CHESS, PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEMATIZATION, AND THE POLITICAL LEGACY OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

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ABSTRACT

In today's philosophical debates, due to the influence of postmodernism, it seems particularly important to reflect on the relationship between reason and rationality. By celebrating the notion of reason as a liberating agent and as the cornerstone of modern civilization, the Enlightenment gave rise to high expectations and to different forms of rationalities. But no sooner was reason rationalized and objectified, than it was denied its intrinsic promise; what was believed to extract humans from obscurantism eventually turned out to be an instrument of domination. From the Holocaust to modern totalitarian forms of subjection, the trust in reason has proven incapable of foreseeing the reality of technological advances and of controlling the immense powers that it initiated. Techno-scientific rationality has led humankind to envisage the possibilities of its own self-destruction in light of potential catastrophes brought about by global climate change and nuclear proliferation. Rationalized reason has thus veered from its initial concern for human welfare and prosperity. It has evolved instead into technologies whose hegemonic authority has sought to dominate and dehumanize individuals.

Focusing on the individual and his/her manipulation, the use of chess as a metaphor for political and philosophical ideologies based on reason, is of specific interest in this study. This dissertation investigates the connection between chess and the Enlightenment project, and seeks more precisely to discern a narrative logic and a conceptual grammar that are both informed by the game of chess. The paradigm of chess helps appreciate the rationality of the eighteenth-century political thinking for which Nature and Reason were the absolute philosophical references. Analyzing the Enlightenment through the prism of chess reveals its excessive reliance on dehumanized reason and its emancipation from an essential human essence or a type of anthropocentric thought. Viewed from the perspective of twentieth-century critical theory such as that of Michel Foucault, the paradigm of chess may well constitute a more accurate description of what motivates and determines human thought and behavior than the Cartesian/Kantian model. In light of such interpretations, the notion of Reason and the ideals promoted by Humanism appear as convenient guises, masking the actual processes of control and domination at work in modern societies.

À mon père

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No conclusive study has ever proven when and where the game of chess was invented. Some chess historians argue that the game originated in China, others believe that its beginnings were in India, yet others have identified Persia as its place of birth. What does act as proof, however, is that "the earliest reference to the game is contained in a Persian romance written about 600 AD, which ascribes the origin of Chess to India."[1] The ancestor to the modern game of chess was known in India as *chaturanga*. "A similar game was also played in China. It was called *hsiang chi*. The game spread from India to Persia, known today as Iran."[2] It was an esteemed pastime throughout the Arab world where its popularity continually grew. The pieces at that time were representative of the distinct local powers. There were "the king, his general or chief counselor called a vizier, and a line of foot soldiers."[3] The elephant was used instead of the bishop, and as the rules of the game were not fixed, they

[1] Edward Lasker, Chess and Checkers; The Way to Mastership (New York: Dover Publications, 1960) 12.

[2] Dana Meachen Rau, Chess (Minneapolis, MN: Compass Point Books, 2005) 7.

[3] Marilyn Yalom, Birth of the Chess Queen: A History (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2004) xviii.

changed according to the place in which it was played. Originally the queen was not part of the game. “Not until the year 1000, two hundred years after Arab conquerors brought chess to southern Europe, did a chess queen appear on the board.”[4] Following the Arab invasion of southern Europe, chess spread “into the Christian parts of Spain during the eleventh century.”[5] The game was introduced by the Muslim conquerors and was adapted to the local customs and beliefs. “During the twelfth century, the chess queen would make her first definite appearance in Spain”[6] and would replace the vizier. Her power and participation in the game remained very limited for three centuries. It was only in fifteenth-century Spain, under the rule of Isabella of Castile that the queen grew from being the weakest to the strongest piece on the chess board. It was also at this time that modern chess rules took a definite shape.

By the thirteenth century chess became a courtly entertainment favored by the nobles and the aristocrats. It was played in educated circles of society and soon appeared in medieval literary creations. Around 1275, Jean de Meung composed the end to the *Roman de la Rose* and attributed the invention of chess to a mathematician whose existence has left no traces:

> Ainsi dit Attalus le sage
> Qui des échecs trouva l'usage
> Car ce fut lui qui démontra
> Ce beau jeu joli qu'il trouva

[4] Marilyn Yalom v.

[5] Marilyn Yalom 43.

[6] Marilyn Yalom 52.

Quand il traitait d'Arithmétique.[7]

It is during this same period that Jacobus de Cessolis, an Italian Dominican monk, preached innovative moralizing sermons based on the symbolism of the chess figurines. He later turned his lectures into a book, *The Game of the Chesse*, which met with great success and in which he provided members of the medieval society with moralizing lessons. It was translated in many languages and "copied so frequently that it rivaled the Bible."[8] For Cessolis chess had been invented to prevent people from idleness, which he viewed as the major cause of sinful actions.

Remarkably enough, the first book written about chess was an effort to set a moral example. Cessolis intended to improve and, if necessary, correct the moral conduct of the ruling members of medieval society.

> Cessolis makes two main divisions of society: the nobility and the commoners, represented respectively by the major pieces and the pawns. Of the major chessmen, the king and the knight are symbols of their obvious ranks; the queen, of her sex in general as well as royal women. There remain two important pieces, the bishop, usually known in the thirteenth century as the alfin, and the castle, or rook, to which no single definite meaning had been attached at this time. Cessolis makes the former represent the judges, whose duty it is to counsel the king and to give sentence well and justly, and the latter, the king's legates or vicars. God's vicars and legates do not appear at all among the chessmen, so the Church is entirely neglected in this otherwise very complete community-a very strange omission.[9]

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[7] Jean Guillaume and Jules Croissandeau, Le Roman de la Rose (Nendeln/Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint, 1970) 173.

[8] J. C. Hallman, The Chess Artist: Genius, Obsession, and the World's Oldest Game (New York: T. Dunne Books, 2003) 7.

[9] Charles K. Wilkinson, "A Thirteenth-Century Morality" (The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin, New Series, Vol. 2, No. 1) 50.

By defining moral duties according to social prerogatives, the friar drifted away from a purely theological understanding of man and suggested instead a more human, social, and pragmatic approach to human responsibilities on earth. Cessolis noticeably stated the medieval philosophy that bound the servant to his master, but his writing was not only a clear indication that "Chess had a political dimension in Renaissance culture"[10] , it also announced the new philosophy of the Renaissance. This philosophy based itself on humanistic ideas — since "the word humanism suggests that it is concerned with what it is to be human"[11] and that "the Humanists saw themselves as men at work rescuing a maltreated past for the sake of perfecting their own civilization."[12] The term humanism was coined in the nineteenth century though its roots lie in Greek philosophy, and therefore, as anachronistic as it may be, Cessolis' approach could readily be assimilated with the humanistic principles that Erich Fromm has clearly characterized as follows:

> First, the belief in the unity of the human race, that there is nothing human which is not found in every one of us; second, the emphasis on man's dignity; third, the emphasis on man's capacity to develop and perfect himself; and fourth, the emphasis on reason, objectivity, and peace.[13]

In Cessalis' book, chess became a codified expression of moral and social behaviors. As his essay was a simplified and symbolic approach to study human beings and to

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[10] Patricia Fortini Brown, Private Lives in Renaissance Venice: Art, Architecture, and the Family (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004) 130.

[11] Jeaneane D. Fowler, Humanism: Beliefs and Practices (The Sussex library of religious beliefs and practices. Brighton [England]: Sussex Academic Press, 1999) 9.

[12] Peter Gay, The Rise of Modern Paganism (New York: Norton, 1995) 268.

[13] Erich Fromm, On Disobedience and Other Essays (New York: Seabury Press, 1981) 43.

provide them with moral guidance, *The Game of the Chesse* was a pedagogic treatise and an attempt to perfect his contemporaries and the society he lived in.

During the Renaissance in France the game of chess continued to be a fashionable recreational activity. During this period, "chess was played at tournaments with human "pieces" on enormous fields"[14] and was often referenced in literature. The French poet, Gratien du Pont, published in 1534 his *Controversies of the Masculine and Feminine Sexes* in which he splashed his misogynistic views and amassed "nasty words for women on a chessboard, one in each square."[15] Other French writers, such as Rabelais in his fifth book, made mention of the game of chess and thereby testified their knowledge of the game. In the opinion of Descartes, chess was equated with a harmless confrontation between two differing and opposite views. In a letter to Huygens written on March 9th 1638, he used the game of chess to describe the disagreement he had with a man named Fromondus about the few errors the latter made in the copy of Descartes' essay *Optics and Geometry*: "our dispute was conducted like a game of chess: we remained good friends once the match was over."[16] The centuries during which intellectuals and clergymen strove to define human beings without resorting to theology were also the centuries in which chess was introduced to Europe and when the rules of the game settled. Since its

[14] John Carlos Rowe, "Culture" and the Problem of the Disciplines (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998) 82.

[15] Marilyn Yalom 219.

[16] René Descartes, The philosophical writings of Descartes 3. The correspondence (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991) 91.

introduction by the Arabs, chess continued to fascinate the European intellectual elites, and the Enlightenment was no exception. “In the Enlightenment, at least for some philosophes, humanism was the ground, and the fruit, of atheism,”[17], and it was also the ground for the natural religion that many *philosophes* supported and developed. This particular form of rationality evolved in the eighteenth century through the game of chess which influenced philosophical discourse and ushered in new forms of strategies and tactics in the constitution of society and, incidentally, of the subject.

In eighteenth-century France, many *philosophes* promoted a natural philosophy which "was a fusion of humanism and science—a will to systematize the world along with a caution to remain detached and objective.”[18] While humanism defined freedom and a certain form of morality in order to organize and reinforce the techniques that would allow society to progress, it is also at the root of the disciplinary society as suggested by Michel Foucault:

> Humanism invented a whole series of subjected sovereignties: the soul (ruling the body, but subjected to God), consciousness (sovereign in a context of judgment, but subjected to the necessities of truth), the individual (a titular control of personal rights subjected to the laws of nature and society), basic freedom (sovereign within, but accepting the demands of an outside word and “aligned with destiny).[19]

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[17] Peter Gay, The Enlightenment: An Interpretation (New York: Norton, 1995) 108.

[18] Aram Vartanian, Science and Humanism in the French Enlightenment (EMF critiques. Charlottesville: Rookwood Press, 1999) 126.

[19] Michel Foucault, Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977) 221.

As widespread as humanist philosophy may have been, it is nonetheless based on an abstract notion of humanity, and can moreover "be used to any end"[20] and has even "been used by Marxists, liberals, Nazis, Catholics"[21] :

> Marxism has been a humanism; so have existentialism and personalism; there was a time when people supported the humanistic values represented by National Socialism, and when the Stalinists themselves said they were humanists.[22]

Humanism is a wide-ranging doctrine vague enough to justify anything and even to substantiate inhumane actions. Originally placing humans at the center of its preoccupation, eighteenth-century philosophy conceptualized and organized a world that would value and rule human life, well-being, and morality. The Enlightenment has given rise to many doctrines, including a humanist trend which substantiated all the previous humanist philosophical tenets. Tzvetan Todorov has noted that "Humanism is the ideology underpinning modern democratic states; but this very omnipresence makes it invisible or insipid."[23] Those imperceptible disciplines that rule every human life are what Michel Foucault intends to reveal. In his essay "What is Enlightenment?" he explains however his conception and the limitations of humanism as a potential reference for an analysis of the eighteenth century: "The humanistic thematic is in itself too supple, too diverse, too inconsistent to serve as an

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[20] Michel Foucault and Paul Rabinow, The Foucault Reader (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984) 374.

[21] Michel Foucault, Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton, Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988) 15.

[22] Michel Foucault and Paul Rabinow, The Foucault Reader 44.

[23] Tzvetan Todorov, Imperfect Garden: The Legacy of Humanism (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002) 7.

axis for reflection."[24] For Foucault the key to humanism is the subject — "Au cœur de l'humanisme, la théorie du sujet"[25] — and it is the political investment of the subject, and more precisely of its constitution, that characterized the Enlightenment. Warning against the "too facile confusions between humanism and Enlightenment," Foucault claimed that the Enlightenment "must not be conceived only as an obligation prescribed to individuals," but it should be considered instead "as a political problem."[26] This political problem resides in the "relationships between power, truth and the subject" which "appear live on the surface of visible transformations."[27] Expressing the need to get away from a subject-centered mode of thought based on a conscious, purposeful, autonomous agency, Foucault has directed his attention to the "form of power that makes individuals subjects" and to the technique that "categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him that he must recognize and others have to recognize in him." [28] As an axis for reflection, the Enlightenment departs therefore from a purely subject-based paradigm and from humanism; it should be questioned instead as the birth — or at least the conceptualization — of "structures of rationality which articulate true discourse and the mechanisms of subjugation which are linked to it."[29]

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[24] Michel Foucault and Paul Rabinow, The Foucault Reader 44.

[25] Michel Foucault, Dits et écrits. 1954-1988 II, 1976-1988 (Paris: Gallimard, 2001) 226.

[26] Michel Foucault, The Foucault Reader (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984) 37.

[27] Michel Foucault, The Politics of Truth (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2007) 57.

[28] Michel Foucault, The Essential Foucault. (New York / London: The New Press, 2003) 130.

[29] Michel Foucault, The Politics of Truth (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2007) 56.

In that regard, Roger Chartier gives a particularly clear explanation of the core issue that needs to be addressed:

> Instead of accepting the classic definition of the Enlightenment as a corpus of specific statements or a set of clear and distinct ideas, should we not rather see that term as covering a set of multiple and intermingled practices guided by a concern for common utility, which aimed at a new management of spaces and populations and whose mechanisms (intellectual, institutional, social, and so on) imposed a complete reorganization of the systems for the perception and organization of the social world?[30]

As it is according to practices that the Enlightenment should be addressed, the particular angle of this study follows the strategies and techniques of population government conceived in the eighteenth century. The Enlightenment is therefore not a period or a philosophy to be considered and analyzed from the point of view of the subject, that is, of his freedom, of his welfare, of the advances of his condition, or of his autonomy, but rather in terms of his constitution[31] and, as Michel Foucault remarked, "here we would have to bring out a whole form of analyses which could be called *strategic*s."[32] The eighteenth-century legacy is to be questioned according to formation of systems and networks of knowledge and power which "are only an analytical grid"[33] and which have constituted subjects and organized them.

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[30] Roger Chartier, On the Edge of the Cliff: History, Language, and Practices. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997) 60.

[31] The use of the gender-exclusive pronouns does not reflect the French original version in which gender is not expressed through pronouns.

[32] Michel Foucault, The Politics of Truth (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2007) 65.

[33] Michel Foucault, The Politics of Truth 60.

While the two main categories used as reference by eighteenth-century thinkers were reason and nature, I argue that the game of chess, which was very much in vogue in philosophical milieus, was also a very useful guide for thoughts and that its tactics and logic eventually became a reference for philosophical discourse and practices. Inherited from the humanist ideology, and developed and conceptualized by the Enlightenment, those strategies have paradoxically disregarded human beings to the point that Foucault defended an anti-humanistic stance in which he claimed the death of man, who "had long […] disappeared and would continue to disappear,"[34] and through which he hoped to reactualize and revitalize the debate on the individual subject.

Foucault's approach has helped to appreciate the implication of this sort of rationality and, at the same time, the model of the chess game helps to understand more fully the originality and force of Foucault's rationale. In this regard, my purpose is first to reveal the significance of chess to the Enlightenment mapping of Nature, to the conceptualization of a new social organization and political authority, and to the development of techniques and strategies of power. My following objective is centered on the investigation of the importance of chess logic in the legacy of the Enlightenment.

I begin therefore with the importance of chess in eighteenth-century Europe. I look into the advent of coffee-houses whose propagation through France, I argue, helped the Enlightenment ideals to be publicized, discussed, and popularized, as much

[34] Michel Foucault, The order of things: an archaeology of the human sciences (London: Routledge, 2001) 351.

as they helped chess playing spread through all social spheres. In the eighteenth century, the game was praised for its requirement of long-range planning and mastery of preset rules. It enjoyed the reputation of being a game that required high general intelligence. It is of little wonder that the Enlightenment thinkers who prided themselves on their ability to use reason took a liking to the game. Many of them were regularly seen in cafés, became avid chess players, and devoted most of their free time to chess.

In Chapter two, as chess was believed to sharpen one's reason and perfect the art of thinking, I argue that the importance of the game went beyond that of a simple pastime. Discussing natural philosophy that was at the root of many innovative theories of the Enlightenment, I show that chess became a convenient and significant reference for philosophical discourse and that prominent *philosophes* like Voltaire or Diderot used the paradigm of chess as a metaphor to illustrate the ideal social organization or as the logic of innovative moral philosophy.

In Chapter three I begin by looking at Jean-Jacques Rousseau's obsession with the game of chess and then move on to analyze his critical essays and philosophy. I show that most of Rousseau's social and political theories were fundamentally structured by the logic and codification of chess. From the concept of transparency to the necessary behavioral management of social individuals, Rousseau's logic and mindset were fundamentally influenced by the game of chess which helped him conceptualize his innovative political and moral philosophy.

In chapter four, I argue that, applied to politics, the rationality of chess assumed the form of a social determinism incompatible with private freedom. In trying to conceive the perfect society in which freedom and welfare would prevail, Rousseau's rationale led him to a degrading conception of the social man who, in the *philosophe*'s project, became nothing more than a docile and obedient pawn in the hands of the Legislator.

In my fifth and last chapter, I study the chess-like strategy of the partitioning of the human environment and understanding. Using Michel Foucault's approach, I claim that the tactics and strategies of chess can be found in the modern techniques and mechanisms of population government and that the notion of Reason and the ideals promoted by Humanism have eventually veered into actual processes of control and domination at work in modern societies.

CHAPTER 1

CHESS OR THE DELIGHT OF AN ENLIGHTENED NATION

1.1 A new Parisian trend: the coffee-house

In the eighteenth century, a new taste for coffee spread all over Europe. The French capital saw the opening of many new locations where this new commodity was sold to the general public. As an alternative to taverns and alcohol retailers, coffee-houses grew in popularity, attracted more people, and had a considerable impact on Parisian social life. First introduced in Europe during the seventeenth century, about 1668, "when the coffee parties of the Turkish ambassador at Paris brought the beverage into fashion,"[35] coffee was not originally available to the common people who could not afford to buy it. It was the privilege of the nobles and the affluent bourgeois. Yet no sooner had cafés opened than coffee became very much in vogue among the lower classes of the French society. The first Parisian café was the *Café de Procope*, opened in 1689 by François Procope, an Italian immigrant. It marked the

[35]Robert Hewitt, Coffee: Its History, Cultivation, and Uses (D. Appleton and company, 1872) 17.

beginning of a new trend.[36] As Mark Pendergrast remarks, it was only after the opening of "his *Café de Procope* directly opposite the *Comédie Française* that the famous French coffeehouse took root."[37] Its popularity inspired many other Parisians to set up a business. Many other coffee retail spaces opened all over Paris and experienced the same public esteem.

The introduction of coffee was a great event which created new customs, and even modified human temperament. Coffee and cafés changed and enlivened Parisian life. French historian Jules Michelet even identifies coffee as one of the elements that triggered social progress. He argues that, in the eighteenth century,

> Paris devient un grand café. Trois cents cafés sont ouverts à la causerie. Il en est de même des grandes villes, Bordeaux, Nantes, Lyon, Marseille, etc." "Jamais la France ne causa plus et mieux. […] De cette explosion étincelante, nul doute que l'honneur ne revienne en partie à l'heureuse révolution du temps, au grand fait qui créa de nouvelles habitudes, modifia les tempéraments même : l'avènement du café.[38]

Coffee-houses were numerous, diverse, and offered atmospheres as varied as their clientele. In his 1740 novel *La Valise Trouvée*, novelist and playwright Alain-René Lesage described various Parisian cafés and did not fail to mention their distinctive atmospheres. One of them in particular attracted his protagonist's attention:

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[36] Joel Shapira praised Procope's business savvy: "He had shrewdly established his café opposite the new *Comédie Française*, and so it became the natural meeting place of the most renowned French actors, writers, and musicians of the eighteenth century, who were attracted not only by its location, but by its dark, cave-like atmosphere. Voltaire, whose favorite drink was a mixture of coffee and chocolate, was a regular customer. When the Procope closed two centuries later, Voltaire's marble table and chair were still there as objects of veneration. Rousseau, Beaumarchais, and Diderot were a few of the scores of famous Frenchmen who were patrons of the café (18).

[37] Mark Pendergrast, Uncommon Grounds: The History of Coffee and How It Transformed Our World (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1999) 9.

[38] Jules Michelet, Histoire de France. Tome dix-septième (Paris : A. Lacroix, 1877) 171.

> Il y a tout au contraire un autre café où l'on entend plus de bruit que dans la grand'salle du palais. C'est un flux et reflux de gens de toutes conditions. Ce sont des nobles et des roturiers, des adolescents bien faits et des figures plates, de beaux-esprits et des sots, pêle-mêle, qui s'entretiennent ensemble, chacun à proportion de son intelligence.[39]

This literary excerpt testifies to the heterogeneity of the coffee-houses' patrons. People from all walks of life socialized in cafés which "catered to all classes of society; and […] retained their distinctive characteristic. A number of them "added other liquid and substantial refreshments, many becoming out-and-out restaurants."[40] These were the places that would bring the population together, not only to sip coffee, but also to debate, exchange ideas and opinions, and socialize. "As coffee became cheaper and more affordable, its popularity spread to all levels of society."[41] For these reasons, coffee-houses blurred the distinctions between the Parisian population and had a considerable impact on Parisian social life.

The demand for coffee was such that even taverns started carrying this product. Unlike liquor and other alcohols, coffee does not impair the senses but it affects them. The main effect of coffee is not euphoria; its consumption does not cause intoxication and other public misbehavior. One of its main assets is to allow the consumer to remain sober and lucid. It was coffee's ability to sharpen one's attention and spirit that was highly valued in the eighteenth century as Jonathan Swift wrote in

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[39] Alain-René Lesage, "La Valise Trouvée." Oeuvres Complétes (Paris: Renouard, 1821) 210.

[40] William H. Ukers, All about Coffee (Detroit: Gale Research, 1974) 100.

