to see negative education as a series of compromises between the prohibition against exerting violence upon Nature and the desire to observe her in even the most minute of details.²²

Thus, between the promethean yearning to manipulate nature by fostering a relationship of control and domination, and the orphic yearning that seeks to restrain itself to a contemplative approach and denies itself the act of unveiling, Rousseau seems to indicate the possibility of a third path. Between the Baconian, who manipulates nature, controls and dominates her, and he who, like abbé Pluche, contemplates without touching, Julie incarnates another way that consists in *working with* Nature, in other words, to live *in society with her*. Julie's garden, like her pedagogy, is not promethean, and neither are conceived as a subjection of nature, as the product of tyranny of knowledge and of the action exerted on a nature that "loves to hide," according to Heraclite's aphorism. But neither are exactly orphic either: they respect the veil of nature, and entice her to deploy her charms. Seduction is halfway between violence and gentleness. Julie's garden, and her pedagogy, point to the possibility of a harmonious seduction of nature that in the end offers the ideal image of a complete (and simultaneous) metamorphosis of both nature and culture.

with a laugh, merely the Gardener's servant; I weed the garden, I remove the bad seed, it is for him to cultivate the good" (*Julie* 478).

²¹ On horticultural metaphors in *Emile*, see Grosrichard 1985: 98–100. Generally speaking, gardening metaphors are very common in pedagogical discourses of the eighteenth century. See Simone Gougeaud-Arnaudeau (2000: 20[ff]).

²² On this, see Martin 2012.

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