[41] James Van Horn Melton, The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe (New approaches to European history, 22. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 238.

a 1722 letter to Miss Vanhomrigh: “Coffee makes us severe, and grave, and philosophical.”[42] One could drink coffee in excess, and still make sense. The appreciation of coffee was widespread; people valued its taste and its effects.

As coffee-houses were the gathering locations of disparate people, they became the venue of political discussions and debates about social change. Jürgen Habermas stresses the importance of public spaces in London. He postulates that "the coffee-house not merely made accessible to the relevant circles less formal and easier; it embraced the wider strata of the middle class, including craftsmen and shopkeepers."[43] Following British coffee-houses, eighteenth-century Parisian cafés entered the public sphere and were the theatres of political deliberations on critical issues. Among the “lower institutional embodiments,” there “were the *cabinets de lecture*, the subscription libraries, the cafés and the coffee-houses that proliferated in Paris and the larger towns from the mid-century.”[44] More and more cafés made news print available to their customers who could in turn analyze and comment current events of all sorts. In fact, in his book *Coffee: A Dark History*, Anthony Wild goes as far as to argue that the revolutions in America and France were “fomented in the coffee houses”[45] and points out that “the debate concerning slavery had a profound

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[42] Jonathan Swift and Thomas Roscoe. The Works of Jonathan Swift, D.D., and Dean of St. Patrick's, Dublin With Copious Notes and Additions, and a Memoir of the Author (New York: Derby & Jackson, 1859) 122.

[43] Jürgen Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry Into a Category of Bourgeois Society (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989) 33.

[44] Peter Jones, Reform and Revolution in France: The Politics of Transition, 1774-1791 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 75.

[45] Antony Wild, Coffee: A Dark History (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005) 137.

effect on the pre-Revolutionary thinkers who gathered at the *Café Procope* in Paris, including Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Diderot."[46] It was also "very significant in the eighteenth century, the resort of Voltaire and Encyclopædists, and later of the Revolutionaries."[47] Coffee-houses were the new gathering places; they entered the social and public sphere, and were notorious for their networks and unceasing debates about freedom, progress, and other themes promulgated by the *philosophes*. Ambitious young men used coffee-houses as a springboard to fame, just as well-known *philosophes* used cafés to spread their ideas and to enlighten their contemporaries: "The writer of the eighteenth century […] spoke to a public who had deserted the Church, the royal palace and the university for the salons [and the] cafés."[48]

Salons were not public spaces however, they were private clubs with prestigious or comfortable members who were admitted on a highly selective basis. On the other hand, even though coffee was not free and some cafés required their clientele to pay a fee at the entrance, coffee-houses in general enabled intellectuals to reach, inform and present new ideas to a larger population.

Debating was indeed a widespread exercise in eighteenth-century Paris. Gathered in coffee-houses, essayists of all kinds presented and defended the ideas and sought to demonstrate eloquence and acumen. In that venture, coffee was believed to

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[46] Antony Wild 138.

[47] E. V. Lucas, A Wanderer in Paris (New York: Macmillan Co, 1909) 171.

[48] Friedrich Heer, The Intellectual History of Europe (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1966) 403.

be a great stimulant that could foster thoughts and stimulate the mind. It was an esteemed beverage for dilettantes and more enlightened thinkers as revealed by Montesquieu in his 1721 anonymously published epistolary novel *The Persian Letters*. This novel related the Parisian adventures of Usbek and Rica who exchanged letters with their compatriots to share their impressions. In Letter 36, Usbek wrote Rhedi about the strange habits of Parisians and evoked the new popularity of the coffee houses:

> In some of them people tell each other the news; in others they play chess. There is one where the coffee is prepared in such a way that it sharpens the wits of those who drink it; at any rate, there is nobody among them who, as he leaves, does not think that he is four times cleverer than when he went in.[49]

The perception of the two Persian natives on French society was meant to produce *defamiliarizing* effect and expose the vices and nonsense of eighteenth-century French society. Montesquieu's intention here was to give a fresh perspective on French society. He mocked the coffee trend in Paris and the Parisians' naïve belief that it could make them more intelligent. The café he mentioned was "doubtless the café Procope,"[50] where well-known authors would sometimes stop in and taste the new coffee brands.[51] Even though Montesquieu satirized his fellow Frenchmen's enthusiasm for coffee, this letter reveals the excitement that surrounded this new

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[49] Charles de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu, The Persian Letters Trans. C. J. Betts (Harmondsworth (UK)/Baltimore: Penguin Classics, 1973) 89.

[50] Louis Ducros and W. De Geijer, French Society in the Eighteenth Century (London: G. Bell, 1926) 321.

[51] "*Voltaire, ne fit, ainsi que Jean-Jacques Rousseau, que de rares apparitions au café Procope,— le premier, parce qu'il était trop recherché; le second, parce qu'il recherchait trop le huis clos.* " Emile Colombey, Ruelles, salons, et cabarets: histoire anecdotique de la littérature française (Paris: E. Dentu, 1892) 74.

commodity. Most importantly it shows that many of them were gathering places for chess players as early as the first quarter of the century.

Coffee-houses not only became very trendy, they also promoted the game of chess. Some remained sites for discussions, others drew in chess enthusiasts. In fact, Richard Twiss reported in his 1740 book entitled *Chess* that "at this time chess was played in almost every Coffee-house in Paris."[52] In 1783, Sir S. Romilly would qualify Twiss's account and would write in his memoirs that chess was played "in every coffee-house in Paris."[53] From those two accounts of Parisian life, it is easy to see how chess constantly grew in popularity and steadily invaded eighteenth-century public life. By the end of the century, chess turned out to be the epitome of game playing.

The popularity of coffee thus had two notable consequences. The propagation of coffee houses throughout Paris helped spread and popularize Enlightenment ideals were publicized, discussed, and popularized, but it is also thanks to the proliferation of coffee retailers that chess playing became one of the favorite pastimes of a nation.

1.2 The democratization of chess

Chess was originally reserved for the nobles and the aristocracy, it "has been practiced by the greatest warriors and generals; and some have supposed that it was

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[52] Richard Twiss, Chess. [A Compilation of All the Anecdotes and Quotations That Could Be Found Relative to the Game of Chess; with an Account of All the Chess-Books Which Could Be Procured] (London: J.G.I. and I. Robinson, 1787) 152.

[53] Samuel Romilly, The Life of Sir Samuel Romilly (London: J. Murray, 1842) 450.

necessary for a military man to be well skilled in it."[54] It had always been known as an allegory for war. Military campaigns waged on European soil during the seventeenth and eighteenth century resembled a game of chess. The pitched battles and the code of honor among officers made it easy to apply chess strategy to the battle field:

> For at this period war really resembled a game of chess. On the field of operations, duly marked out and delimitated, the generals began the contest every year in the spring. When, after complicated maneuvers, one of the adversaries had lost or gained several pieces –towns or fortresses – the decisive battle took place; from the top of the slope, whence the whole chess-board – the battlefield – lay before him, the Marshal moved his fine regiments backwards and forwards…. Check and mate, the loser cleared his board: the pawns were put back into their boxes, or the regiments into their winter quarters, and each one went off to attend to his private affairs while awaiting the next game or campaign.[55]

Military officers organized the battlefield and ordered military maneuvers just as they would move pieces on a chessboard. Each battle was a game of chess that would be reinitiated after each skirmish.

In his *Essay sur l'histoire générale,* Voltaire also wrote about India, to which he attributed the invention of chess. He then introduced the game as an allegory for war: "Le jeu que nous appelons des échecs par corruption, fut inventé par eux: il est allégorique comme leurs fables; c'est l'image de la guerre."[56] From Voltaire's

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[54] Francois Danican Philidor, An Easy introduction to the game of chess : containing one hundred examples of games, and a great variety of critical situations and conclusions, including the whole of Philidor's analysis, with copious selections from Stamma, the Calabrois, etc. ... : to which are added, Caissa, a poem / by Sir William Jones ; The morals of chess, by Dr. Franklin (Philadelphia : M. Carey and Son, 1817) 249.

[55] Jacques Boulenger, The Seventeenth Century The National history of France, v. 3 (London: W. Heinemann, 1920) 218.

[56] Voltaire, Essay sur l'histoire générale (Genève: Cramer, 1756) 29.

observation, one may deduce as Paul Metzner did that "if playing chess was like conducting a war, and the people who conducted wars were noblemen, then chess was logically a noble game."[57] Chess was valued as a game that lent itself to comparisons with warfare and to which eighteenth-century military officers remained partial: "Le jeu d'échecs bénéficient auprès du public d'une image valorisante ; il est considéré comme étant le jeu des rois et des grands."[58] Chess had always been one of the principal amusements of the nobles and was even taught in military academy.

No wonder then that the French royal family appreciated the game, especially Louis XIII who, as Richard Twiss recounted in his 1740 book, "had a chess-board quilted with wool, the men each with a point at the bottom; by which means he played when riding in a carriage, sticking the men in the cushion."[59] The Game of Kings paradoxically left Louis XIV and his great grandson Louis XV indifferent. While both kings enjoyed card games and other games of chance, they did not indulge in chess. Maxcellend Coulon explains that their lack of concern for chess was politically motivated: "Louis XIV ne jouait pas aux Echecs; il trouvait la pratique de ce jeu trop risqué pour son autorité, et pour l'image qu'il voulait donner de la fonction royale."[60] Louis XIV is famous for having disciplined the nobility in 1682 after moving his court and government to Versailles which "drew the great nobles from the castles and

[57] Paul Metzner, Crescendo of the virtuoso : spectacle, skill, and self-promotion in Paris during the Age of Revolution (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1998) 35.

[58] Maxcellend Coulon, Jeu d'échecs et société en France au XVIIIe siècle (Paris : Septentrion, 2001) 348.

[59] Twiss 5.

[60] Coulon 351.

peasantry, and converted them into courtiers, functionaries and office holders."[61] But the Sun King himself would have lost face after a loss at chess: suffering defeat would put his intellectual and political authority in jeopardy. The royal snub of the game was proof that chess was no longer limited to its intellectual dimension: the activity of pushing wooden pieces on a board had entered the political realm.

The political implications of chess became especially pronounced in the eighteenth century. Despite the game's sophistication and its historical association with nobility and distinction, the eighteenth century witnessed an expansion of chess which broke through the social barriers and no longer remained the privilege of the aristocracy: "In both London and Paris, the 'democratization' of the game was helped on its way by a comparatively small social development – the increase of coffee-houses and cafés."[62]

A case in point is the area of the *Palais Royal* in eighteenth-century Paris which was the intellectual center of the capital and where cafés could be found on every block. In this Parisian district, while prominent *philosophes* used to sip away, dangerous new ideas were debated, but it "gradually became more of a chess than a purely literary resort."[63] The main coffee-house of the *Palais Royal* was the *Café de la Régence.* Established in 1718, it was the place where the best chess players could be

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[61] Robert Matteson Johnston, The French revolution; a short history (New York: H. Holt and Co., 1909) 15.

[62] Harry Golombek, A history of chess (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1976) 114.

[63] Walter Hilliard Bidwell Eclectic Magazine (New-York / Philadelphia: Leavitt, Trow & co, 1856) 268.

found as well as all the people wishing to see or learn from the masters. In a letter to Sophie Volland, Diderot described this location as "le rendez-vous des joueurs d'échecs de la grande classe."[64] Diderot alludes furthermore to the reputation of this venue in *Le Neveu de Rameau*, in which the narrator confessed to coming to the *Café de la Régence* where he enjoyed watching people playing chess. It was the best-known coffee-house in Paris, "among other literary monarchs who visited the café, came Voltaire and D'Alembert. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, dressed as an Armenian, drew such crowds that the proprietor was forced to appeal for police protection"[65]. It was eventually to become "the favorite resort of Robespierre, a devoted chess-player, who lived close by the Rue St. Honoré [...], and of the young Napoleon Bonaparte when waiting on fortune in Paris. The latter is said to have been a rough, impatient player, and a bad loser."[66] Robespierre would often take a seat at the *Café de la Régence* but "few had any wish to play with him, such terror did the insignificant looking little man strike into every one's heart."[67]

Louvet de Couvray in his 1787 novel *Une année de la vie du chevalier de Faublas* relates an incident during which his protagonist disturbs a chess game at the *Café de la Régence*. The *chevalier de* Faublas inadvertently knocks over the pieces of

[64] Denis Diderot, Lettres A Sophie Volland. T. 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1950) 24.

[65] Thomas Okey, The Story of Paris (London: J.M. Dent & Co, 1906) 332.

[66] Okey 332.

[67] Johann Löwenthal, The Chess Player's Magazine (Adams & Francis, 1866) 12.

a chessboard which initiates a heated argument between him and the chess players who not only yell at him but end up yelling at each other:

> Eh mais vous êtes fort heureux que l'étourderie de monsieur vous ait sauvé; je forçais la dame en dix-huit coups! - Et vous n'alliez pas jusqu'au onzième. En moins de dix vous étiez mat! - Mat! Mat! C'est pourtant vous, monsieur, qui êtes cause que l'on m'insulte! ...apprenez, monsieur, que dans le Café de la Régence on ne doit pas courir. (alors un autre joueur se leva:)-hé! Messieurs, dans le Café de la Régence, on ne doit pas crier, on ne doit pas parler. Quel train vous faites![68]

This passage testifies to the intensity of the players at the *Café de la Régence* just as it shows that chess was not considered a game of mere recreation: it was a serious and important matter that required foresight and concentration. As the players bragged about devising the strategic demise of their opponent, the game became more a battle of wills than a mere hobby. Louvet de Couvray's novel moreover offers an illuminating insight into the habits of the patrons of the Café de la Régence. When chess was being played, there was no room for discussions or debates, silence prevailed.

By the end of the century, private clubs opened in the French capital city. Many were literary resorts and most of them made it possible for their members to play chess. The members of *Le Salon des Echecs* however were only dedicated to the game of chess: "Le jeu d'échecs est le seul que cette société se permette."[69] Another famous salon was *Le Salon des Arts* established in 1784 that convened at the *Palais*

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[68] Jean-Baptiste Louvet de Couvray, « Une année de la vie du chevalier de Faublas» In Romanciers du 18e Siècle (Paris : Gallimard, 1960) 556.

[69] Luc-Vincent Thiéry, Almanach du voyageur a Paris: contenant une description exacte & intéressante de tous les monumens, chefs-d'oeuvres des artes, etablissemens utiles, & autres objets (A Paris: Chez Hardouin, 1784) 211.

Royal upstairs from the *Café du Caveau*. This club proposed different activities such as conversation, reading, exhibition, music, and one room was reserved for chess-players: "Tous jeux y sont proscrits, excepté ceux des échecs et des dames, auxquels on ne peut même jouer que dans une pièce destinée à ces amusements."[70] The membership fee kept the general population away from these clubs. But this development shows nonetheless that chess became the pastime of the upper Parisian society as much as it was popular among the lower classes.

Following the establishment of coffee-houses which were the rendezvous of all the chess enthusiasts, the appeal of chess to the general public created a market for chess literature which became widely sought after. Any player who looked forward to improving his strategy or his understanding of the game would consult the treatises written by famous chess masters.

Gioachino Greco was a sixteenth-century Italian chess player who was one of the first to transcribe chess games on record. Though Greco was still published and widely read in France, he was praised for his attacks but the system of defense he offered was not deemed efficient. New first-rate players noticed Greco's failings and offered a more complete and pragmatic pedagogical approach.

In 1737, Philip Stamma, a native of Syria, first published his book in Paris entitled *Essai sur le jeu d'échecs* where he provided advice to improve his readers' tactic and reveal some secrets of the game. Stamma then emigrated to London where he pursued a career in playing and teaching chess. In 1745 he published another book

[70] Luc-Vincent Thiéry 212.

The noble game of chess; or, a new and easy method to learn to play well in a short time in which he gives an historical account of the game of chess and offers — in English this time — hints and models to advance the reader's strategy. The title of his book is significant in that, for the first time, the finest strategies and moves would no longer be reserved for the elite, they would be explained and made accessible to the educated French population. However his book failed to sell well partly because of the new notations he employed to describe the combinations and partly because, two years later, in 1747, he publicly suffered an embarrassing defeat at chess against a twenty-one year-old Frenchman named Philidor.

Among all chess players, François André Danican Philidor (1726-1795) was the most prominent figure of the eighteenth century. Born in 1726, he had been trained by M. de Kermur, "Sire de Légal, the star of the Café de la Régence, which was the centre of French chess ever since the beginning of the eighteenth century."[71] Philidor published his first book in 1749. It was entitled *Chess analysed: or instructions by which a perfect knowledge of this noble game may in a short time be acquired* and in it he "set forth, in a true light, the theory and practice of this game."[72] It was a publication that contributed enormously to the popularization and diffusion of chess knowledge. Philidor's explanation of various chess tactics and combinations were not only meant for the specialists, they were clear enough to be understood and reproduced by any player. As a result, the first edition of his book met with great

[71] Walter Yust. Encyclopaedia Britannica: A New Survey of Universal Knowledge (Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, 1952) 432.

[72] Francois Danican Philidor, Chess analysed: or instructions by which a perfect knowledge of this noble game may in a short time be acquired (London : printed for J. Nourse, and P. Vaillant, 1750) vi.

success, and was reedited many times both in French and English. Philidor is still known today to chess enthusiasts for his groundbreaking theory about the pawn which he described as the soul of the game. He wrote in the preface to his chess treatise that the pawns "are the very life of this game: They alone form the attack and the defense; on their good or bad situation, depends the gain or loss of each party."[73] In the spirit of the egalitarian ideas of the Enlightenment, the pawn, usually considered expendable, turns out to be essential to victory and can even bring down a king. The idea that the well-organized pawns could defeat any king perfectly fits the democratizing drift that pervades the eighteenth-century French intellectual milieus. Chess places kings and pawns on the same board, and the people, the kings, the nobles, and the clergy also figuratively come together on this equalizing level of the game.

1.3. Chess and the *philosophes*

The value and therefore the importance of chess pieces differ. The king has always been the piece to protect and the queen the most efficient and useful piece on the chess board. However all the men on the board are complementary; they share and connect through a common goal: to checkmate the opponent's king. It was arguably a newly gained perspective on social organization that inspired eighteenth-century authors to use chess as a metaphor.

[73] Philidor x.

Marc Antoine René de Voyer d'Argenson, also known as the Marquis de Paulmy, used chess to question the current royal authority and to demonstrate that, despite their grandeur and renown, the kings and all the other affluent people of his time were nonetheless human. The great work by the Marquis de Paulmy was entitled *Mélanges tirés d'une grande bibliothèque* and was published in 65 volumes in Paris between 1770 and 1788. It is in his 1782 volume that he used the image of the chess set to express the equality of every human being regardless of their rank or birth. He argued that every human being is doomed to the same fate: "Mais enfin la partie d'échecs finit, & lorsque le Roi est mat, toutes les pièces rentrent pêle-mêle dans la boite de sapin: c'est ainsi que la mort & et le cercueil égalisent toutes les conditions & font oublier la place que l'on a occupée sur l'échiquier de ce monde."[74] This passage raised two major issues. The first one was that, in a society characterized by inequality and the granting of privileges to an aristocratic elite, the Marquis de Paulmy used a chess metaphor to portray the strict equality of humans in their helplessness in the face of death. The second issue raised by the passage was the rejection of religious dogma since faith did not seem to have any bearing on the afterlife: humans were simply all equal in death.

Taking into consideration the growing popularity of chess, it comes as no surprise that many *philosophes* took a liking to this form of recreation. Among them, Voltaire was a dedicated player. It is an interest occasionally alluded to in his

[74] Marc Antoine René Paulmy and André Guilleaume Contant D'Orville, Mélanges tirés d'une grande bibliothèque (Paris: Moutard, 1780) 372.

correspondence. Voltaire was a correspondent of Frederick II of Prussia with whom he had a tumultuous relationship. They nonetheless remained in touch after Voltaire's departure from Prussia and exchanged letters. In one of them, written on July 15th 1759, Frederick described his political and military difficulties to Voltaire:

> L'homme à toque et à épée papales est placé sur les confins de la Saxe et de la Bohême. Je me suis mis vis-à-vis de lui dans une position avantageuse en tout sens. Nous en sommes à présent à ces coups d'échecs qui préparent la partie. Vous qui jouez si bien ce jeu, vous savez que tout dépend de la manière dont on a entablé. Je ne saurais vous dire à quoi ceci nous mènera.[75]

Not only does this letter acknowledge Voltaire's talent for chess, it also suggests that Voltaire played chess with the King of Prussia.

Under Voltaire's pen, chess becomes a synonym of superiority and distinction. In a letter to Mr D'Olivet, he uses chess as a reference to excellence, hence testifying to his high regard for chess: "Vous ne me condamnerez pas sans doute, quand je vous répéterai que le Grec et le Latin sont à toutes les autres langues du monde ce que le jeu d'échecs est au jeu de dames, et ce qu'une belle danse est à une démarche ordinaire."[76] In 1776 Martin Sherlock, "who was Chaplain to the Earl of Bristol, Bishop of Derry,"[77] visited the famous *philosophe* in Ferney. The Englishman would describe the typical day of his host's life as follows: "He spends his time in reading, writing, playing at chess with Father Adam, and in looking at the workmen building in

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[75] Voltaire, Œuvres complètes de Voltaire XLIV (Paris: Hachette, 1876-1900) 270.

[76] Voltaire, Œuvres complètes de Voltaire XVII (Paris: Carez, Thomine et Fortic, 1820) 122.

[77] Archibald Ballantyne, Voltaire's Visit to England, 1726-1729 (London : J. Murray, 1919) 317.

his village."[78] Chess was therefore a important element of Voltaire's daily routine at Ferney.[79] Father Adam was a member of the Jesuit Order that became powerful enough to generate envy and resentment. After the suppression of the Jesuit society by royal authority in 1764, Father Adam, like all the Jesuits in France, was forced into exile. He found shelter on Voltaire's property. In Ferney, chess formed part of the daily routine. Voltaire found in Father Adam the perfect chess partner and shared in a letter to the Abbé de Sade his satisfaction to have such a guest at home:

> J'oubliais de vous dire que nous avons chez nous un jésuite qui nous dit la messe: c'est une espèce d'Hébreu que j'ai recueilli dans la transmigration de Babylone: il n'est point du tout gênant, il joue très bien aux échecs, dit la messe fort proprement: enfin c'est un jésuite dont un philosophe s'accommoderait. [80]

Despite his famous disdain for religion and church officials, Voltaire valued his guest. Though he makes light of the religious views of his visitor, he overlooks Father Adam's vocation on the basis of his chess skills. The man from Ferney sarcastically admitted that a *philosophe* could put up with anybody as long as they knew how to play chess. However he would also share his concern about Father Adam's constant superiority in a letter to Lauraguais:

> J'ai peut-être employé moins de temps à faire une chose quelconque qu'à jouer aux échecs: je les aime, je m'y passionne, et le Père Adam, qui est une bête, m'y gagne sans cesse, sans pitié! Tout a des bornes.

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[78] Theodore Besterman, Voltaire (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1969) 521.

[79] "*Quelquefois il se promène dans son jardin, ou, si le temps ne lui permet pas de sortir, il emploie ses moments de récréation à jouer aux échecs avec le Père Adam ou à recevoir les étrangers qui se succèdent continuellement, et attendent à sa porte le moment favorable de pouvoir être admis, ou à lire et à dicter des lettres car il a une correspondance suivie avec tous les pays de l'Europe*"
Voltaire, Œuvres complètes de Voltaire I (Paris: Garnier frères, 1883) 402.

[80] Voltaire and Jean-Antoine-Nicolas de Caritat Condorcet, (Œuvres complètes de Voltaire; avec des notes et une notice sur la vie de Voltaire (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1858) 459.

> Mais pourquoi le Père Adam est-il pour moi le premier homme du monde aux échecs ? Pourquoi suis-je aux échecs, et pour lui, le dernier des hommes ? Tout a des bornes. Croyez-moi c'est le refrain que nous ne saurions trop répéter.[81]

Voltaire tries to downplay his losses and even philosophizes about them. Through the game of chess, Voltaire's own mental limitations are revealed. In fact, Father Adam often had to humor his prestigious host and to concede some games. Condorcet remarked that "Father Adam, to whom a sort of celebrity was given by his abode at Ferney, was not absolutely useless to his host. He played with him at chess, and he played the game with sufficient address sometimes to conceal his superiority."[82]

In 1758 Jean Huber "obtained from Catherine the Great a prestigious commission for a "Voltairiade" a suite of sixteen scenes of Voltaire's domestic life in Ferney."[83] One of his most famous oil-paintings (Figure 1) is a scene of Voltaire

Figure 1: "Voltairiade". The State Hermitage Museum. St. Petersburg, Russia.

[81] Louis-Léon-Félicité Lauraguais, Lettres de L.B. Lauraguais a Madame***: dans lesquelles on trouve des jugements sur quelques ouvrages : la vie de l'abbé de Voisenon : une conversation de Champfort sur l'abbé Syeyes, et un fragment historique des Mémoires de Madame de Brancas sur Louis XV, et Madame de Châteauroux (Paris : F. Buisson, 1802) 59-60.

[82] Jean-Antoine-Nicolas de Caritat Condorcet, The Life of Voltaire (Philadelphia: Printed by and for W. Spotswood, 1792) 133.

[83] Philippe Bordes, Review of L'Art singulier de Jean Huber, Voir Voltaire (The Burlington Magazine, Vol. 138, No. 1122. (Sep., 1996), p. 608) 608.

sitting in Front of a table playing chess with Father Adam at Ferney and two other characters watching the *philosophe's* and the Jesuit's game.

Voltaire's famed rival**,** Jean-Jacques Rousseau, was also an avid player. In the Book VII of his Confessions, Rousseau wrote that, in 1742, he was learning poetry by heart. Once he read the story of Athenian prisoners that "obtained a livelihood by reciting the poems of Homer." Following their examples, Rousseau set out to exercise his memory "in learning all the poets by heart, in order to prepare [himself] against poverty." But poetry was not his only resource, as he "possessed an equally solid expedient in chess, to which [he] regularly devoted [his] afternoons at the Café Maugis, on the days when [he] did not go to the theatre."[84] The coffee-house was the venue of chess games where new adversaries could be found every day.

Rousseau enjoyed practicing his skills as he desired nothing more than to beat all the current chess champions. This was not to be, however, because he "became acquainted with M. de Legal, M. Husson, Philidor, and all the great chess players of the day, without making the least improvement in the game."[85] Regardless of his successive failures, Rousseau was persuaded that he could one day be superior to them all. In this regard, chess was no mere pastime for him; it was actually more like an obsession. In his *Confessions*, he relates his frustration at losing at chess against M. Bagueret, whom he introduces as a worthless and foolish man from Geneva working for the court of Russia, and who added insult to injury by offering to

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[84] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Confessions of Jean-Jacques Rousseau Trans. J. M. Cohen (Penguin Classics, 1953) 271.

[85] Jean-Jacques Rousseau 234.

teach him how to improve his game. After his loss, Rousseau decided to buy a chessboard and to seclude himself in order to practice and improve his chess skills. For months he studied combinations only to come back to the coffee-house and once again be humiliated by Bagueret:

> I was mad for chess from that moment. I bought a chess-board and a 'Calabrois'; I shut myself up in my room, and spent days and nights in trying to learn all the openings by heart, in stuffing them into my head by force, and in playing by myself without rest or relaxation. After two or three months of this praiseworthy occupation and these incredible efforts, I went to the cafe, thin, sallow, and almost stupid. I tried my hand, I played with Bagueret; he beat me once, twice, twenty times; all the different combinations had become mixed up in my head, and my imagination was so enfeebled, that I saw nothing but a cloud before my eyes.[86]

Years later, Rousseau eventually improved his skills and became quite proficient. He faced notorious intellectuals like Voltaire or Diderot, or eminent personalities like the Prince of Conti whom he beat twice and retorted "My Lord, I have too much respect for your most serene Highness, not to beat you always at chess."[87]

Rousseau's partiality for chess was known to everybody. His expertise at chess however was often challenged and the quality of his opponents was a good way to question both his strategic and intellectual skills. D'Alembert reviewing Rousseau's treatise on pedagogy *Emile*, taunts the author: "ah! J. J. Rousseau, depuis deux ou trois ans vous vous êtes un peu gâté; voilà ce qu'on gagne aussi à jouer aux échecs

[86] Jean-Jacques Rousseau 213.
[87] Jean-Jacques Rousseau 531.

avec des princes du sang, à prendre un appartement au château de Montmorency."[88] The term *prince de sang* alludes to the descendent of Saint Louis and is a direct reference here to the Prince of Conti whom Rousseau prided himself to have beaten but whose proficiency at chess seemed to be notoriously very poor. The truth is that Rousseau was obsessed with the game of chess. He was seen many times at the Café de la Régence[89], where, in 1742, one his friends, Daniel Roguin, introduced him to a promising young intellectual: Denis Diderot[90]. Two of the great minds of the century not only met in the most esteemed spot for Parisian chess playing, they also spent hours either playing chess against one another or watching others play.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Denis Diderot eventually had a falling out. Diderot remembered in his Salon de 1767 how aggravating Rousseau's attitude was. His frustration with his former friend was expressed in his portrayal of Rousseau and his chess-playing habits:

> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, qui me gagnait toujours aux Echecs, me refusait un avantage qui rendit la partie plus égale. « Souffrez-vous à perdre ? me disait-il. –Non, lui répondais-je ; mais je me défendrais mieux et vous en auriez plus de plaisir. –Cela se peut, répliquait-il ; laissons pourtant les choses comme elles sont.[91]

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[88] Jean Le Rond d'Alembert, Œuvres Complètes de d'Alembert Tome quatrième (A. Belin, 1822) 465.

[89] " Jean-Jacques Rousseau venait aussi à la Régence, mais moins pour y regarder que pour s'y faire voir. Quand il voulait produire un de ces grands effets de montre dont était si friande sa vanité bourrue, c'est là qu'on le voyait paraitre." Édouard Fournier, Chroniques et légendes des rues de Paris (E. Dentu : Paris, 1864) 243.

[90] Daniel Roguin, vaudois d'origine, les présenta l'un à l'Autre au Café de la Régence vers la fin de 1742, Rousseau et Diderot ont trente ans. (157) Freres ennemis : Diderot et Jean-Jacques.

[91] Denis Diderot, Œuvres complètes de Diderot Tome onzième (Nendeln (Liechtenstein): Kraus reprint, 1875-1877) 127.

Though Denis Diderot was not a master at chess, he would play chess on a regular basis and was even listed as one of the subscribers of Philidor's treatise on chess. Yet he enjoyed analyzing better players' strategy more than actually playing, and would devote hours of his day to the study of the game. In his correspondence with Sophie Volland, he testified to his taste for the game as an essential daily activity:

> Nous dînons. Après le dîner, la partie d'échecs; après la partie d'échecs, la promenade; après la promenade, la retraite; après la retraite, la conversation; après la conversation, le souper; après le souper, encore un peu de conversation; et c'est ainsi que finira une journée innocente et douce, où l'on se sera amusé et occupé, où l'on aura pensé, où l'on se sera instruit, estimé et aimé […].[92]

Chess was such a significant activity that it was one of the fundamental elements to the making of a perfect day. Though chess was an important pastime for him, it was also the topic of serious discussion. Diderot supervised articles and wrote many letters about his friend and French grand chess master Philidor. The *Chevalier de* Jaucourt mentioned the French prodigy many times in the *Encyclopédie* and introduced Philidor in the article *Echecs*:

> Nous avons eu à Paris un jeune homme de l'âge de 18 ans, qui joüoit à la fois deux parties d'échecs sans voir le damier, & gagnoit deux joüeurs au-dessus de la force médiocre, à qui il ne pouvoit faire à chacun en particulier avantage que du cavalier, en voyant le damier, quoiqu'il fût de la premier force.

Philidor could play blindfolded and win against several opponents. He was famous for his extraordinary memory and power of concentration: "C'est un des exemples les plus extraordinaires de la force de la mémoire & de l'imagination." Philidor later emigrated to London where he earned a living playing blindfolded multiple players. People

[92] Denis Diderot, Lettres A Sophie Volland. T. 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1950) 105.

typically paid five shillings to be admitted in the private club or the coffee-house where they could watch the French master play simultaneously several chess games. He usually had to face three players at the same time; for two of the games he could not see the board at any time whereas he was allowed to see the third game.

The idea of playing several games blindfolded was not only seen as phenomenal, it was also judged as absolute madness. Those who would subject themselves to such an effort were said to put their mental health at risk. In a letter to Philidor written in Paris on April 10th 1782, Diderot urged the master to stop his chess exhibitions. He warned his friend against blindfolded chess and recommended that he take better care of his well-being. Diderot failed to understand why Philidor would endanger his sanity for a trifling amount of money: "Je serais plus disposé à vous pardonner ces essays périlleux si vous eussiez gagné à les faire cinq ou six cents guinées mais risquer sa raison et son talent pour rien, cela ne se conçoit pas."[93] Diderot's concerns brought about the idea that chess demanded such a momentous and continuous mental effort that playing several games blindfolded could seriously cripple the intrepid player who ventured to undertake such a challenge. Diderot admitted to sharing his worries about Philidor with chess master Legal, and as if to give an expert opinion to his friend and more clout to his argument, he quoted the latter's account of a similar experience in his letter:

> Quand j'étais jeune, je m'avisai de jouer une seule partie d'échecs sans avoir les yeux sur le damier; et à la fin de cette partie, je me trouvai la

[93] Albert Cahen, Lettres du XVIIIe siècle, lettres choisies de Voltaire, Mme du Deffand, Diderot, Mme Roland, et de divers auteurs, publiées avec une introduction, des notices et des notes (Paris, Colin, 1913) 286.

> tête si fatiguée, que ce fut la première et la dernière fois de ma vie. Il y a de la folie à courir le hasard de devenir fou par vanité.[94]

Since a single game of chess entailed considerable intellectual exertion, several blindfolded, simultaneous games were equated with a death wish. Moreover, Diderot's fear testified not only to the *philosophes*' interests in the game but also to their passion for the mental concentration symbolized by chess.

The eighteenth century in France was a complex and prolific period of intellectual activities and significant philosophical advances. It was the age when everything was to be evaluated under the light of Reason. Chess was the game of an intellectual elite. Not only did it fascinate many aristocrats, it also interested authors and thinkers from all social origins. Chess was the game at which any man of wit would endeavor to be proficient. Played in coffee-houses or salons, chess delighted the Enlightenment society. It became very trendy among the *philosophes* who would either indulge in the game or would at the very least have some elementary knowledge of its rules and strategies. As chess was usually associated with wit and intelligence, it was a common thing for many intellectuals to spend hours everyday playing or studying the logic of the game. The importance of the game went beyond that of a simple pastime or leisure activity, however, and eventually influenced the logic and rationales of philosophical discourse.

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[94] Albert Cahen 286.

CHAPTER 2

CHESS AND THE ART OF THINKING

Analogies refer to our symbolic ability to pick out patterns, to form concepts that abstract and reify patterns. It is a mapping of knowledge from one domain (base or source) to another (target). Holyoak and Thagard identified three constraints that must be satisfied by a good analogy:

> First, the mapping between elements of the source and target analogs can be supported by the direct similarity of objects and concepts. Second, the mapping between analogs can also be supported by taking into account their structure, by showing that each element in the source is uniquely and consistently mapped to an element in the target, establishing an isomorphism. Finally, support for an analogy comes from determining that it satisfies its purpose in producing understanding or accomplishment of practical goals.[95]

A good analogy therefore exists first, if the source and the target share common properties, second if there is an overall correspondence in structure between the two element, and finally if the analogy is guided by problem solver's goals. Dedre Gentner

[95] Keith James Holyoak and Paul Thagard, Mental Leaps: Analogy in Creative Thought (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1995) 36-37.

noted that "in mapping, a familiar situation — the base or source analog — provides a kind of model for making inferences about an unfamiliar situation — the target analog."[96] I argue in this chapter, that, in the eighteenth century, chess was frequently used as the source of analogies. Therefore the sources of analogies were the laws of the game, the checkerboard, and the pieces which were seen as a way to solve problems and to establish correspondences between philosophical thinking and social reality. In the eighteenth century, the targets of analogies were new political, moral, and legal systems that would offer new frames of reference that would help to improve the condition of the general population.

Over the century, the analogy between chess and the exercise of reason became a frequent topic of philosophical and moral investigations. Voltaire praised chess and even saw it as "the game that reflects the most honor on human wit."[97] A good chess player always has to apply his wits before moving a piece. In the conclusion to the instructions he provided in his *Easy Introduction to the Game*, Philidor provides the "Golden rules of chess," the first one of which is to "Beware of oversights."[98] A player has to demonstrate constant and careful attention to the deployment of the men on the chessboard. Being briefly distracted is enough to lose one's advantage and irremediably the game. A good chess player must be able to

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[96] Dedre Gentner, "Analogy" In W. Bechtel & G. Graham (Eds), A Companion to Cognitive Science (Malden, Mass: Blackwell, 1998), 108.

[97] Bruce Pandolfini, Pandolfini's Ultimate Guide to Chess (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003) 362.

[98] François Danican Philidor, An Easy Introduction to the Game of Chess (London: Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1820) 20.

apply his wits to define a strategy and to decipher his opponent's tactics. Chess requires mental concentration and the ability to make sense of a complicated and often entangled situation. In the eighteenth century, the game was praised for its requirement of long-range planning and mastery of preset rules. It enjoyed the reputation of being a game that required high general intelligence. Little wonder that the Enlightenment thinkers who prided themselves on their ability to use reason took a liking to the game.[99]

The Enlightenment philosophers celebrated Reason as humankind's ability to organize their world and understand nature, but Reason did not merely exist, it required development. Therefore, as the intellect needed drilling, no better mind game existed than chess. In fact, eighteenth-century intellectuals were divided about chess and two antagonistic views about the game flourished during the century; some disapproved of chess for its idle and unproductive application of intelligence, while others saw chess as a pedagogical tool that would form and train people to properly direct their minds.

[99] In the article *Philosophe* published in the Encyclopædia, Dumarsais wrote that "Le philosophe est donc un honnête homme qui agit en tout par raison [...]. Il évite les objets qui peuvent lui causer des sentiments qui ne conviennent ni au bien-être, ni à l'être raisonnable, & cherche ceux qui peuvent exciter en lui des affections convenables à l'état où il se trouve. La raison est à l'égard du philosophe, ce que la grâce est à l'égard du chrétien. La grâce détermine le chrétien à agir ; la raison détermine le philosophe. "

2.1. Chess and the teaching of morality

Literature testified to the eighteenth-century new craze for chess as much as it denounced the excessive passions it triggered. Alain René Le Sage, in his 1707 novel *Le Diable boiteux*, depicts a doctor who only lived for his obsession:

> C'est un médecin biscayen. Il va prendre une tasse de chocolat, après quoi il passera toute la journée à jouer aux échecs. Pendant ce temps-là, ne craignez pas pour ses malades, il n'en a point. Et quand il en aurait, les moments qu'il emploie à jouer ne seraient pas les plus mauvais pour eux.[100]

This sarcastic description of a doctor, so engrossed in the game that he loses any concern for his patients or his practice, reveals the addictive nature of chess. The game becomes a disease; the poor doctor neglects the care he is supposed to give his patients, and spends all his time indulging in his hobby.

The main argument against chess concerned the futility of the intellectual effort required to checkmate one's opponent. The case against chess was not new in this sense, because as early as the sixteenth century, Montaigne complained about the time he was wasting pushing wood on a board.[101] More than a century later, the same argument would be used against chess. Many intellectuals looked down on chess playing. They considered chess an idle and childish activity that wasted valuable time and effort: They criticized chess for failing to improve society or be of any concrete

[100] Alain-René Lesage, "Le Diable Boiteux" Romanciers du 18e Siècle (Paris: Gallimard, 1960) 461.

[101] In his 1580 *Essay,* Montaigne discussed Antiquity and rhetorically asked whether Alexander the Great was a chess player and eventually shared his feelings about that game with his readers. In a surprising digression, he confessed to hating and avoiding the game of chess, "because it is not play enough, that it is too grave and serious a diversion, and I am ashamed to lay out as much thought and study upon it as would serve to much better uses" (The Works of Michael de Montaigne 141).

use to it. In *De l'Esprit*, Helvetius recognized that "*l'intérêt préside à tous nos jugements*." The reason why public opinion did not recognize chess masters as great thinkers was because "*leurs idées ne lui sont utiles ni comme agréables ni comme instructives.*"[102] The great minds of the nation should devote their intelligence to the development of social Enlightenment and not waste their time and potential utility to humankind by playing chess. According to Joseph Adrien Lelarge de Lignac in his 1759 *Examen serieux & comique des discours sur l'esprit,* the reason why chess-playing was considered a waste of time and chess-players were not seen as the great intellectuals of the nation was that "Le grand Joueur d'Echecs a un grand nombre de combinaisons et des suites de combinaisons très étendues; mais peu de personnes s'en amusent."[103] As an entertainment, chess failed to excite the crowds and as brilliant as the strategy utilized by the players might be, the general public failed to recognize the players' intelligence and skill.

Though Diderot was a chess enthusiast, other authors of the *Encyclopédie* generally had little regard for chess. One of them, the *Chevalier de* Jaucourt concluded his article "Echecs" with the following rhetorical question: "pourquoi voit-on tant de gens médiocres, & presque des imbécilles qui y excellent, tandis que de très - beaux génies de tous ordres & de tous états, n'ont pû même atteindre à la médiocrité?" His article echoed the beginning of Diderot's *Le Neveu de Rameau*, where the narrator berated some great chess masters and pictured them as socially

[102] Claude Adrien Helvétius, De L'Esprit (Paris: Durand, 1758) 45-46.

[103] Joseph Adrien Lelarge de Lignac, Examen sérieux & comique des discours sur l'esprit, par l'auteur des Lettres américaines (1759) 94-95.

challenged. Sharing his impressions of the *Café de la Régence*, Diderot noted that "one sees the most surprising moves and hears the stupidest remarks. For one can be an intelligent man and a great chess player, like Legal, but one can also be a great chess player and a fool, like Foubert and Mayot."[104] In his treatise on Education *Émile* and despite his notorious passion for chess, Rousseau defended himself from wasting too much his time playing chess: "I never play, unless it is a game of chess now and then, and that is more than enough."[105] Even Voltaire, whose passion for chess was notorious, regarded the game as a frivolous and unproductive activity to which he nevertheless admitted to devoting too much time: "Passer deux heures à remuer de petits morceaux de bois! on aurait fait une scène pendant ce temps-là."[106] To Voltaire's mind, writing for the stage was more valuable than playing a board game. Chess was therefore seen as a waste of time and was in no way, at least for some intellectuals and the general public, a guarantee of intelligence.

On the other hand, many eighteenth-century authors, thinkers, and politicians celebrated chess as a perfect teaching tool. By virtue of its strategic nature, it comes as no surprise that many saw chess as the ultimate strategic drill for military officers. In 1780, Helwig, a master of pages at the court of Brunswick, "invented a modification of the game of chess for the purpose of illustrating the principles of war."[107] Chess

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[104] Denis Diderot, Rameau's Nephew, and D'Alembert's Dream (Penguin classics, L173. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1966) 1.

[105] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Emile: On Education Trans. Barbara Foxley (BiblioBazaar, 2006) 431.

[106] Sébastian Longchamp, Mémoires sur Voltaire, et sur ses ouvrages (Paris: Aimé André, 1826) 532.

[107] Farrand Sayre, Map Maneuvers (Springfield: Staff College Press, 1908) 13.

was considered a great help for military officers who, thanks to that game, would exercise better judgment and tactical finesse on the battle field. In 1746, François Gayot de Pitaval argued that "Il y a des jeux où la science du joueur emporte le prix; ces jeux-là sont plutôt des études que des jeux. Ainsi au lieu de dire : Allons jouer aux Echecs, il faudrait dire, allons étudier en jouant aux Echecs."[108] As it requires the player's undivided attention, chess becomes a study more than a game. The player has to elaborate a strategy and at the same time predict and adapt to the other's tactic. Nicolas Fréret in 1796 presented the origin of the game of chess and explains why chess was praised by intellectuals: "Le jeu des échecs est de tous les jeux où l'esprit seul a part, le plus combiné, le plus savant, et celui dans lequel l'étendue et la force de ce même esprit peut se faire aisément remarquer."[109] In chess, men of letters, artists, or aristocrats found the perfect tool to assess their intellectual capacities and their intelligence.

Besides its military and strategic instructional values, chess was said to provide moral and psychological instruction that was highly regarded in the eighteenth century. It was celebrated as a pedagogical tool that would help acquire a perfect command of one's reason and intelligence. When Benjamin Franklin was the US ambassador to France to France from 1776 to 1785, he was known to be a womanizer. A regular customer at the Café de la Régence, he was also known to enjoy chess playing. Franklin was very fond of a Parisian lady named Madame Brillon. He

[108] François Gayot de Le Gras, Bibliothèque de Cour, de Ville, et de Campagne, contenant les bons mots de plusieurs Rois, Princes, Seigneurs de la Cour et autres Illustres (Paris : Théodore Le Gras, 1746) 4.

[109] Nicolas Fréret, Œuvres complètes de Fréret v.17 (Dandré, 1796) 121.

arranged to play chess with a mutual acquaintance in her bathroom while, soaking in the bathtub, she watched the game: "it was, as bathtub chess games go, rather innocent; the tub was covered, as was the style, by a wooden plank."[110] Franklin's interest for chess went further than a mere bathroom occupation however. It was during his stay in France, in the year 1779, that Franklin wrote "The Morals of Chess" which he "dedicated to Madame Brillon."[111] In his article he explained the importance of chess for morality:

> The Game of Chess is not merely an idle amusement; several very valuable qualities of the mind, useful in the course of human life, are to be acquired and strengthened by it, so as to become habits ready on all occasions; for life is a kind of Chess, in which we have often points to gain, and competitors or adversaries to contend with, and in which there is a vast variety of good and ill events, that are, in some degree, the effect of prudence, or the want of it.[112]

According to Franklin, chess as a moral activity should develop a man's foresight **"**which looks a little into futurity." Players should develop circumspection as well, **"**which surveys the whole Chess-board, or scene of action." Finally, the game was seen as a valuable teaching tool to protect man from the dangers of rashness and hasty judgment. It would teach **"**Caution, not to make our moves too hastily." As a way to gain knowledge, chess acquired a didactic dimension. It had the ability to train one's spirit and direct one's reasoning towards a pre-determined end: the besting of the

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[110] Walter Isaacson, Franklin, Benjamin. An American Life (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003) 362.

[111] Ralph K Hagedorn, Benjamin Franklin and Chess in Early America (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1958) 36.

[112] Benjamin Franklin, "The Morals of Chess" A Benjamin Franklin reader (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003) 290.

adversary's strategy. John Stewart further argued in his 1790 book entitled *The Revolution of Reason* that

> Judgment in theory is nothing but the arrangement of ideas, and their various relations, placed in a comparative view or opposition, like pieces on a chess-board, waiting new positions from new movements; or like an account current, whose balance is never struck till necessity calls for active judgment.[113]

Human judgment would therefore depend on an individual's ability to adapt to new situation with various complexities. As nothing should be taken for granted, human reasoning needs to adjust to different conjectures as well as to be able to disentangle them and exercise common sense.

Moreover, German philosopher and mathematician Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz highly praised chess and supported it for its instructive ability: "I strongly approve the study of games of reason, not for their own sake, but because they help to perfect the art of thinking."[114] Mind games stood as the perfect exercise of reason. In that respect, chess assumed a didactic quality that would provide abstract thinking with concrete application.

Far from being a tedious process, reasoning was usually considered a delightful activity during the eighteenth century. Diderot even equated mind exercising as a source of contentment. When describing the concept of pleasure in his

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[113] John Stewart, The revolution of reason: or the establishment of the constitution of things in nature, of man, of human intellect, of moral truth, of universal good (London : J. Ridgway, 1790) 84.

[114] Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Die Philosophischen Schriften von Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, (Hildesheim: Olms, 1960) 304.

Encyclopédie, he recognized the duality of pleasures: they could be physical and spiritual. The example he used to typify his argument was chess:

> A voir un joueur d'échecs concentré en lui-même, et insensible à tout ce qui frappe ses yeux et ses oreilles, ne le croirait-on pas intimement occupé du soin de sa fortune ou du salut de l'état? Ce recueillement si profond a pour objet le plaisir d'exercer l'esprit par l'opposition d'une pièce d'ivoire. C'est de ce doux exercice de l'esprit que naît l'agrément des pensées fines, qui de même que la bergère de Virgile, se cachent autant qu'il le faut pour qu'on ait le plaisir de les trouver.[115]

Refined thoughts, for Diderot, did not come naturally. They required an intellectual effort and resulted from a series of reflections. Chess was the ultimate philosophical game. It refined, sophisticated, and prepared the mind for discerning and delicate thoughts and was therefore the perfect activity for the *philosophes*. Diderot further equated sophisticated thoughts with pure pleasure:

> Il y a eu des hommes à qui on a donné le nom de philosophes, et qui ont cru que l'exercice de l'esprit n'était agréable que par la réputation qu'on se flattait d'en recueillir. Mais tous les jours ne se livre-t-on pas à la lecture et à la réflexion, sans aucune vue sur l'avenir, et sans autre dessein que de remplir le moment présent ? Si on se trouvait condamné à une solitude perpétuelle, on n'en aurait que plus de goût pour des lectures que la vanité ne pourrait mettre à profit.[116]

Rationalization for him denied any claim for prestige. While he did not openly name anybody, he nevertheless differed from another prominent intellectual, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who believed that chess was a way to be accepted in the world and to gain prestige. Rousseau aspired to be sought after. Fame for him could be achieved through excellence. He postulated in his *Confessions* that "whoever excels in anything is sure

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[115] Denis Diderot, Œuvres de Denis Diderot T.3 (Paris: Belin, 1818) 334.

[116] Denis Diderot 334.

to acquire a distinguished reception in society."[117] He saw chess as a path towards notoriety and frenetically indulged in it. Taking an opposite viewpoint, Diderot advocated the self-sufficiency of chess and any other intellectual activities. The exercise of one's intelligence should not be a matter of prestige but should merely be a satisfying and appropriate way to occupy one's time.

Popularized by the advent of cafés in Paris and thought to be an efficient moral teacher, chess reached the intellectual milieus and became one of Diderot's favorite pastimes. As Diderot regularly spent hours pushing wood in Parisian coffee-houses or studying other people's strategy, his writing and dialectics were very likely in the end to be influenced by the game.

2.2. Morality on the Chess Board in Diderot's *Le Neveu de Rameau*

It is mainly in *Le Neveu de Rameau*, first published in German in 1805 by Goethe, that Diderot explicitly brings to light the connection between chess and philosophy. Although, initially in the novel, chess simply serves as background for the meeting of the two characters, it ends up pervading their entire discussion. The description of the narrator's taste for Parisian cafés and chess games sets the stage for a philosophical dialogue that follows the pattern of chess. While passing his time at the *Café de la Régence* watching chess players, *Moi*, the *philosophe,* runs into an eccentric character, *Lui*, whom he has known for a long time and whose name is Jean-François Rameau, nephew of the great composer Jean-Philippe Rameau. Surrounded

[117] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Confessions of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Penguin Classics, 1953) 27.

by chess players, the duo proceeds to discuss various subjects while sitting in the coffee-house. Debating the features of great music, *Lui* is so engrossed in his own reasoning, that he shows absolutely no concern for his surroundings. He wails, complains, and laughs: His loudness and eccentricity contrast with the chess players' concentration but somehow attract and captivate every player's attention. Rameau starts coughing loud enough to shake the café's windows and throw the chess players off their game: "*Il se mit à tousser d'une violence à ébranler les vitres du café, et à suspendre l'attention des joueurs d'échecs*."[118] All the men "pushing wood" leave their chess boards to gather around him. Even passers-by stopped by the sound fill up the windows of the café. But *Lui* does not notice a thing. He is so absorbed by his own narrative that the actual world around him ceases to matter. *Moi* has fun watching chess games, but *Lui* makes him lose this focus and he becomes not only the *philosophe*'s but also the chess players' center of interest.

Though Rameau and the *philosophe* never actually play chess, their exchange turns into a battle of wills reminiscent of a chess game: Both *Moi* and *Lui* argue and alternatively present their opinions as chess players who move their pieces. For Ruth P. Thomas, the game serves as a metaphor for the entire dialogue: "chess is the mirror of their roles in society and the mirror of the game of the text."[119] The exchange of philosophical ideas uses the same strategy as chess, whose strategy pervades the entire logic and structure of the novel: the game of chess "with its symmetries and conflicts,

[118] Denis Diderot, Le Neveu de Rameau (Paris : Le Livre de Poche, 1984) 56.

[119] Ruth P. Thomas, "Chess as a metaphor in Le Neveu de Rameau" (Forum for Modern Language Studies 1982 XVII) 73.

its doubling and mirrors and oppositions, explains the relationship between *Moi* and *Lui* and the dialogue itself."[120] In this story, Diderot presents two characters whose perspective on life, society, and philosophy are antithetical. While "Diderot, in the role of *Moi*, represents the moral, principled individual of society,"[121] his book "is concerned chiefly with the analysis of a completely alienated man, who, at every point, is at war with society."[122] The protagonists defend ideas that are black and white, and stand in radical opposition to one another. Yet, they manage to reconcile their antagonistic views and engage in a civilized exchange of ideas. Ruth P. Thomas explains how chess serves as model for the two mindsets:

> In chess, which is a form of war, the aggressive instinct is channeled into socially acceptable norms through the rules of the game. There is no blood, no violence […]. So through the rules of discourse the real conflict in the dialogue between *Moi* and *Lui* becomes socialized and is reduced to a philosophical and aesthetic level.[123]

The frame of chess renders the exchange of seemingly incompatible opinions possible and, despite the dissensions, it maintains communication. The discussion turns out to be an intellectual joust played between rule-abiding and civilized players. *Moi*, the *philosophe*, is a man of reason devoid of prejudice. Even though Rameau is first introduced as a social parasite, he attracts "patrons in aristocratic salons with his attitudes, onlookers in the *Café de la Régence* with his acting, and followers in the

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[120] Ruth P. Thomas 63.

[121] Emily Zants, "Dialogue, Diderot, and the New Novel in France" (*Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2) 176.

[122] Frederick Artz, The Enlightenment in France (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1998) 96.

[123] Ruth P. Thomas 72.

streets of Paris with his antics."[124] Rameau is a philosopher in his own right: he fascinates crowds, discusses art, morality, education and proves himself to be eloquent and well-versed in musical knowledge. Despite his vices and eccentricity, he has one redeeming quality: his total lack of hypocrisy. He is honest with the *philosophe* and lucid about his own character and actions. Diderot imagines an unconventional protagonist to reveal the misconception of widespread ideas. It is as if he had set up a game board and arranged a number of pieces — or philosophical points of view — in an oppositional pattern in order to see how the arguments would play out. At the same time as he explains what serves as inspiration for his music, Rameau sheds light on contemporary misconceptions and more specifically on human nature: "Point d'esprit, point d'épigrammes; point de ces jolies pensées. Cela est trop loin de la simple nature."[125] For him, moral philosophy departs from true human nature in that it only generates artificial behaviors. Rameau advocates instead philosophical preoccupations that have an immediate impact on everyday life and, in that sense, *Le Neveu de Rameau* turns out to be a lesson in pragmatism.

In *Le Neveu de Rameau*, the two characters mainly debate about morality and eventually acknowledge that moral standards are amenable to change. For Jerrold Seigel, "Rameau made evident the distance between the true inner nature of

[124] Paul Metzner, Crescendo of the virtuoso : spectacle, skill, and self-promotion in Paris during the Age of Revolution (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1998) 291.

[125] Denis Diderot, Le Neveu de Rameau (Paris : Le Livre de Poche, 1984) 90.

individuals and the masks they put on in social life."[126] Rameau first confesses to playing the pantomime. He admits to occasionally putting on a mask, to acting and pretending to be what others expect him to be so that he can reach his goals. But he is not fooled by himself nor by others and shows remarkable lucidity about his own hypocrisy. He further debates with the *philosophe* about who in society should never have to play that game. For *Moi*, even a king has to do a pantomine in order to please his mistresses: "Quiconque a besoin d'un autre, est indigent et prend une position."[127] While *Moi* reconsiders his position and comes to the decision that almost everyone is forced to play a role: "Ma foi, ce que vous appelez la pantomime des gueux est le grand branle de la terre,"[128] he adds that only philosophers are spared the necessity to act a part for they allegedly have and ask for nothing. *Lui* disagrees and argues that such a man is nowhere to be found. He merely is a figment of the imagination which has no concrete example in the dire reality of every day life: "Et où est cet animal-là? S'il n'a rien il souffre; s'il ne sollicite rien, il n'obtiendra rien, et il souffrira toujours."[129] Hence everybody puts on masks, everybody acts a part. This discussion about social pantomime reveals a flawed society where vice is rife and hypocrisy rules. But it is a game that even intellectuals have to play. As Peter Gay has noted: "When wealth, brilliant company, public recognition became ends in themselves, they

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[126] Jerrold E. Seigel, The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe Since the Seventeenth Century (Cambridge (UK) / New York : Cambridge University Press, 2005) 197.
[127] Denis Diderot, Le Neveu de Rameau (Paris : Le Livre de Poche, 1984) 106.

[128] Denis Diderot 106.

[129] Denis Diderot 107.

enslaved men of letters in glittering chains."[130] Rameau's cultural portrayal of eighteenth-century Paris features a self so alienated and a morality so subjected to social hypocrisy that "all moral values blur and the only truly lucid awareness is of general corruption and perversion."[131] As a result, a conduct cannot be deemed moral or immoral without taking into account the circumstances in which it takes place. Rameau eloquently mocks the propensity of moral principles to define general values with no regards to real life and particular situations. For him, they serve to prove everything and its contrary: "je sais bien que si vous allez appliquer à cela certains principes généraux de je ne sais quelle morale qu'ils ont tous à la bouche, et qu'aucun d'eux ne pratique, il se trouvera que ce qui est blanc sera noir, et que ce qui est noir sera blanc."[132] Moral principles consequently appear devoid of any actual relevance. And since moral codes have no bearing on real life, they become completely obsolete. The metaphor of the pantomime is central to the philosophical and moral ideas developed in the novel in that it shows that everybody is engaged in social pretend play and that morality cannot be defined without reference to reality.

The battle of wills between the two characters is actually a symbolic game of chess that features Diderot against himself and therefore figuratively opposes his philosophical principles to themselves. Diderot warns against any fabricated truths and denounces Reason's claim to universally define human nature and aspirations:

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[130] Peter Gay, The Enlightenment: An Interpretation (New York: Norton, 1977) 69.

[131] Daniel Brewer, The Discourse of Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century France: Diderot and the art of philosophizing (Cambridge (UK) / New York : Cambridge University Press, 1993) 245.

[132] Denis Diderot 56.

"Vous croyez que le même bonheur est fait pour tous."[133] After *Moi* admits teaching morality to his daughter, *Lui* compares moral to musical instruction. The lessons he teaches his son are imbued with pragmatism, vices, and honesty. *Moi* praises such an education and stresses its effectiveness: "Je tremblais de ce que son enfant deviendrait sous un pareil maître. Il est certain que d'après des idées d'institution aussi strictement calquées sur nos moeurs, il devait aller loin, à moins qu'il ne fût prématurément arrêté en chemin."[134] Rameau touches moreover on a critical moral issue. Using a musical metaphor, he presents an interesting view on what he thinks is essential moral instruction: "Ce sont des dissonances dans l'harmonie sociale qu'il faut placer, préparer et sauver. Rien de si plat qu'une suite d'accords parfaits. Il faut quelque chose qui pique, qui sépare le faisceau, et qui en éparpille les rayons."[135] The dissonances he mentions are found in the diversity of human characters that needs to be preserved. For him, moral universalism creates a very dull and monotonous community. Rejecting this moral standardization, he celebrates instead the moral specificities of the individual. Only the ability to develop children's social skills matters so that they are able to understand the world they live in and avoid shame, dishonor, and trouble with the laws: "mais de lui marquer la juste mesure, l'art

[133] Denis Diderot 48.

[134] Denis Diderot 96.

[135] Denis Diderot 96.

d'esquiver à la honte, au déshonneur et aux lois."[136] What Rameau values is a moral instruction that prepares for the games men play in society.

Accordingly, while moral rules have to be taught, they become meaningless if one lives by them alone. They only are a means to an end, which Rameau clearly designates as individual interest. Human nature for him is the ability to adapt to society and to look for what is more suited for everyone. He refers to his son — the little savage — in order to support his argument that it is only natural for humans to worry about their personal well-being first:

> Tout ce qui vit, sans l'en excepter, cherche son bien-être aux dépens de qui il appartiendra; et je suis sûr que, si je laissais venir le petit sauvage, sans lui parler de rien: il voudrait être richement vêtu, splendidement nourri, chéri des hommes, aime des femmes, et rassembler sur lui tous les bonheurs de la vie. [137]

When in a social setting, the child would naturally desire the best for himself and the best that society can offer. Therefore, to stand close to human nature, moral instruction should focus on the individual first. For Rameau, it should not simply make one's existence easier, it should even serve an epicurean purpose: "Et qu'est-ce qu'une bonne éducation, sinon celle qui conduit à toutes sortes de jouissances, sans péril, et sans inconvénient."[138] Morality should be taught and valued only when purposeful and when it serves the individual interest. Rameau praises the moralists who have turned morals into concrete application: "Je ne suis pas de ces gens qui

[136] Denis Diderot 96.

[137] Denis Diderot 97.

[138] Denis Diderot 98.

méprisent les moralistes. Il y a beaucoup à profiter, surtout en ceux qui ont mis la morale en action."[139] He only values moral principles that are pertinent and useful to human existence.

Interestingly enough, the way Rameau's discusses morality is exactly how Philidor defines a chess move. In the preface to his famous treatise on chess, Philidor recommends that "a player, who, when he has played a Pawn well, can give no Reason for his moving it to such a square, may be compared to a general, who with much practice has little or no theory."[140] Logic and rationality are the essential ingredients of chess strategy. Players must examine every possibility and demonstrate prescience. They must ponder each of their moves, question their strategy and act only if all possibilities have been duly investigated. By itself, a move is insignificant. It becomes meaningful only when it integrates a strategy. It is only valuable when it contributes to a well-thought-out scheme and only gains substance through its usefulness and its contribution to check-mate the adversary. The way Philidor conceived and explained chess perfectly adhered to the French Enlightenment dialectic which submitted scientific and philosophical principles to the test of reality. For Philidor, in order to be judged valid and timely, every move has to be evaluated according to the opponent's counter move.

In that respect, moral tenets resemble the rules of chess and the way the men are allowed to move on a board. One cannot systematically apply the rules and move

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[139] Denis Diderot 66.

[140] François Danican Philidor, Chess analysed: or instructions by which a perfect knowledge of this noble game may in a short time be acquired (London : printed for J. Nourse, and P. Vaillant, 1750) x.

pieces on a chessboard without considering the specific context. Moves need to be studied and be a relevant addition to the player's strategy. There is no chess game without chess rules just as there is no society without morality. Morality distinguishes between good and evil or between good and right conduct. It defines what is socially acceptable. However, without any relation to reality, the strict respect of morality becomes irrelevant. One cannot apply a system of morals without depriving everyone of the ability to conduct their lives. Moral and chess systems have to leave humans free, as long as they play by the rules, to use the codes for their own individual benefit.

The main relationship between the philosophical dialogue and chess lies in the necessary, essential, and incessant quest for the strategic advantage indisputable knowledge provides. Truth in chess could be construed as the laws of the game since it is undeniable that if any player stops abiding by the laws of chess, then he stops engaging in a chess game. German grandmaster Emanuel Lasker who first became world champion in 1894 however defines truth in chess differently. For him, chess comes down to combinations and "there are still problems to be solved; the whole truth in Chess is not by any means all known yet — fortunately."[141] Since the goal in chess is to checkmate the opponent, there is no definite method or strategy to end a game as has been pointed out by Lasker. The player has to adapt his rationale to that of his opponent, and modify his strategy according to the situation. Therefore there is

[141] Emanuel Lasker, Lasker's Manual of Chess (New York: Dover, 1960) 86.

no established and official truth in chess. On the whole truth pertains to the endless pathways to victory and has to be rediscovered at every moment.

The philosophical game of chess not only questions the ethical values of the eighteenth century, it also questions the morality of philosophy. Rules only exist to serve a purpose; morality should never be valued for itself but rather for what it brings to the individuals. Rameau's philosophy of life and acknowledgment of all his base habits underline that he is "an extreme expression of the internal paradoxes of the Enlightenment"[142]: his "rantings have the effects of disclosing the pretentiousness of Reason and its claim to Truth."[143] For *Moi*, Rameau's philosophy sharply contrasts with the discourse of other Parisian intellectuals in that it expresses what everybody secretly thinks and comes closer to the truth than any other discourses of his time: "Il y avait dans tout cela beaucoup de ces choses qu'on pense, d'après lesquelles on se conduit; mais qu'on ne dit pas."[144] The intellectuals in France believed that morality was to be rationally defined. Born from reasonable thinking, the new moral tenets were what *philosophes* called natural morality and were nothing else but rational moral codes that departed from the widespread and sometimes arbitrary religious morality. In his novel, Diderot disrupts and undermines the claims of knowledge as well as its pretenses to define what are morality, legitimacy, and appropriate social behaviors. His concern is mainly expressed by the floating and ever-shifting concept

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[142] Rèudiger Bubner, The Innovations of Idealism (Cambridge (UK) / New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 154.

[143] Karlis Racevskis, "Michel Foucault, Rameau's nephew, and the question of identity" (The Final Foucault. Ed. Rasmussen, David M., and James William Bernauer. Cambridge : MIT Press, 1988) 25.

[144] Denis Diderot 95.

of truth which is at the core of the dialectics in the novel. He postulates that as soon as anything is labeled true, its authenticity and validity should be questioned. Diderot initiates a philosophical game of dialectical confrontation in order to bring out the dangers inherent in Reason: *Le Neveu de Rameau* shows that even the greatest creed of the Enlightenment proves to be faulty. The dialogue undermines the belief that morality can rationally be defined and promotes instead, as James Schmidt has noted, an individualistic conception of morality: "one's morality is not properly a concern of society at large."[145] As Reason itself generates moral corruption, Diderot's dialogue shows that nothing can be taken for granted. Moral values cannot become absolute tenets without perverting themselves just as Reason cannot become an inflexible rule without depraving itself. No sooner do moral principles become standards, than they institutionalize values and produce truth. Rameau's immorality underlines the bias of any moral code and reveals that morality cannot become a universal norm.

In his satire, Diderot studies the general nature of morals and of the specific moral choices made by a person. His dialogue features two antagonistic views that clash with each other to show that moral philosophy could never reach absolute truth and is very likely to fail in defining universal moral codes suited for everyone. If we look at his argument in terms of chess as a metaphor, he shows that morality is the ability to understand and live in the world just as chess skills represent the capacity to make sense out of a set of positions and combinations on a chessboard. Like the

[145] James Schmidt, "The Fool's Truth: Diderot, Goethe, and Hegel" (Journal of the history of ideas. 57. 4 (1996)) 628.

arrangement of the pieces on the board, the world is changing, situations are never the same, and human beings need to adopt the appropriate and most effective strategy. And that is only possible when they have the ability to adapt themselves to any type of juncture. Diderot advocates practical rules of conduct that allow humans to elaborate, deploy, and execute their own personal strategy. Morality is merely what enables humans to do the best of any particular situations, to make the right move, and to lead their lives the way they intend to. Only then will moral teaching help everyone improve their lives. Diderot demonstrates that no matter what the rules may be, what truly matters is the ability to play. If we compare a moral principle to a chess rule, moral teaching becomes a way of determining a player's ability to develop his or her own game, to understand the maneuvers of his or her adversary, and to understand the great chessboard of human society. As there cannot be any definite and final truth, moral philosophy, as construed by Diderot, is nothing more than the everlasting quest for truth, doomed to constant and unflagging intellectual analysis.

2.3. Natural law as a universal reference

As systems of thought were likely to take unproven beliefs for granted, the French Enlightenment refused the strict disciplines imposed by them and broke through their rigid barriers. Ernst Cassirer has clearly explained this aspect of Enlightenment thought: "The true nature of Enlightenment thinking cannot be seen in its purest and clearest form where it is formulated into particular doctrines, axioms, and theorems; but rather where it is in process, where it is doubting and seeking,

tearing down and building up."[146] In the article *Vertu* in the *Encyclopédie*, The *Chevalier de* Jaucourt criticizes the philosophical systematization for its complex and overwhelming rationale:

> On s'en impose sur ses devoirs à force d'y réfléchir, l'esprit de système s'oppose à celui de vérité, & la raison se trouve accablée sous la multitude des raisonnements. « Les moeurs & les propos des paysans, dit Montagne, je les trouve communément plus ordonnés, selon la prescription de la vraie philosophie, que ne sont ceux des philosophes.

The example of peasants, whose morals are said to be closer to the true philosophy, is reminiscent of Rameau's attitude towards philosophy. No matter how innovative and lucid a philosophy is, it should always remain simple and straightforward. In *Le Neveu de Rameau* Diderot questioned the systematic application of morality and showed that it should always have concrete links to people's life and help improve their social as well as spiritual conditions.

While system-building has always been to some extent "part of the cultural impulse toward rationalization and mathematicization,"[147] eighteenth-century intellectuals usually looked down on systems of thought: they "often used *système* negatively to characterize scholastic thought and other objects of their enlightened disdain."[148] Voltaire, in his *Eléments de la philosophie de Newton*, considers that Descartes's systematic methodology misled him into deceiving himself: "Il était

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[146] Ernst Cassirer, The Philosophy of the Enlightenment (Cambridge (UK) / New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999) ix.

[147] Julie Candler Hayes, Reading the French Enlightenment: System and Subversion (Cambridge (UK)/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 30.

[148] Julie Candler Hayes 26.

possédé de l'envie d'établir un système. Cette passion fît dans ce grand homme ce que font les passions dans tous les hommes : elles les entraînent au-delà de leurs principes."[149] In *Candide*, Voltaire also reproves Leibnitz's systematic thinking and his theory of optimism. Pangloss, Master of philosophy and Doctor, is the epitome of the intellectual zealot, adept of philosophical systems. Despite the crude and harsh reality, regardless of the horrors and hypocrisy of civilization, Pangloss keeps on deceiving himself and his disciple:

> Pangloss enseignait la Métaphisico-théologo-cosmolo-nigologie. Il prouvait admirablement qu'il n'y a point d'effet sans cause, et que dans ce meilleur des Mondes possibles, le Château de Monseigneur le Baron était le plus beau des Châteaux, et Madame la meilleure des Baronnes possibles. [150]

Systemic thinking is based on erroneous assumptions and devoid of concrete and practical concern: "Remarquez bien que les nez ont été faits pour porter des lunettes, aussi avons-nous des lunettes."[151] Systems of thought can be used to substantiate any claim. Voltaire's irony becomes a virulent criticism of this mechanical thinking as he taunts the aberration of Pangloss' rational thinking. Taking as an example the cause of Lisbon's earthquake, Voltaire mocks Candide's mentor:

> Ce tremblement de terre n'est pas une chose nouvelle, répondit Pangloss; la ville de Lima éprouva les mêmes secousses en Amérique l'année passée ; même causes, même effets : il y a certainement une traînée de soufre sous terre depuis Lima jusqu'à Lisbonne. — Rien n'est plus probable, dit Candide ; mais, pour Dieu, un peu d'huile et de vin.

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[149] Voltaire, Jean Michel Moreau, Jean-Antoine-Nicolas de Caritat Condorcet, Louis Moland, Georges Bengesco, and A. J. Q. Beuchot, Œuvres complètes de Voltaire (Paris: Garnier frères, 1877) 440.

[150] Voltaire, Candide (London: Bristol Classical, 1995) 20.

[151] Voltaire 20.

> — Comment, probable ? répliqua le philosophe ; je soutiens que la chose est démontrée.[152]

With *Candide*, Voltaire condemned the preposterous rationality of certain eighteenth-century philosophers, for whom everything could be explained and every event or catastrophe obeyed a "*raison universelle*." Contrary to a traditional 'rationalist' picture of the Enlightenment, what emerged from the middle of the eighteenth century was an anti-system ideology that took its model from Nature. Natural laws became the ultimate reference and value.

Jean Ehrard's careful and exhaustive research on the idea of nature in the first half of the eighteenth century has shown the French Enlightenment's overdependence on the concept of Nature. Ehrard describes the exaltation around the idea of Nature as "*fertile en hérésies*": "Elle s'épanouit aux époques les plus portées à secouer les contraintes de la doctrine chrétienne."[153] As far back as the Antiquity, in an effort to redefine society and lay emphasis on its corruption, culture has been opposed to nature. During the French Enlightenment, nature became the philosophical groundwork for a new conception of man and society:

> Renonçant à l'introspection cartésienne, qui fonde la connaissance sur la réflexivité du moi pensant, la philosophie des Lumières va au-devant des choses. La nature extérieure, saisie par l'expérience, est le lieu de toute vérité. Il faut sortir de soi pour la posséder.[154]

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[152] Voltaire 36.

[153] Jean Ehrard, L'idée De Nature En France Dans La Première Moitié Du XVIIIe Siècle (Chambéry: Imprimeries Réunies, 1963) 12.

[154] Jacques Chouillet, L'Esthétique des Lumières (Paris: PUF, 1974) 75-76.

Adorno and Horkheimer remark that in the Age of Reason "nature is viewed by the mechanism of social domination as a healthy contrast to society, and is therefore denatured."[155] Nature was of course perceived from a cultural point of view, and its understanding was as varied as the purposes it has served. Ehrard furthermore remarks that "C'est par la raison que l'homme est vraiment humain, c'est dans sa raison que consiste sa véritable nature."[156] Hence any rationally conceptualized idea was deemed natural:

> Like a Freudian dream, the idea of nature was made up of displaced and condensed elements, its meaning over- determined and variable, its interpretation subject to endless and undecidable debates. Its huge success in the French Enlightenment came from its capacity to unite opposites and apparently answer every possible question about the world.[157]

While systematic philosophy was commonly seen as a sophism in eighteenth-century France, many prominent intellectuals developed a network of ideas and values that assimilated and organized nature. Natural law was a very handy reference, on which many Enlightenment intellectuals elaborated morals, societies, and politics. But how did the *philosophes* conceptualize natural law and how did they arrange the abstract systems and idealistic plans they elaborated from Nature?

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[155] Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972) 149.

[156] Ehrard 335.

[157] Lorraine Daston and Fernando Vidal, The Moral Authority of Nature (Chicago : University of Chicago press, 2004) 254.

Adorno and Horkheimer perceive the Enlightenment as a "philosophy which equates the truth with scientific systematization"[158], but the concept of system is problematic in that it refers to two distinct intellectual tendencies: the spirit of system and the systematic spirit. The former was usually understood in philosophical circles as the leading cause for sophism and fallacy. As defined in the *Encyclopédie* "l'esprit de système s'oppose à celui de vérité, & la raison se trouve accablée sous la multitude des raisonnements." Bailly, for one, in his *Lettres sur l'Atlantide de Platon et sur l'ancienne histoire de l'Asie,* reflects on the meaning and implication of the systematized reasoning that was commonly put down in the eighteenth century philosophical milieus. For him, "ce mot est devenu le signe de l'improbation; & pour reléguer une idée dans le pays des chimères, l'arrêt le prononce, en disant, c'est un système." A system was hence a derogatory term that would be hurled at any nonsensical idea; it "points to that which is not demonstrable, but instead dogmatic and fantastic."[159]

Diametrically opposed to the *esprit de système,* the *esprit systématique* referred to a mental process that focused on the particular to deduce and appreciate the general:

> Plus on diminue le nombre des principes d'une science, plus on leur donne d'étendue; puisque l'objet d'une science étant nécessairement déterminé, les principes appliqués à cet objet seront d'autant plus féconds qu'ils seront en plus petit nombre. Cette réduction, qui les rend d'ailleurs plus faciles à saisir, constitue le véritable esprit systématique.

[158]Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno 85.

[159] Julie Candler Hayes 51.

Hence the systematization resulting from the *esprit systématique* is a more elaborated thinking process that, as Sylvain Bailly put it in his 1779 essay, would be closer to its actual Greek etymology, that is, an "assemblage": "Un système n'est donc que la liaison des faits; quand il n'est que cela, quand il ne les altère pas, il n'est point condamnable."[160] Considered in this light, the *esprit systématique* is not so much alien to the materialistic and rational philosophy. Instead of critically examining each fact by itself, this systematization investigates causality and organizes the principles between cause and effect to help broaden human understanding.

The Enlightenment philosophers promoted critical reasoning and rational methodologies in order to overthrow anything that would hinder the development and understanding of human nature. As the historian Carl Becker remarks, "to be enlightened was to understand this double truth, that it was not in Holy Writ, but in the great book of nature, open for all mankind to read, that the laws of God had been recorded."[161] The philosophy of the eighteenth century privileged Natural law, an innate law inscribed in each human being. For Diderot, "la loi naturelle est inscrite dans nos cœurs en caractères si beaux, qu'il est impossible de la méconnaître."[162] Nature was the absolute ideal, "having denatured God, [the *philosophes*] deified

[160] Jean Sylvain Bailly and Voltaire, Lettres sur l'Atlantide de Platon et sur l'ancienne histoire de l'Asie. Pour servir de suite aux lettres sur l'origine des sciences, addressées à M. de Voltaire (A Londres: Chez M. Elmesly, 1779) 405.

[161] Carl L. Becker, The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1932) 51.

[162] Denis Diderot, Œuvres complètes (Paris : Garnier, 1876) 269.

nature."[163] Volney presented natural law as the new doctrine of any citizen; it was the way God could influence man's ability to reason: "pour leur servir de règle égale et commune, et les guider [...] vers la perfection et le Bonheur."[164] This rationalization of nature and of the natural law was the substructure of numerous political and moral essays.

In eighteenth-century France, topics such as natural politics, morality, and religion were abundant. Many *philosophes* acknowledged the existence of a natural law that would proceed from human reason and that would be the framework of a fairer society. The *philosophes* were like preachers: "le prêtre parlait au nom d'une révélation, d'un Dieu ; le philosophe s'adresse à ses semblables au nom de la nature."[165] Natural law was a general and sovereign law that would rule men. Useful, necessary, and fair, it would promote social welfare and personal well-being.

Additionally it would be respected by all since it would originate from everyone's rationale. Therefore, in short, natural law was supposed to be a consensus, an ideal that everyone shared. Intellectuals principally referred to nature for moral, political, and legal theories. Bringing mankind back as close as possible to his natural state would safeguard men and women from the vices and perversity of culture and promote what would be best for man. Nature was conceptualized and charted to fit

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[163] Becker 63.

[164] Constantin-François de Chasseboeuf Volney, La loi naturelle, ou Catéchisme du citoyen français. (Publication Num. BNF. Paris : Imprimerie de Sallior, 1793) 3-4.

[165] Michel Delon and Pierre Malandian, Littérature française du XVIIIe siècle (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1996) 298.

human society. However, any so-called natural or innate values were nothing more than the reflection of the *philosophes* who identified the need to live in society as the first natural law. As Becker recognized, "Natural law was a logical construction dwelling in the mind of God and dimly reflected in the minds of philosophers."[166] Despite the claim that natural law was to be found in every human heart and soul, the resulting organization of nature was principally born out of the *philosophes'* imaginations and was by and large open to interpretation.

While many Enlightenment thinkers did not believe that systematic thinking might be applied to all areas of human activity, they nonetheless believed in the systematization of natural law which should be the basis for all human systems and should guarantee social justice, equality and welfare. And, in the chartering of Nature, the favorite game of the Enlightenment intellectuals can be seen to have had a considerable influence.

2.4. Chess and natural politics

In eighteenth-century France, chess was seen by many intellectuals as a model for an ideal political and legal system. Figurative treatments of politics or law have been influenced by many different models, among which chess has been a most influential one since it symbolizes perfect social organization. It furthermore became the reference to a new social order as Chamfort would rightly put it in his 1794

[166] Carl L. Becker, The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1932) 55.

Maximes et Pensées: "On gouverne les hommes avec la tête: on ne joue pas aux échecs avec un bon Coeur."[167] Chess quickly became a metaphoric device with which many *philosophes* would express their innovative thoughts and deliver sharp criticism of the ruling classes. In the article "*Loi*," from his *Dictionnaire philosophique*, Voltaire referred to chess as an example of a clear, fair, and respectable legal system:

> À la honte des hommes, on sait que les lois du jeu sont les seules qui soient partout justes, claires, inviolables et exécutées. Pourquoi l'Indien qui a donné les règles du jeu d'échecs est-il obéi de bon gré dans toute la terre, et que les décrétales des papes, par exemple, sont aujourd'hui un objet d'horreur et de mépris? C'est que l'inventeur des échecs combina tout avec justesse pour la satisfaction des joueurs, et que les papes, dans leurs décrétales, n'eurent en vue que leur seul avantage. L'Indien voulut exercer également l'esprit des hommes et leur donner du plaisir ; les papes ont voulu abrutir l'esprit des hommes.[168]

Chess for Voltaire epitomized the human faculty of reason. He mentioned chess to denounce the Church's agenda meant to keep humanity in a state of ignorance and maintain its control over the human spirit. What Voltaire implicitly criticized was the social organization of the Old Régime, whose system was contingent upon the divine rights of the kings, that is, the endorsement by God of the authority of the sovereign. The church therefore supported the king's authority over his subjects and territory. The religious mandate bore social consequences as it was preserving and approving the feudal system. Voltaire once again attacked the Church, which for him was at the core of all evil, and the reason for all of the social injustice and human backwardness

[167] Sébastien-Roch-Nicolas Chamfort, Maximes et Pensées : caractères et anecdotes. Porrentruy: Portes de France, 1946.

[168] Voltaire, Dictionnaire philosophique (Paris: Flammarion, 1964) 289.

of his time. It is remarkable that Voltaire chose the image of a game in which the main aim is to protect a king with a queen, a bishop, and a knight.

Paradoxically enough, chess characterizes a system that would, in the very words of Voltaire, guarantee fairness and equity to everyone. However, the author of *Candide* initiated his argument with an incorrect statement. Most games have rules that some players try to bend. Cards, gambling and all manner of games of chance were fashionable in eighteenth century Paris. They were often condemned by the Church and declared illegal by the Royal authority. Cheating and stealing money from tourists was common in Parisian underground private clubs. On numerous occasions, the unscrupulous behavior of Parisians towards outsiders is recounted in eighteenth century literature.

Chess, however, is one of the few games in which abiding by the rules is mandatory. As remarked by Henrik Paul Bang, "If you want to play chess, you must play by the rules; not to do so is not to play chess."[169] Moves are unequivocal; they are made in front of the opponents. Nothing is kept secret in chess. Cheating is impossible because everything is made in the open. The relevant point raised by Voltaire here is the approbation of the player who accepts and abides by the rules. Laws in an ideal world would only help humans fulfill their whole potential, to promote progress and to allow self-improvement. Under Voltaire's pen, chess became a double-edged weapon. On the one hand, the rules of chess illustrated the perfect legislature in contrast with the legal system of the Old Régime that maintained

[169] Henrik Paul Bang, Governance, As Social And Political Communication (Manchester, UK : Manchester University Press, 2003) 186.

humanity in a state of ignorance. In a world governed by superstition, the Church and the king ruled over a benighted nation. On the other hand, the perfect governing body would disregard personal profit in favor of the general prosperity. Public and personal welfare need not only to be linked, but should also constitute the ultimate goal of any legislative system. Voltaire sought an agreement between the governed and the rulers. A sovereign can exercise his power with the support of the population only if people acknowledge the laws that administer their lives and social environment and understand their benefits. Voltaire's legal theory is thus reminiscent of his famous intellectual antagonist: Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

CHAPTER 3

ROUSSEAU, CHESS, AND NATURAL LAW,

In 1782, four years after his death, Rousseau's *Confessions* were published and provided a subjective self-recollection of the *philosophe*'s life. In this work he recalls an incident with M. Bagueret who tried to teach him chess, leading Rousseau to spend three months in seclusion improving his skill through individual practice. Rousseau was first introduced to chess by M. Bagueret in 1732 while he was living in Chambéry. It wasn't until ten years later, in 1742 at the Café Maugis in Paris, that Rousseau got to know the great Parisian chess masters, as he states in his *Confessions,* "I made the acquaintance of M. de Legal, of M. Husson, of Philidor, and of all the great chess players of that time, without however improving my game."[170] Rousseau's last reference to chess in his *Confessions* relates an incident in 1760 involving the Prince de Conti whose adversaries were used to letting him win. After three games

[170] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Confessions of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Penguin Classics, 1953) 271.

and three checkmates, Rousseau allegedly told his host: "My lord, I honour your most Serene Highness too deeply not to beat you on all occasions at chess."[171]

In *Julie ou La Nouvelle Héloise*, Rousseau imagines a young man in love with a woman who has committed herself to another man. The young noble, Saint-Preux vanquishes his passion and demonstrates great virtue in the society of his married hosts. Eugène Ritter has described how Rousseau's frustrated love for Mme de Warrens is expressed through Saint-Preux's experience: "Jean-Jacques avait oublié son ancienne maîtresse il écrivait son roman. Saint-Preux, c'était lui-même, avec ses avides désirs et le feu de ses passions."[172] Rousseau identified himself with Saint-Preux. Interestingly enough, *Julie ou La Nouvelle Héloise* features a letter in which Claire writes Julie and explains to her an incident that happened during a chess game between Saint Preux and Wolmar:

> As the table was small, the chess-board hung over its edge ; I watched my opportunity, therefore, and, without seeming to design it, gave the board a knock with a back stroke of my racquet, and overturned the whole game on the floor. You never in your life saw a man in such a passion: he was even so enraged, that when I gave him his choice of a kiss or a box in the car by way of penance, he sullenly turned away from me as I presented him my cheek."[173]

Like Saint-Preux, Rousseau would certainly have had a fit of rage if anyone had disturbed one of his games in such a fashion. This scene bore great significance for Rousseau as he commissioned Gravelot to draw an engraving of it for the 1761

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[171] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Confessions of Jean-Jacques Rousseau 501.

[172] Eugène Ritter, La famille et la jeunesse de J.J. Rousseau (Genève: John Jullien, 1926) 303.

[173] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Julia. Or, The New Eloisa. A Series of Original Letters III (Edinburgh: Bell & Bradfute, 1794) 270.

edition. However, the *philosophe* was not pleased with one of Gravelot's works and, in a letter to Coindet, criticized one small detail of the eleventh engraving:

> Je reviens sur l'échiquier et je trouve que les aiguilles de la pendule ne sont pas placées avec esprit; il est nuit ou trop matin l'hiver pour jouer à l'heure qu'elles montrent. La petite aiguille doit être environ sur trois heures et demie et la grande environ sur vingt ou trente minutes.[174]

What bothered Rousseau was not the work of Gravelot in itself. Neither was it the inappropriateness of the time on the clock in relation to the light on the engraving. What really bothered him was that nobody in the type of good societies he described in his novel would be playing chess at that time. His comment additionally shows that chess was a very important element in his life and that he had a strict schedule for this activity.

Figure 2 : Hubert-François Bourgignon Gravelot "*Claire! Claire! Les enfants*…."

Louis Courtois describes in detail Jean-Jacques Rousseau's two-year trip to England from 1766 to 1767. During this time, Rousseau visited the countryside and stayed at several locations. He was invited into the homes of friends and admirers, one of whom was Richard Davenport who asked the *philosophe* to pass some time with him at his London and Chiswick homes.

[174] Jean Jacques Rousseau, François Coindet, and Alexis François, Correspondance Jean-Jacques Rousseau et François Coindet (1756-1768) (Annales de la Société Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 14. 1922) 60.

Surrounded by his new English company, Rousseau excelled at chess, or so it seemed according to Louis Courtois : "En pareille société, le temps s'écoula d'autant plus paisiblement que les distractions variaient beaucoup aux heures chaudes de l'après-midi et durant les soirées on avait recours aux échecs Davenport, bon joueur, perdait galamment sa partie." [175] Davenport proved to be smart enough not to offend his prestigious guest and let him win at every game. One year later in a letter to M. Laliaud dated November 28th 1768, Rousseau testified to his love for the game that not even illness can keep him away from: "Depuis deux jours je suis moins bien : j'ai de la fièvre, un grand mal de tête, que les échecs où j'ai joué hier ont augmenté ; je les aime, et il faut que je les quitte."[176] Two years later, in a letter to M. de Saint-Germain dated February 26th 1770, Rousseau attacked gambling and the fashionable games of his time, and noted that he was only partial to chess: "Les échecs, où l'on ne joue rien, sont le seul jeu qui m'amuse."[177] 1770 was also the year when Rousseau returned to Paris and was seen on numerous occasions at the Café de la Régence, where skilled chess-players flaunted their talent[178]. Richard Twiss, in his 1787 book entitled *Chess,*

[175] Louis-J Courtois, Le Séjour de Jean-Jacques Rousseau en Angleterre (1766-1767) (Annales de la Société Jean-Jacques Rousseau. 1910 T. 6) 52.

[176] Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, Lettres (1728-1778) (Lausanne : La Guilde du livre, 1959) 241.

[177] I. Grünberg, « Rousseau joueur d'échecs » in Annales de la Société Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Tome troisième 1907 (Genève: Chez A. Jullien, 1907) 157.

[178] "Le 9 mai 1919, a été vendu à l'hôtel Drouot, à Paris, une collection d'eaux fortes, gravures, dessins, livres et catalogues, illustrés par Gabriel de Saint-Aubin. En marge d'un Catalogue des tableaux du Cabinet de M. Crozat, baron de Thiers, Paris, de Bure ainé, 1755, in-80, figurait un portrait au crayon rehaussé de lavis représentant Rousseau jouant aux échecs au Café de la Régence. Ce croquis précieux, signalé naguère par M. H. Buffenoir dans son ouvrage sur les Portraits de Jean-Jacques Rousseau, est reproduit dans le catalogue de la vente, p. 52. On peut lire distinctement l'inscription de l'artiste: *M. Rousseau, de Genève, dessiné au Café de la Régence en 1771*. Rousseau très absorbé par la partie qu'il

describes this event: “He was accustomed in Paris to spend many hours daily at the Café de la Régence, where a dozen chess-boards are constantly in use.”[179] However, Rousseau’s mere presence at the Café de la Régence attracted such crowds that he was asked not to return:

> Il s’est montré plusieurs fois au café de la Régence, sur la place du Palais-Royal; sa présence y a attiré une foule prodigieuse, et la populace s’est même attroupée sur la place pour le voir passer [...]. On fit cesser cette représentation en exhortant M. Rousseau à ne plus paraître ni à ce café, ni dans aucun autre lieu public; et, depuis ce temps-là, il s’est tenu plus retiré.[180]

The chronological account of Rousseau’s numerous references to chess has helped shed light on the importance of the game in his life. From the year 1732, when he first learned how to play, to his *Dialogues* written a few years before his death, Rousseau enjoyed playing chess and mentioned it repeatedly either in his books or in his abundant correspondence. Over a period of forty years, Rousseau played chess regularly. He loved the game and devoted many hours of his days to it. Grünberg links the game of chess to a mindset characteristic of Rousseau’s mentality: “Lorsqu'il jouait sans préoccupation et sans fatigue, lorsqu'il oubliait les traités des maîtres pour redevenir autodidacte, l'auteur des Confessions savait assurément appliquer au jeu des échecs un peu de sa dialectique serrée et de sa force de méditation.”[181] According to

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joue, ne voit pas qu'il est entouré de jolies filles assez décolletées” (275). Annales de la Société Jean-Jacques Rousseau. 1920-21.1920-21 (T. 13).

[179] Richard Twiss, Chess (London: J.G.I. and I. Robinson, 1787) 6.

[180] Friedrich Melchior Grimm, Denis Diderot, Raynal, Jacques-Henri Meister, and Maurice Tourneux. Correspondance, littéraire, philosophique et critique (Paris: Garnier frères, 1968) 91.

[181] I.Grünberg, « Rousseau joueur d'échecs » Annales de la Société Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Tome troisième 1907 (Genève: Chez A. Jullien, 1907) 174.

Grünberg, Rousseau was able to transfer the mental concentration and the dialectics he applied to his literary writings to the game of chess. This chapter will attempt to reverse Grünberg's analysis and try to determine whether the transfer was a two-way process. If philosophy and literature somehow influenced Rousseau's strategy and attitude towards the game, could the game have had any influence on his philosophy and writing?

3.1. The structure and logic of chess in Rousseau's *Dialogues*

Much have been said about *Rousseau juge de Jean-Jacques*. Some have argued that it was undeniably proof of Rousseau's mental disease making public his schizophrenia. Others have taken his *Dialogues* for paranoid gibberish and have seen in it the pathetic fantasy of a general conspiracy. Indeed, Rousseau claimed in his book to be the victim of slander that turned public opinion against him. Rousseau thought he was the victim of a machination whose leaders were said to be the other *philosophes*. He accused them of being "the arbiters of the reputation and even the destiny of individuals and through them of that of the State."[182] Rousseau shared his conviction that the *philosophes* shaped public opinion and turned it against him. Helpless target of furtive maneuverings, he found no other alternative than to denounce these intrigues and to fight back. With his *Dialogues,* Rousseau intended to

[182] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Roger D. Masters, Christopher Kelly, and Judith R. Bush, Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques, Dialogues (Hanover: Published for Dartmouth College by University Press of New England, 1990) 237.

clear his name. To that end, his methodology differed from that of the *Confessions*[183] and took on a much more strategic quality.

Jacques Berchtold, wrote in the conclusion to his article *Rousseau, Joueur d'échecs au café*, that, in the *Dialogues*, Rousseau managed to write his own chess game, "comme on compose solitairement un problème, en prévoyant à sa guise les coups possibles à jouer des blancs et des noirs." Berchtold further remarked that the *mise-en-scène* in the *Dialogues* is built on three different levels: "premièrement, la figure sur l'échiquier; deuxièmement, le joueur, et troisièmement, le cercle des regards fixement attachés sur le joueur et sur sa liberté."[184] For Berchtold, this arrangement epitomizes a scene at a café that features Rousseau playing chess: "Dans le café, ce sont les spectateurs qui sont les avant-coureurs grimaçants de ses véritables oppresseurs tapis dans l'ombre."[185] Berchtold has additionally argued that the character *Jean-Jacques* in the *Dialogues* resembles Rousseau in the café. He is the character towards whom all the gazes converge. He becomes an attraction, a curious animal that people want to see: "He has been pointed out, described, recommended everywhere to deliverymen, Clerks, guards, spies, Chimney-sweeps, at all the Theaters, in all the cafes, to the barbers, the merchants, the peddlers, the booksellers."[186] Following Berchtold's critical view of the *Dialogues* and expanding

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[183] Michel Foucault, in his "Introduction to *Rousseau juge de Jean-Jacques,"* describes the *Dialogues* as an "anti-Confessions" (Dits et Écrits I 172).

[184] Jacques Berchtold, « R., joueur d'échecs au café (1770-1771) » (*Annales J.-J. R.*, 42, 1999) 145.

[185] Jacques Berchtold 141.

[186] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques, Dialogues 42.

on them, this study will show that Rousseau created, in effect, a three-level chess game.

The first level is marked by the author's efforts to rationalize the gossip that tarnished his public image. The study of the *Dialogues* will show the similarities of his approach to that of Philidor. Whereas the chess master wanted to teach his readers to be better players, Rousseau intended to tell them how to be better judges. He was determined to show them how to read more thoroughly and how to form better judgment.

The second level consists of the strategy of the author himself who, in an attempt to decipher obscure rumors, tries to put himself in the minds of his enemies and make clear the irrationalities of the attacks directed against him. Rousseau furthermore intended to map out his enemies' attacks and plans of actions. By tracing and breaking down the intrigues and slander, he gave it a concrete existence and created thereby the possibility to deny them. He brought the conspiracy to the open and, as a chess player, proceeded to analyze and illustrate the various moves and attacks against him just to prove that they were ungrounded.

The third level of the game of chess involves Rousseau's consciousness of the oppressive presence of the crowd that constantly casts a watchful eye upon his action and morality. The oppressive darkness he is forced to live in is caused by his surroundings and public opinion which he plans to make transparent. Rousseau felt he had become the pawn of public opinion: a manipulable chess piece to which every one was allowed to affix labels of qualities, characteristics, and prerogatives.

It is first significant to consider that at the time he wrote his *Dialogues*, Rousseau was ridiculed and derided by French public opinion. Much to his dismay, he was not understood as the man he was sure to be. The public readings of his *Confessions* resulted in a failure that he noted himself at the end of his autobiography:

> I concluded the reading of my Confessions, and everyone was silent. Madame d'Egmont was the only person who appeared to be affected; she trembled visibly, but she quickly recovered herself and remained silent, like the rest of the company. Such were the results of these readings and declarations. [187]

For Rousseau, anyone who had really read and studied the *Confessions* was bound to think highly of the author or, if not, as he mentioned at the end of his book, they "deserved to be choked."[188] Rousseau thought he could improve mankind and believed to have provided useful moral and pedagogical treatises with his *Héloïse* and his *Émile*. But he failed nonetheless to be recognized as the righteous and virtuous man he described at length. In fact, he appeared as a monster giving innovative advice on education only to abandon his children at a public orphanage. To tarnish his reputation even more, rumor had it that he was not the author of many of his writings but merely claimed them as his own. In short, he was a fake whose greed and craving for fame had led to depict himself as a man he was not, describing feelings and virtues that were alien to him. Or at least that was the way he thought eighteenth-century French society pictured him. Were he to be judged as a dishonorable man, he would

[187] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Confessions of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Penguin Classics, 1953) 412.

[188] Jean-Jacques Rousseau 412.

lose his credibility, and the lessons he so much wanted to provide would be lost to his contemporaries.

For him, one plausible explanation for that failure was that his contemporaries did not know how to study him. It became then vital to teach them how to read differently, to read better. Misunderstood by his fellowmen, Rousseau felt like an outcast. He felt condemned to live in a society that despised him and that offered him no chance of redemption. He blamed the other *philosophes* for having masterminded his public disgrace and his personal hopelessness:

> They have discovered the art of making a solitude for him in Paris more awful than caves or the woods, so that in the midst of men he finds neither communication, consolation, nor counsel, nor enlightenment, nor anything that could help to guide him; a vast labyrinth where he is allowed to see in the darkness only false routes that lead him further and further astray. [189]

They forced him to withdraw from everything and to live like a pariah. Deprived of any contact with the *philosophes*, he felt powerless in front of the public opinion that oppressed him. Foucault has argued that "De cette surveillance muette, aucune expression directe qui se transforme en langage accusateur. Seulement des signes dont aucun n'est parole […]. Il est condamné à ce monde des signes qui lui retirent la parole."[190] Rousseau wrote his *Dialogues* between 1772 and 1776, and used them to fill the emptiness caused by the lack of conversation: "Les Dialogues s'efforcent de

[189] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques, Dialogues 41-42.

[190] Michel Foucault, Daniel Defert, and François Ewald, Dits et écrits: 1954-1988. 1, 1954-1969 (Paris: Gallimard, 1994) 183.

faire naitre un langage à l'intérieur d'un espace où tout se tait."[191] The *Dialogues* created a legal arena in which he was able at last to discuss the judgment of others, to offer his own perspectives, to retort to the allegations being leveled against him, and to denounce the fact that the other *philosophes* took "away from him every means of defending himself."[192] This tribunal not only enabled him to counter-attack and to explain the treachery of his fellow *philosophes*, it also allowed him to be better understood. Contrary to the *Confessions* where he wanted to show himself as he was, he wrote the *Dialogues* to teach his readers to see himself as he really was. Far from a mere hallucinatory ranting, the *Dialogues* assume a pedagogical quality and purpose: to set an example with his own judgment and to teach his readers how to be better judges. In that effort, Rousseau, the chess player, adapted what he must very likely have considered as a very efficient pedagogical essay: Philidor's treatise on chess.

Indeed, the structure of his *Dialogues* resembles that of Philidor's book. In the advertisement to his *Analysis of the Game of Chess*, Philidor wrote that "It is to be observed, that in the Notes, I always speak of the white in the second, and the black in the third person, to avoid equivocation."[193] He addressed his reader directly using the second person, and explained not only how to beat, but mainly how to understand their opponent's strategy. The Black was always the focus of the discussion. Philidor

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[191] Michel Foucault, Daniel Defert, and François Ewald, Dits et écrits: 1954-1988. 1, 1954-1969 (Paris: Gallimard, 1994) 180.

[192] Michel Foucault, Daniel Defert, and François Ewald, Dits et écrits: 1954-1988. 1, 1954-1969 (Paris: Gallimard, 1994) 217.

[193] François Danican Philidor, Analysis of the Game of Chess; A New Edition, Greatly Enlarged. By A. D. Philidor (London: printed for P. Elmsley, 1777) x.

always talked about it in the third person: every move of the black was analyzed, commented, and judged. Philidor maintained center stage and acted as the authority which presented and commented upon the various combinations explained and illustrated in his book. He used a three-character pattern: Himself, the one who knows, the reader, the one who needs to learn, and the adversary, who, in order to be outwitted, first needs to be understood.

Rousseau's *Dialogues* adopt the same trinary format. The reader — or the White — is the *Frenchman* who needs to learn how to read, how to think for himself, and how to appreciate *Jean-Jacques* as he really is. *Jean-Jacques* — or the Black — is the eighteenth-century public representation of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *Jean-Jacques* is the adversary, the public enemy, the "other" that the reader needs to understand. Rousseau plays his own role — *Rousseau* — and assumes the role of the chess master. He analyzes his own public image: *Jean-Jacques*. He is the authority that directs the reader's and the *Frenchman*'s attentions to the critical issues in order to make them see through the slander of the general conspiracy. *Jean-Jacques* never talks: The two voices of the *Dialogues* are the *Frenchman* and *Rousseau*. The latter supposedly acts as an unbiased judge who disproves "the noisy assertions of passionate people by the peaceful but certain observations of an impartial man"[194] and denounces the unfair trial *Jean-Jacques* had to go through.

Rousseau set out to teach his contemporaries to use critical thinking, to read more efficiently, and to be able to reach conclusions following their own judgment on

[194] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques, Dialogues 107.

the basis of ironclad evidence. These proofs are Rousseau's previous writings and the irrationalities of the disparagement that was made against him. He will talk the *Frenchman* into thinking for himself: "We cannot therefore reason as equals, you and I, unless you put yourself in a position to judge for yourself too."[195] Rousseau, the Judge, becomes a teacher who trains the *Frenchman* to judge on his own and to exercise sound and fair judgment. He acts as the mediator between two adversaries and two antagonistic views: his own and personal analysis of *Jean-Jacques* and the *Frenchman*'s — or the public — understanding of the famous author.

As Rousseau questioned how he could have been so much misread and defamed, he decided first to examine his adversaries' best theories and then to oppose them with his own worst assumptions. He subsequently planned to understand the conduct of his enemies, to determine why and how they have acted the way they did: "Studying openings and end-games, replaying master games, the chess player is at once white and black. In actual play, the hand poised on the other side of the board is in some measure his own."[196] He therefore decided to put himself in the minds of his enemies and "attributed to them the motives that would have prompted [him] to act in their place."[197] Rousseau believed that the rational analysis of the attacks against him would suffice to prove them wrong. He placed himself in the mind of the conspirators to undermine their arguments and counter them with his better judgment.

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[195] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques, Dialogues 31.

[196] George Steiner, George Steiner: A Reader (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984) 176.

[197] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques, Dialogues 95.

Addressing the problems he faced when he had to define the most efficient methodology for his counter-offensive, Rousseau wrote in the "subject, object and form of this writing" that:

> When all my efforts led to nothing that could satisfy me, I made the only choice left to reach an explanation: being unable to argue on the basis of private motives that were unknown and incomprehensible to me, I would reason on the basis of a general hypothesis that could combine them all. This was to choose, from among all possible assumptions, the one that was worst, best for my adversaries, and from that vantage point—as well adapted as possible to the maneuvers of which I have seen myself to be the target, the demeanors I have glimpsed, the mysterious comments I have overheard here and there – to examine what would be the most reasonable and most just behavior on their part. Exhausting everything that could be said in their favor was the only means I had to discover what they say in fact; and this is what I have tried to do, attributing to them all plausible motives and specious arguments, and collecting all imaginable charges against myself.[198]

He broke down every move that had been made against his public image in order to show that it was unfounded. Like a chess player would study a loss at chess, Rousseau analyzed his enemies' combinations and plans of actions that had led to his public reputation. The defense of *Jean-Jacques* is a tactical approach through which *Rousseau* analyzes and explains the arguments that have been used against *Jean-Jacques* in order to set forth his real and virtuous self: "if 'Jean-Jacques' can be judged innocent by the Frenchman, then the reader should appropriately follow suit."[199] The reason why the *Frenchman* was so much deceived and ill-informed in the

[198] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques, Dialogues 4.

[199] James F. Jones, Rousseau's Dialogues: An Interpretive Essay (Genève : Droz, 1991) 105.

first place was because Rousseau's enemies manipulated the opinion and conjured up an appalling and repulsive *Jean-Jacques*.

Just as he considered that his *Confessions* were unique, he thought he was so distinct from anybody else that his self required "a separate analysis, made uniquely for him."[200] Hence the split personality that appeared in his *Dialogues*: Rousseau pleaded for *Jean-Jacques*. The *Dialogues* are a refutation of all the abominations heard by the *Frenchman* in order to convince his contemporaries of his good faith. The *Confessions* were supposed to portray Rousseau as a man of virtue who has nothing to hide. Aware of his failure to reach transparency, Rousseau attempted in his *Dialogues* to redeem himself in the eyes of the public opinion and to bring to light the murky intrigues that had led to his public disgrace: "to know him well, it is necessary to know his situation to the bottom: it is necessary to know both what he endures and what makes him bear it. Now all of that cannot be well stated; it has to be seen to be believed."[201] Indeed, with his *Dialogues*, Rousseau not only wanted to prove that his readers were misled into thinking so badly of him, he wanted also to lay bare the irrationality of the accusations that were brought against him.

The public perception was fomented by others and Rousseau takes upon himself to reveal "the tortuous and dim paths by which it has been imperceptibly guided to that point, without noticing what was happening."[202] Rousseau had no other

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[200] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques, Dialogues 88.

[201] Jean-Jacques Rousseau 107.

[202] Jean-Jacques Rousseau 61.

choice than to publicize the prejudice he suffered. He described the conspiracy against *Jean-Jacques* as a series of very intricate maneuvers:

> It is impossible for you to have a just idea of the position of your J.J. or of the manner in which he is enmeshed. Everything is so well organized concerning him that an Angel could descend from Heaven to defend him without being able to do so. The plot of which he is the subject isn't one of those impostures hastily put together, which are discovered and destroyed in an instant. As he himself felt, it is a long-meditated project, whose slow and gradual execution functions with as much precaution as method, erasing as it advances both all trace of the paths it has taken and the all vestiges of the truth it has caused to disappear. In so carefully avoiding all types of explanations, can you believe that the Authors and leaders of this plot neglect to destroy and denature everything that might one day serve to confound them; and in more than fifteen years of full execution, haven't they had all the time they needed to do so successfully? The further they move into the future, the easier it is for them to obliterate the past or give it the aspect that suits them."[203]

In this passage Rousseau claims that the conspiracy theory he refers to all along his book has been sketched for years and is now undecipherable. Rousseau blamed the "Authors and leaders" for his disgrace. But most importantly, this passage reveals Rousseau's method and objective. While *Jean-Jacques* is surrounded by calumny and libel, he has no power over them: "They have built walls of darkness around him through which he cannot see; they have buried him alive among the living."[204] The solution is to bring the conspiracy in the open so that the truth can come forth. He wants to make transparent the process that has led to his predicament and to show how the accusers have suppressed facts, distorted reality, and erased the truth. Rousseau wonders "What can power and ruse not accomplish with sufficient time, intrigue, and

[203] Jean-Jacques Rousseau 220-221.

[204] Jean-Jacques Rousseau 36.

money, when no one opposes their maneuvers, when nothing stops or undermines their secret operations?"[205] The machinations were all the more efficient in that they were undisclosed. His enemies could turn any rumor into truth, they were "legitimate as having for their object the unmasking of a wicked man. Destined, on the contrary, to make a man who is the furthest from being wicked appear so, they will be equally effective."[206] Rousseau's counterattack is only possible if the subterfuges are unmasked. He plans to disclose "all the mechanisms they have been able to put into play to ignite and foment that very lively and very general animosity of which he is the object."[207] Bringing to the surface the underground plot allows everybody to comprehend them and enables Rousseau to appear as the righteous man he had always claimed to be. Foucault has argued that:

> Au lieu d'être ramassé dans le point sans surface d'une sincérité où l'erreur, l'hypocrisie, le vouloir mentir n'ont pas même la place de se loger, le sujet qui parle dans les Dialogues couvre une surface de langage qui n'est jamais close, et où les autres vont pouvoir intervenir par leur acharnement, leur méchanceté, leur décision obstinée de tout altérer.[208]

Rousseau's project is to map the allegations and chart them like a chess player would record combinations. The surface mentioned by Foucault could very well be that of a chess board on which Rousseau systematically traced the origin and the treatment of a libel in order to prove it wrong. The *Dialogues* are the strategic demise of the

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[205] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques, Dialogues 83.

[206] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 173.

[207] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 177.

[208] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 176-177.

conspiracy. Rousseau analyzed his failure to be understood and transparent just as a chess master would analyze a loss at chess. He systematically showed that his situation resulted from a series of irrational arguments, an accumulation of gossip that had caught *Jean-Jacques* in a web of lies.

In the *Second Dialogue*, *Rousseau* uses the example of chess to illustrate how *Jean-Jacques*'s performances and capabilities depend on his perception of reality:

> About music and about the things he knows best, JJ is like he used to be with chess. If he played against someone stronger than he whom he believed weaker, he most often beat him; if he played against a weaker person whom he thought stronger, he got beaten. The adequacy of others intimidates and unnerves him without fail.[209]

Jean-Jacques's failures result from his own perception of the world and it is only his self-confidence that allows him to be proficient and to fulfill his potential in everyday life. This passage additionally reveals that Rousseau's insecurity is triggered by the "adequacy of others." In other words, he felt oppressed by other people's poise, and it was their self-assured accusations that he intended to thwart in his *Dialogues*. Following Philidor's second golden rule of chess which is "if you cannot gain a victory over your adversary, gain one over yourself."[210] Rousseau featured a multi-faceted self who has served him to justify himself since the battle against public opinion was from the outset of his book a lost cause.

The labyrinthine writing of the *Dialogues* is an answer to the intricate and obscure maneuverings of Rousseau's enemies. Plunged into a world of libel and

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[209] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques, Dialogues 164-165.

[210] François Danican Philidor, An Easy introduction to the game of chess (Philadelphia : M. Carey and Son, 1817) 30.

gloom, he tried not only to bring the conspiracy in the open but also to undermine the arguments that were leveled against him. His desire for transparent relationship is limited by the maze of unfair criticism that have created walls that block his understanding of others as much as they hinder others to understand him properly. Through the structure and logic of chess, Rousseau denied the accuracy and the rationality of the processes used by his enemies.

This work published after his death testified to the influence of chess in his literary production. If the *Dialogues* are a very personal and unique piece of literature, they also served a purpose: they created the legal floor which enabled Rousseau to decompose his enemies' strategy and to demonstrate that every argument against him was illogical. The obvious influence of chess in the articulation and logic of the *Dialogues* is an indication that chess had an impact on Rousseau's late writing. But the influence of the game was not limited to auto-biographical literature; it also affected his early philosophical and political discourse.

3.2. Rousseau's chess-like organization of nature

In his *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, written for the *Académie de Dijon* in 1754, Rousseau set out to answer the following question: "What is the origin of inequality among men, and is it authorized by natural law?" In the preface to his dissertation, he argued that the state of Nature "no longer exists, perhaps never did exist, and probably never will exist; and of which, it is, nevertheless, necessary to

have true ideas, in order to form a proper judgment of our present state."[211] For Rousseau, the state of nature is an imaginary state that existed prior to human society. The first society is based on a theoretical law: the original equality. To understand his conception of equality, it suffices to refer to the metaphor of the chess board. The advantage taken by a player can be understood in reference to the rules of chess and to the initial position of the men on the board. The initial position disappears and ceases to exist as soon as the game starts. The original position on the chessboard reifies the pristine state of society and stands for the perfect equality of the players before the game. It is not society that determines inequality, but the human ability to use the rules for their own interest. Following the example of democracy, the game of chess is a game of rules. At the outset of the game, both players have the same assets. The winner is the player who is best able to use the rules for his own particular interest. Through a social perspective, the metaphor of chess illustrates Rousseau's rationale since civilization in itself could not be held responsible for the inequalities among men, only the historical development of society is to be blamed.

In his *Social Contract*, Rousseau elaborates upon a political project based on Natural Law. For him, only a fundamental convention could legitimize the political authority and allow the general will of the people to become sovereign. He laid the basis for a fair State in which each member would abandon their natural liberty and accept to subject themselves to the General Will, that is, "the constant will of all the

[211] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, A Discourse on Inequality (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1984) 11.

members of the state."[212] His social contract reconciles individual liberties with life in society. Out of this association would emerge a moral and collective body that the philosopher labeled a Republic. This political body could only be governed by the concept of General Will to serve a common welfare.

Rousseau's society follows the same pattern. In his ideal *Cité*, people can argue about legislature, social reforms and politics, but they all agree on pursuing public welfare. Society exists only in reference to this pact. Chess also exists only in accordance to the players' agreement to respect and play by the rules. Alf Ross makes it explicit that "The rules of chess, since they define the game, cannot, strictly speaking, be violated. A player may of course cheat by making an irregular move. But in that case what is going on is not, strictly speaking, chess. Cheating in chess requires passing off, undetected, an action as chess that is not really so."[213] Besides, all players are free to play in the framework defined by the rules of chess, and they all share the same common objective, that is to checkmate their opponent's king. As Derek Jinks argues, chess entails an agreement between players:

> Chess strategists may disagree about the most appropriate defense against an English opening, but they unambiguously agree on, among other things, the game's ultimate objective. This consensus is a condition of possibility for the range of disagreements that comprise chess theory. Simply put, chess is chess in virtue of this agreement.[214]

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[212] Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Maurice Cranston, The Social Contract (London, England: Penguin Books, 1968) 137.

[213] Alf Ross, Directives and Norms (New York: Humanities Press, 1968) 54.

[214] Derek P. Jinks, "Essays in refusal: pre-theoretical commitments in postmodern anthropology and critical race theory" (Yale Law Journal, Vol. 107, 1997. 499-528).

Rousseau's natural society was therefore to be chartered with a common rationale. He listed the constitutive laws that would govern his ideal State and "whereas regulative rules presuppose an activity to regulate, constitutive rules create one."[215] For Rousseau, before the social pact, no society could exist. Social beings had to define the laws that would regulate their social life. These constitutive rules are reminiscent of the game of chess as "before there were rules of chess there was no such thing as a chess move. If someone had a pawn on a board, and moved the pawn one space, that act would not have been a chess move."[216] Rousseau theorizes society, the need for a Legislator[217], and above all the utmost importance of the general will.

Though Rousseau enjoyed playing chess and considered that game a great pastime, he was far from being a master at chess, he was even described as "inexpert" though "an enthusiastic admirer of it: he was accustomed when at Paris, to spend many hours daily at the *Café de la Régence.*"[218] As far as Rousseau is concerned, chess becomes relevant in that it influenced his logic, affected his philosophy, and became the reference and method to systematize Nature and organize society.

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[215] Martin Hollis, Invitation to Philosophy (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985) 92.

[216] Bernard Rosen, "Rules and Justified Moral Judgments." (*Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 30, No. 3. (Mar., 1970)) 436.

[217] "a superior intelligence beholding all the passions of men without experiencing any of them would be needed" (Rousseau, *The Social Contract* 25)

[218] Richard Twiss, Chess (London: J.G.I. and I. Robinson, 1787) 6.

3.2.a. Chess and Transparency

Not only did chess have great influence on the social and political philosophy, it also considerably helped Rousseau formulate and organize natural laws and more specifically his conception of natural morality. Chess is a game of perfect information; it is "a game in which the players move one at a time, rather than simultaneously, and a player choosing a move always has full knowledge of all moves that have preceded it."[219] Nothing is hidden on a chessboard. Chess is an open game; whereas other games like card games usually are not. The basic principle of chess involves the conspicuousness of the players' strategies. In chess, as in any other game of perfect information, choices are made "with the full knowledge of the exact path in the game tree that earlier choices in the play follow."[220] Though the purpose of chess is to cover up one's intentions, the game offers a clear insight into the psychology of the players. With chess, it is possible to analyze the thought process of a player. It is possible to identify mistakes, lack of foresight as much as to reveal the great prescience of a player and his ability to conceal his tactics.

Chess moves are usually unpredictable, unless they are forced and there is only one best or one mandatory move. It is however possible to predict to a certain degree the possible moves of a player: "a knowledge of the primary norms of chess will make it possible to predict the course of a game of chess only within a very wide

[219] Andrew Colman, Game theory and Its Applications in the Social and Biological Sciences (Oxford (UK)/Boston: Butterworth-Heinemann, 1995) 9.

[220] Peter C. Ordeshook, Game Theory and Political Theory: An Introduction (Cambridge (UK) / New York : Cambridge University Press, 1986) 121.

framework."[221] A move can be predicted since it is played within a legitimate framework and since "there are very many perfectly legal and hence available moves, but only a few — perhaps half a dozen — with anything to be said for them, and hence only a few high probability moves according to the intentional strategy."[222] Because the game of chess depends on a respect for the rules, an adversary's potential moves can be deducted. Even if the latter seeks to hide his future combinations and to deceive his opponent, his strategy can be deduced for it is limited to a legal framework.

Furthermore, while the amateur fails to realize the sophistication and complexities of the game, connoisseurs and experts can not only understand a player's strategy, they are also able to anticipate future moves: "chess theory can often be used to predict – with reasonable but not absolute reliability – the moves of strong players."[223] In that sense, chess can give an insight into the player's psychology. As the player's thoughts are materialized on the chessboard, his/her reasoning process can be tracked. The abstract logic becomes immanent. With chess, the capacity — or the near-capacity — to lay bare anybody's intention is rendered possible.

In his book *La Transparence et l'Obstacle*, Starobinski gives a revealing insight into Rousseau's psychology and philosophy: "Si les choses sont ambiguës, cela ne provient pas du fait que Jean-Jacques est incapable de saisir l'être derrière les

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[221] Alf Ross, On Law and Justice (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959) 17.

[222] William G. Lycan, Mind and Cognition: An Anthology (Malden : Blackwell Publishing, 1999) 80.

[223] Preston T. King, Trusting in Reason: Martin Hollis and the Philosophy of Social Action (London / Portland : Frank Cass, 2003) 157.

apparences: il est clair que ce sont les conjurés qui lui refusent la possibilité de vivre dans la clarté."[224] The conspiracy against him is the obstacle that prevents his consciousness to reach clarity. The evil spirits that loom in the distance are fomenting a strategy to libel him, to stain his public image, and distort his true self. What hinders him from total bliss is the sentiment that an unknown and unfriendly force menaces him. Only through perfect transparency can Rousseau reach happiness and peace of mind. Setting an example with his own psyche, he defines harmony between men – and by extension social concord – as the ability to read and understand every man. The obstacle to social harmony is men's ability to conceal their intention, to conspire and collude secretly. Rousseau is so obsessed with the "other" that his though process is always directed to protect himself from that "other": "Jean-Jacques ne peut plus avoir une seule volonté qui ne lui soit subrepticement inspirée par ceux qui lui veulent du mal."[225] It means that Rousseau's rationale is a response or a defense to an alleged incoming attack. Rousseau's psychology is very similar to that of a chess player. He deals with life as he would manage a chess game: he is always paying attention to his opponent's moves which eventually conditioned his own moves and attract his entire attention.

Though chess is a game of perfect information, there is obviously a major obstacle to total transparency: the adversary. Victory in chess can be achieved only if one manages to conceal one's stratagem to checkmate the other player. At the same

[224] Jean Starobinski, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, la transparence et l'obstacle ; suivi de sept essais sur Rousseau (Collection Tel, 6. Paris: Gallimard, 1971) 265.

[225] Jean Starobinski 266.

time, while a player has a perfect view of the game and though he may have a perfect understanding of it, he/she can be taken aback by his opponent's move. The obstruction is produced by the maneuvers of the adversary.

3.2.b. Chess, Transparency, and Rousseau's ideal society

Rousseau's moral ideal was transparency, and in that respect, chess served as a very convenient reference. Following the law of the game, Rousseau imagined the perfect society as a giant chess-board and based his political and moral philosophy on the principle of conspicuousness. Everything should be exposed to the gaze. But more importantly, anything that fails to be publicized becomes suspicious. For the social body to function properly, transparency needs to become law and be enforced.

In his *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences*, Rousseau blamed the arts for having perverted morals and corrupted society. Arts and science have disguised men's subjection and have barely rendered his plight easier to put up with. Before art corrupted society, "Human nature was not fundamentally better, but men found their security in the ease with which they could see through each other, and this advantage, whose value we no longer feel, spared them many vices." Transparency was the key to harmony between men. Arts created the veils and the masks that have blocked each other's self from connecting to each others: Men are no longer able to see through each other. Rousseau identifies transparency as the foundation of moral control: it would ensure social order. He presents the society of his dreams in his *Discourse on Inequality*. This place, where he wished he had been born, is a country in which "all

the individuals knowing one another, neither the obscure maneuvers of vice nor the modesty of virtue [would be] concealed from public gaze and judgment."[226] In his ideal world, feelings and most intimate thoughts would be exposed to the general public. Nothing could remain secret.

Transparency was characteristic of the natural morality that Rousseau presented in his 1762 epistolary novel *Julie ou La Nouvelle Héloïse* in which the small society of Clarens embodied his political and social ideals. This community that conformed to the state of Nature was based on the family, and centered on the paternal figure of Wolmar. Jones has noted that "Wolmar's powers match those given by Rousseau to the Legislator of the *Contrat* and to the Tutor of the *Emile.*"[227] He stood for the Supreme Being and natural morality. The protagonist Saint Preux compares Clarens' order to Wolmar's psychology: "The economy he has established in his household is the image of that order which reigns in his own breast; and his little family seems to be a model of that regularity which is observable in the government of the world."[228] This patriarchal community illustrates the perfect society that Rousseau describes in his *Social Contract* where he celebrates the family: "The most ancient of all societies, and the only one that is natural."[229] Clarens combines the

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[226] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, A Discourse on Inequality (Penguin classics. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1984) 57.

[227] James Jones, La nouvelle Héloïse, Rousseau and utopia (Genève : Librairie Droz, 1977) 51.

[228] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Julia. Or, The New Eloisa. A Series of Original Letters (Edinburgh: Bell & Bradfute, 1794) 215.

[229] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract: Or, Principles of Political Right (Ware, UK: Wordsworth Editions Ltd, 1998) 2.

concepts of public and private utility. Everything that is useful for the individual is also supposed to benefit the community. Wolmar contends that exemplary morality is to avoid doing or saying anything that one does not want anybody to hear or see:

> One moral precept may supply the place of all the rest, which is this: neither to say or do anything, which you would not have all the world see and her. For my part, I have always esteemed that Roman, above all other men, who wished that his house was constructed in such manner, that the world might see all his transactions.[230]

Thoughts and feelings were never to be concealed. To be considered virtuous, a social member should have always made his morality conspicuous and should have had nothing to hide. Wolmar echoes Rousseau's view on natural morality where appearance should correspond to reality. For Jean Starobinski, in Rousseau's state of nature, "Appearance and reality were in perfect equilibrium. Men showed themselves and were seen by others as they really were. External appearances were not obstacles but faithful mirrors, wherein mind met mind in perfect harmony."[231] Transparency was part of Rousseau's ideal republic, where each citizen would understand everyone, and be understood by everybody. There would not be any conspiracy nor any hypocrisy, since everybody would open their souls and hearts to the public. Nothing would remain private and undisclosed. Everything would belong to the public sphere. Rousseau's dream infringed on privacy, in fact, particular will was to be fought and replaced by the omnipotence of the common interests and the general will. If a citizen

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[230] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Julia. Or, The New Eloisa. A Series of Original Letters 297.

[231] Jean Starobinski, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, la transparence et l'obstacle (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1988) 12.

would not open up to the others, then he should be compelled to do so. Michel Foucault clearly articulates Rousseau's aspiration to total transparency:

> It was the dream of a transparent society, visible and legible in each of its parts, the dream of there no longer existing any zones of darkness [or] of disorder. It was the dream that each individual, whatever position he occupied, might be able to see the whole of society, that men's hearts should communicate, their vision be unobstructed by obstacles.[232]

In the same way, Rousseau wrote his *Confessions* to reveal himself in his entirety to his readers and, by doing so, to reach total transparency: "Rousseau is certain that his heart is transparent to himself; the purpose of autobiography is to make it transparent to others."[233] In order to show his virtue, he sought to uncover himself totally:

> I should like in some way to make my soul transparent to the reader's eye, and for that purpose I am trying to present it from all points of view, to show it in all lights, and to contrive that none of its movements shall escape his notice, so that he may judge for himself of the principle which has produced them.[234]

This passage acknowledges that despite all his sincerity and his resolution to expose his feelings and thoughts, he may very well have been suspect to his readers if he had not disclosed everything. Rousseau tries to present his heart "as transparent as crystal." He also introduced himself as being "incapable of concealing for so much as a moment the least lively feeling which has taken refuge in his heart."[235] Were he to

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[232] Michel Foucault, Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980) 152.

[233] Margaret Ogrodnick, Instinct And Intimacy: Political Philosophy and Autobiography in Rousseau (Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 1999) 31.

[234] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Confessions of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Penguin Classics, 1953) 169.

[235] Jean-Jacques Rousseau 415.

dissimulate anything, he would have been seen as guilty. What mattered was to disclose everything he did and every aspect of his personality. It was therefore significant that the symbol of the Revolution was the gaze of Reason or the public eye to which nothing was to be obscured. By lack of means to observe everyone, to invade surreptitiously the privacy of the citizens, virtue was to be displayed. What mattered was that the social being lived in total transparency with the political authority. To conceal anything was to have something to be blamed for. Any secrecy was understood as a conspiracy against the state and was consequently illegal.

3.2.c. Clarens or Rousseau's dream of social transparency

In 1756, Rousseau simultaneously embarked on the composition of three of his major works: *Julie ou La Nouvelle Héloïse*, *The Social Contract*, and his pedagogical treatise *Emile: Or On Education*. As soon as his epistolary novel *Julie* was published, it met with great success and even turned out to be one of the century's best sellers.

In *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, Rousseau organizes a world in keeping with his political philosophy, one where the characters are defending his convictions. The *philosophe* is at the core of his novel: every time a character preaches, it is Rousseau who justifies his moral philosophy. Jean-Louis Lecercle has noted in *Julie ou La Nouvelle Héloïse* that "Rousseau a créé des personnages à son image, il a fait d'eux des dissertants."[236] His novel aims at improving his readers by teaching them how to become virtuous. Indeed his book is a moral lesson and features, as Voltaire

[236] Jean-Louis Lecercle, Rousseau et l'art du roman (Paris: A. Colin, 1969) 75.

sarcastically remarked: "Jean-Jacques a trouvé l'heureux secret de mettre dans ce beau roman de six tomes, trois à quatre pages de faits et environ mille de discours moraux."[237] Thanks to the utopia of Clarens, the author portrays an ideal social organization. He sets a perfect example that he believes is worthy of being followed and that could infuse his readers with good qualities. He combines a love story with a pedagogical treatise and aims at what Lecercle has called "enseigner à travers une intrigue romanesque."[238] The imaginary community of Clarens sheds a new light on the actual eighteenth-century society. The reader escapes from their morally corrupt world and Rousseau intends to guide their imagination so that their reading experience can be instructive and influence their judgment.

Julie and Saint Preux are initially lovers. But Julie obeys her father's wishes and accepts to become the wife of Wolmar, who is the moral authority of the community. She eventually represses her love for Saint Preux and subjects her aspirations to the demands of her husband. She believes that "the art of satisfying our desires lies not in indulging, but in suppressing them."[239] Her virtue has led her to deny her love for Saint Preux and to "accustom her passions to obedience, and subject her inclinations to rule."[240] She has not only restricted all her feelings and emotions to the rules of Wolmar and Clarens, she has also convinced herself that her life could not

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[237] Voltaire and André Versaille Dictionnaire de la pensée de Voltaire par lui-même. (Bruxelles: Editions Complexe, 1994) 1122.

[238] Jean-Louis Lecercle 80.

[239] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Julia. Or, The New Eloisa. A Series of Original Letters II. 116.

[240] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Julia. Or, The New Eloisa. II. 117.

be more blissful. Clarens epitomizes natural happiness and Julie is "satisfied every night with the transactions of day" and "wishes for nothing different on the morrow. Her constant morning prayer is that the present day may prove like the past."[241] She does not long for anything else than what she already has. Living a virtuous life, Julie embodies the female perfection in a natural society ruled by Wolmar.

In Clarens, the sentiment of nature is best illustrated by the *Elysée* garden which stands for the perfect expression of natural purity. While Saint Preux believes he has entered a natural haven where everything is "verdant, fresh, and vigorous" and where "the hand of the gardener is nowhere to be discerned," this garden is actually cleverly designed and regularly maintained. The reason why no human traces can be detected is because they have been carefully camouflaged as Wolmar remarks "it is because they have taken great pains to efface them. I have frequently been witness to, and sometimes an accomplice in this roguery."[242] The garden epitomizes the enterprise of the master in his community. Wolmar takes great pains to conceal the task he has been at. The garden uncovers the delusion that rules Clarens' social organization and the deception he has forced his people to live in.

While Rousseau celebrates nature, the virtue he preaches is paradoxically the suppression of all natural instincts. For the *philosophe*, desires create expectations and pleasures that are annihilated by satisfaction. The non-existent becomes attractive by the power of imagination alone. Pleasure depends less on the actual satisfaction than

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[241] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Julia. Or, The New Eloisa. III. 134.

[242] Jean-Jacques Rousseau 20.

on the effort to reach satisfaction. On the contrary, happiness for Rousseau lies on the exacerbation of desires. Julie's wonderland collapses at the very moment when she reaches complete contentment: "O my friend ! I am indeed too happy: my happiness is a burden to me."[243] Deprived of passion, love, and desire, her life becomes unbearably dull. In her last letter, she admits to having blinded herself: "Long have I indulged the salutary delusion that my passion was extinguished; the delusion is now vanished, when it can be no longer useful […]. It was interwoven with my heart-strings."[244] In the letter to Saint Preux that she has written just before her death, she recognizes that she has always been in love with him and that her virtue has alienated her natural feelings for him. The natural virtue that Rousseau celebrates is paradoxically the suppression of all natural feelings and aspirations. Julie falls victim to Wolmar's moral conceptions. She lives in self-delusion and only realizes it at the twilight of her life.

Discussing the most effective method to train servants, Rousseau often equates domestic with civil economy. The father of the family becomes the Supreme Being in charge of the happiness of his household. He also often equates the servants in Clarens with the citizens of a larger society. However, while this community illustrates Rousseau's ideal social project, it turns out to be a true authoritarian regime. Private interests fade in the face of the general will which, in order to serve the general interest, serves Wolmar's interest first. The domestics and peasants merely

[243] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Julia. Or, The New Eloisa III 349.

[244] Jean-Jacques Rousseau 421.

devote their lives to their master: "They are sensible that their fortune is most firmly attached to that of their master, and that they shall never want anything while his family prospers."[245] Equal rights are not the primary concern in Clarens. Saint Preux describes Wolmar and Julie's condescending attitude towards their employees and how they create a pretense of equality: "She and her husband could so often stoop to level themselves with their servants, and yet the latter never be tempted to assume equality in their turn."[246] The masters agree to lower themselves to the level of their domestics only to ensure that the latter will accept their status and respect the masters' social superiority.

Additionally Saint Preux depicts Wolmar's paternalistic politics and his dictatorial ruling over his domain and people: "His servant was a stranger to him: he is now part of his enjoyment; his child; he makes him his own. Formerly he had only power over his servant's actions; now he has authority over his inclinations."[247] The masters' patronizing attitude reaches its climax in the control of their people. Although Wolmar considers that, in order to be virtuous, one should never hide anything, every character in *La Nouvelle Héloïse* has something to conceal. Julie eagerly hides her wealth from the peasants and servants that come for dinner at her place: "To prevent giving rise to envy, everything is carefully avoided that might in the eyes of these poor people appear more costly than what they meet with at

[245] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Julia. Or, The New Eloisa II 368.

[246] Jean-Jacques Rousseau 351.

[247] Jean-Jacques Rousseau 364.

home."[248] If anybody misbehaves or acts up during these meetings, he or she will not be reprimanded immediately. The masters will wait until they are behind closed doors to get rid of an unwanted member so that "the company is not disturbed by reprimands, but the offender gets his dismission on the morrow."[249] Everything is arranged to keep the masters' authority, wealth, and superiority far from the servants' eyes. The latter are nevertheless subjected to an invisible power that implements much more coercive strategies. As Morgenstern has noted, "the hierarchical patriarchy […] is all the more effective for being camouflaged."[250]

The regime of Clarens promotes order, inequality, and the close surveillance of the mores of the working force. Crocker identifies two specific techniques used by Wolmar in order to manage his people. "The first is the cultivation of reflexive behavior by a combination of discipline and what psychologists today call 'operant conditioning', the setting-up of stimulus conditions that make it difficult for the desired response not to occur."[251] Human beings are then conditioned into acting and reacting as Wolmar judges appropriate. People are manipulated into adopting a behavior that will benefit the community and that they will consider their own. The second technique recognized by Crocker is "necessary to the accomplishment of the first" and is "the use of deceit and disguise, or what is figuratively called 'the hidden

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[248] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Julia. Or, The New Eloisa III 216.

[249] Jean-Jacques Rousseau 217.

[250] Mira Morgenstern, Rousseau and the Politics of Ambiguity: Self, Culture, and Society (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996) 208.

[251] Lester G. Crocker, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (New York: Macmillan, 1968) 69.

hand.'"[252] The organization and adequate working of Wolmar's community rest on the principle that each member will be infused with "a new set of conditioned reflexes."[253] Jones has remarked that Rousseau "devotes several pages developing in some detail how Julie and Wolmar constrain the sexual activity of their domestics."[254] The sexual mores of the employees are regulated so that contacts between men and women fall under the supervision of the masters: "to prevent intimacy between the two sexes, restrain them by positive rules which they might be tempted to violate in secret; but without any seeming intention, they establish good customs." In order to regulate sexual activities, the masters merely need to infuse their employees with aspirations that will keep them away from each other: "It is contrived in such a manner that they have no occasion or inclination to see each other. This is effectuated by making their business, their habits, their tastes, and their pleasures entirely different." By disguising the control over the working force, Rousseau imagines a very effective way to reinforce the masters' authority: "which are more powerful than authority itself."[255] Wolmar hides his power so that his people can put up with his authority and eventually find natural what he forces them to do: "The art of the master consists in disguising this restraint under the veil of pleasure and interest, that what

[252] Lester G. Crocker, 69.

[253] Lester G. Crocker 69.

[254] James Jones, La nouvelle Héloïse, Rousseau and utopia (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1977) 67.

[255] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Julia. Or, The New Eloisa II 337.

they are obliged to do may seem the result of their own inclination."[256] Servants are unconsciously deprived of their free will. All that they do or think has been inculcated by their masters. The illusion serves to achieve the total and unconditional submission of the population. Deceit is the basic principle of Wolmar's society where Julie exercises "in the simplicity of private life, the despotic power of wisdom and beneficence."[257]

Far from giving a lesson on happiness, Rousseau organizes the repression of feelings and morals. He celebrates an authoritarian environment. Clarens unveils the illusion of freedom that pervades his political and moral philosophy. In order to be more effective, power needs to be made imperceptible: "*La Nouvelle Héloise* and *Emile* have shown that duplicity and the 'hidden hand' are constant and conscious mechanisms in Rousseau's methodology for conditioning and indoctrinating the individual."[258] The art of the legislator is to educate and train the masses to convince people to follow the demands of community life. *La Nouvelle Héloïse* is a display of paternalism where happiness is an illusion at the service of the master who manipulates people's lives, feelings, and wills.

Similarly, the organization of society on the Social Contract makes appear as nothing less than a giant chess-board on which the pieces are moved and manipulated by the hand of the Legislator, and in which it becomes essential to guarantee total obedience to achieve the greater objectives of the nation. Not only was the Legislator

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[256] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Julia. Or, The New Eloisa II 343.

[257] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Julia. Or, The New Eloisa III 215.

[258] Lester G. Crocker, Jean-Jacques Rousseau. (New York: Macmillan, 1968) 181.

empowered to define the General Will, he also had at worst, to control, and at best, to influence opinions so that they all conformed to the common welfare.

This section will investigate how transparency in Rousseau's political thoughts is related to the laws of chess and how the game has shaped the *philosophe*'s understanding and organization of nature.

3.3. Legacy of Rousseau's politics of transparency

The revolutionaries organized festivals and tributes to Reason and also held celebrations in Rousseau's honor. "These revolutionary festivals were in effect a direct attempt to institute or manifest the required 'transparency' between citizens and between citizens and government."[259] The strong moral drift that characterized the eighteenth century and Rousseau's writings was ingrained in the 1789 revolutionary ideals which drew inspiration from the Enlightenment ideology and, at the same time, revealed its ambiguities.

In an article published in his newspaper *L'ami du peuple*, Marat falsely incriminated M. July for having forged official papers to his benefit. Marat recognized his mistake and publicly claimed that his previous accusations were spurious. He acknowledged that his newspaper libeled M. July and then made amends for it. However, in the closing of his mea-culpa, Marat, "sûr de la pureté de [son] coeur," denied any legal responsibility since his admission of guilt acted for him as total

[259] John Jervis, Exploring the Modern: Patterns of Western Culture and Civilization (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1998) 44.

immunity: “Tant que ma dénonciation subsistait, vous aviez droit de vous plaindre et d’exiger réparation d’honneur : aujourd’hui que je reconnais ma méprise et que je la désavoue publiquement, vous n’avez plus le droit de m’en faire un crime.” Those few lines by Marat are characteristic of the politics of virtue. Once a citizen opens up, he can no longer be charged with anything nor can he be judged guilty of anything. This attitude characterizes eighteenth-century natural morality and testifies to Rousseau’s influence.

The Rousseauian ideal of a fully transparent society that inspired the ideology of the Revolution of 1789 can be found in the cult of the Supreme Being. In the preface to the *Recueil d'hymnes républicains*, Robespierre, the instigator of the Great Terror, argued that freedom and virtue are natural to man: “La liberté et la vertu sont sorties ensemble du sein de la Divinité, l’une ne peut séjourner sans l’autre parmi les hommes.”[260] Robespierre devised the cult of the Supreme Being and clearly articulated it in the speech made on 7 May 1794. He shared “the belief of Voltaire and Jean-Jacques Rousseau that the populace needed a god in which to put their faith.”[261] In the speech he made for one of the festivals, Robespierre addressed directly the Supreme Being and said:

> Tu connais les créatures sorties de tes mains; leurs besoins n’échappent pas plus à tes regards que leurs plus secrètes pensées. La haine de la mauvaise foi et de la tyrannie brûle dans nos cœurs avec l’amour de la

[260] Philippe-Joseph-Benjamin Buchez and Prosper Charles Roux, Histoire parlementaire de la révolution française; ou, Journal des assemblées nationales, depuis 1789 jusqu'en 1815 (Paris: Paulin, 1834) 180.

[261] Paul R. Hanson, Historical Dictionary of the French Revolution (Lanham, Md. : Scarecrow Press, 2004) 100.

> justice et de la Patrie; notre sang coule pour la cause de l'humanité:
> voilà notre prière; voila nos sacrifices; voilà le culte que nous t'offrons.

The Supreme Being would infiltrate every man's soul so that no citizen would be able to keep any secret. Robespierre also stressed that virtuous citizens should live in good faith and that "good" citizens should consider bad faith as one of the enemies of the state. The eighteenth-century notion of bad faith implied that actions should match thoughts, and that whatever a man did, was the expression of his inner self and virtue. Actions should be the representation of a man's qualities and hence allow the private sphere to be evaluated and judged by the public. Good faith implied that nothing would be kept from the public.

Rousseau's obsession with transparency is present in Robespierre's doctrine. The idea of a Being watching over oppressed innocence and punishing crime became wholly popular: "If Robespierre was instigated by personal ambition, he was instigated also by the desire to put into practice, at whatever risk to himself, the principles which he has learned of Rousseau."[262] The political power would cast an observant eye towards the entire population to study people's behaviors, and to interpret every motion as a presage of the line of conduct which they mean to pursue.

Rousseau's vision of social harmony is a regime of total transparency: "The body politic ought to be a transparent order of political institutions always open to the scrutiny of the citizen."[263] As a result, transparency became the milestone of the ideal

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[262] Bertha Meriton Gardiner, The French Revolution 1789-1795 (London / New York : Longmans, Green, 1893) 214.

[263] Roberto Alejandro, Hermeneutics, Citizenship, and the Public Sphere (Albany : State University of New York Press, 1993) 12.

social organization. Revolutionary political ideas demonstrated a significant shift towards the individual. Earthly happiness would depend on an "all-seeing Judge of the world," whose eye can never be deceived, and whose judgments are definitive. Hiding anything from this observer would have been considered an admission of guilt and would condemn anybody to the scaffold. Indeed, "the leaders of the Revolution were punished with death for lack of honesty or zeal."[264] At the eve of the Great Terror, Robespierre would also make known to the enemies of the Republic "that terror and virtue are the order of the day."[265]

For eighteenth-century intellectuals, virtue had always been an essential component of political philosophy. It was the necessary and sufficient guarantee of social cohesion. As Linton put it, virtue was one of the main concerns for modern philosophy "one word that was central to eighteenth-century political culture, wherein it featured simultaneously as a discourse, as an ideology and as a rhetorical strategy, was virtue."[266] Political virtue was deeply inspired by natural law. And Rousseau imagines that the proper use and teaching of virtue will enable "perfect information" to rule society. Virtue will guarantee the citizens' love for the republic and their devotion to the General Will.

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[264] Henry Williams, The Historians' History of the World (London and New York: The History association, 1907) 338.

[265] Henry Williams 337.

[266] Marisa Linton, "The Intellectual Origins of the French Revolution" The Origins of the French Revolution (New York : Palgrave MacMillan, 2006) 156.

With the coming of the Revolution, superstition and fanaticism were replaced by total information. Reason was the object of a cult, it meant to free men but exacted at the same time a totalitarian regime. What mattered was that no stone remained unturned; each aspect of social life would fall under the supervision of the Law. In order to achieve that goal, Reason had to be omnipotent and able to supervise everything and everybody. A regime of transparency could only function through total and constant surveillance. Indeed, "the notion of a transparent society marked by a Rousseauian general will is a Foucaultian nightmare. Democracy itself is based upon the diffusion of disciplines."[267] To ensure full knowledge and control over society, the governing power needs to set up disciplines both physical and moral. And though total transparency is a utopia, "the lesson of the twentieth century has been that "transparency" on Rousseau's terms is an illusion, and a dangerous one at that."[268] The transparent society born in Rousseau's mind appears to be a flawless and ultimately disciplined society. The most transparent system of all is Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, an incarcerating organization in which everything is open to scrutiny, and everybody subjected to constant surveillance.

> Je dirai que Bentham est le complémentaire de Rousseau. Quel est, en effet, le rêve rousseauiste qui a animé bien des révolutionnaires ? Celui d'une société transparente, à la fois visible et lisible en chacune des ses parties ; qu'il n'y ait plus de zones obscures, de zones aménagées par les privilèges du pouvoir royal ou par les prérogatives de tel ou tel corps, ou encore par le désordre ; que chacun, du point qu'il occupe,

[267] Brent Pickett, On the Use and Abuse of Foucault for Politics (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2005) 2.

[268] Dennis Porter, Rousseau's Legacy: Emergence and Eclipse of the Writer in France (Cambridge (UK) / New York : Oxford University Press, 1995) 33.

> puisse voir l'ensemble de la société ; que les cœurs communiquent les uns avec les autres, que les regards ne rencontrent plus d'obstacles, que l'opinion règne, celle de chacun sur chacun.[269]

Rousseau's political thinking and ideal social organization depended on transparent relationships. But as it has been shown earlier, Rousseau did not experience transparency in his own life, nor did the legacy of his philosophy.

[269] Michel Foucault, Dits et écrits: 1954-1988. III, 1976-1979 (Bibliothèque des sciences humaines. Paris: Gallimard, 1994) 195.

CHAPTER 4

ROUSSEAU, CHESS, AND BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

4.1 The Chess automaton and the end of the Enlightenment

Scientific research and inventions flourished during the Enlightenment. Automata of all kinds were assembled and attracted crowds of the curious. M. de Vaucanson, member of the Royal Academy for the Sciences first created an automatic flute player. In 1741, he designed an automaton in the shape of a duck which would recreate the natural behavior of a duck as well as its bodily

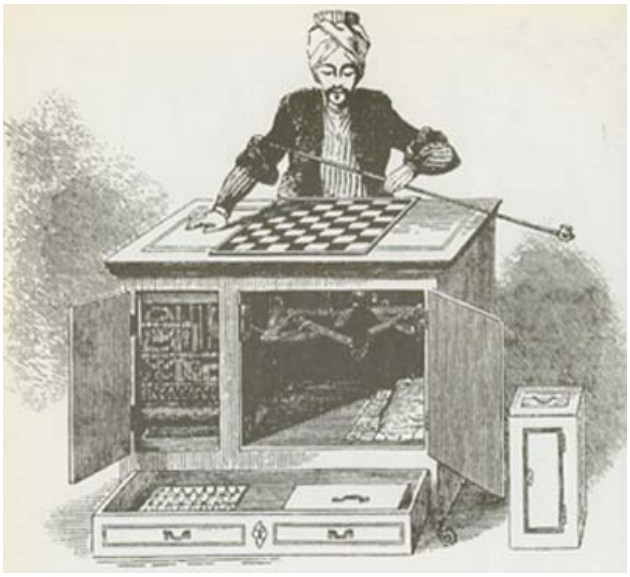

Figure 3: The Chess Automaton. Source: Mary Hillier, *Automata and Mechanical Toys: An Illustrated History* (London: Jupiter Books, 1976)

functions.[270]

The Chess Turk was among the most famous mechanical machines. Created and assembled in Prisburg, Hungary, it was first presented in the Vienna Court in 1769 and later on achieved international success.[271] Featuring a life-size mannequin sitting at a table, the Chess Turk was a mechanical chess player invented by baron Wolfgang von Kempelen and capable of beating the most skilful chess players. Before any exhibition game, all the doors of the chess-table were opened; Kempelen would show the inside of the machine to the audience. A complex array of gearwheels, barrels and pulleys was made conspicuous so that nobody could imagine that a man could fit in the table and make the entire mechanism work. The Chess Turk only had one mechanical arm, and, every time a move was carried out, the Turk "performed movements in a jerky, mechanical fashion."[272] The chess automaton also required constant attention from the exhibitor "who would place a key into the cabinet and

[270] The *Encyclopédie* offers a description of the duck automaton: "Un canard, dans lequel il représente le méchanisme des viscères destinés aux fonctions du boire, du manger, & de la digestion; le jeu de toutes les parties nécessaires à ces actions, y est exactement imité: il allonge son cou pour aller prendre du grain dans la main, il l'avale, le digère, & le rend par les voies ordinaires tout digéré; tous les gestes d'un canard qui avale avec précipitation, & qui redouble de vitesse dans le mouvement de son gosier, pour faire passer son manger jusques dans l'estomac, y sont copiés d'après nature: l'aliment y est digéré comme dans les vrais animaux, par dissolution; & non par trituration; la matière digérée dans l'estomac est conduite par des tuyaux, comme dans l'animal par ses boyaux, jusqu'à l'anus, où il y a un sphincter qui en permet la sortie."

[271] The chess automaton was sold after Kempelen's death. It was hauled across the Atlantic and presented in the US at the beginning of the 19th century.

[272] Harry Golombek, A history of chess (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1976) 122.

crank it up creating a whirring sound that might last for ten to twelve of the Turk's moves before requiring rewinding."[273]

As the *Encyclopédie* defined an automaton as "un engin qui se meut de lui-même, ou machine qui porte en elle le principe de son mouvement," the chess automaton was believed to be a marvelous machine capable of playing chess. Yet, the Turk was also capable of losing which must certainly have motivated some players to take up the challenge: "In the year 1783, the Android encountered the Chess-king, Philidor, at the Café de la Régence, at Paris. Before the Philidors and Legals of this famous resort, the crescent of the Turk grew pale, and he met with a number of reverses."[274] In actuality, the chess proficiency of the Turk entirely depended on the quality of the player who was hiding in the table.

After Kempelen's death in 1804, The Turk was later bought in 1819 by Maelzel who traveled across the Atlantic and brought the Chess automaton to the United States. He "performed for extended runs in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, where the Chess Player was finally destroyed in the 1854 fire that consumed Peales's Museum."[275] As no precise design of the machine has ever been drawn, views differed about the workings of the Turk. Some explain that the mechanical arm was controlled remotely and that whoever was in the chess machine

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[273] Timothy Marr, The Cultural Roots of American Islamicism (Cambridge (UK) / New York : Cambridge University Press, 2006) 72.

[274] C.J.S. Purdy, The Chess World : A magazine devoted to the Cultivation of the game of chess **(**London: Trubner & co, 1869) 4.

[275] J. S. Bell, Puppets, Masks, and Performing Objects (Cambridge (UK) / New York : MIT Press, 2001) 77.

should have been trained for weeks before being able to operate the machine smoothly enough so as to avoid raising suspicion. Others explain that the mechanical arm was actually the actual arm of the human chess player hidden in the machine. His head would be at the level of the board and placed in the Turk's stomach, allowing him or her to watch the board through a thin fabric. The rest of the hidden body would be contorted in the box.

Though it was later proven to be a hoax, many educated people, scientists, and intellectuals believed that an actual mechanical machine could play chess: "Newspaper articles and word of mouth sent news of the sensational 'Thinking Machine' across Europe."[276] The following anonymous description testified that the Turk was taken seriously by the scientific and intellectual community:

> On a d'abord cru que cet automate n'était qu'un de ces spectacles de faire faits pour amuser le peuple: beaucoup de physiciens n'avait pas daigné l'aller voir; mais, sur le rapport de gens dignes de fois, les plus habiles mécaniciens l'ont été visiter, & n'y comprennent encore rien, pas plus qu'au joueur d'échecs.[277]

The fraud was perfect. Chess players believed that they played against a mechanism capable of elaborating a complex strategy; and even scientists would let themselves be puzzled by the machine ability without doubting its validity. People believed that they

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[276]Christopher Milbourne, The Illustrated History of Magic (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2005) 33.

[277] Louis Petit de Bachaumont, Mathieu Françpis Pidanzat de Mairobert, and Mouffle d'Angerville, Mémoires secrets pour servir à l'histoire de la republique des lettres en France, depuis MDCCLXII jusqu'à nos jours; ou, Journal d'un observateur (Londres: J. Adamson, 1781) 231.

witnessed the first thinking machine and praised the scientific genius responsible for that marvel.

The French scientist Louis Dutens was a prominent eighteenth century figure. Official historiographer of the King of England, he also had the chance to play against the automaton in 1770. He described his experience as well as the Turk's scientific implications in a series of letters. In one of them, addressed to the *Mercure*, he intended to inform the public "d'un fait aussi important à l'honneur des sciences que glorieux pour Presbourg[278] qui l'a produit."[279] Dutens described how he tried to cheat the Turk but was immediately caught by the machine which replaced the piece in its original position. The scientist concluded from that quick reaction that the automaton at least matched human performances: "Tout cela se fit avec la même promptitude qu'un joueur ordinaire met a ce jeu; & j'ai fait des parties avec plusieurs personnes qui ne jouaient ni si vite, ni si bien que l'Automate."[280] Dutens was fascinated by the machine and its ability to combine moves and elaborate strategies:

> Il est inutile de remarquer que le merveilleux de cet Automate consiste principalement en ce qu'il n'a point (comme d'autres déjà tant célèbres) une suite de mouvements déterminés, mais se meut toujours en conséquence de la façon de jouer de son adversaire, ce qui produit une multitude prodigieuse de combinaisons différentes dans ses mouvements. [281]

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[278] *Prebourg* - or *Priburg* - was the town in Hungary where the machine was built.

[279] Louis Dutens, Œuvres mélées de m.L. Dutens (Londres : W. & C. Spilsbury, 1797) 114.

[280] Louis Dutens 116.

[281] Louis Dutens 105.

Eventually the Turk was exposed and the imposture revealed to the general public. Public fascination for science led to aberrations among which the Chess Automaton held a prime seat. Intellectuals celebrated the mechanical achievement of Kempelen's machine and many actually believed that a mechanical machine was able to think. It seems amazing that no one publicly denounced the fraud.

Kempelen deceived people to such an extent that Simon Shaffer argued that the Turk not only stood for the end of the Enlightenment but could also be proof that people had never actually been enlightened. For him, the automaton showed how society was plagued by superstition and self-delusion: "The concern here has been to see how an enlightened public produced this grim view of society's mechanics."[282] Paradoxically enough, those deceptions were not generated by religious dogma, but by the unfaltering belief in progress and science. Kempelen was later known as a great conjuror. Yet, for some years, he mesmerized crowds and shed light on the limits of the Enlightenment.

Beyond the mere deception of an uncritical public and the end of an emblematic era, the Turk and automata in general were philosophical and social references. In the eighteenth century, automata were often used as metaphors for primitive human beings and were the expression of the scientific contempt for the general population. D'Alembert, in the preliminary discourse to the *Dictionnaire*

[282] William Clark, Jan Golinski, and Simon Shaffer, The Sciences in Enlightened Europe (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1999) 164.

raisonné des sciences et des arts, introduced craftsmen as no more than thoughtless automata:

> La plupart de ceux qui exercent les Arts mécaniques, ne les ont embrassés que par nécessité, & n'opèrent que par instinct. A peine entre mille en trouve-t-on une douzaine en état de s'exprimer avec quelque clarté sur les instruments qu'ils emploient & sur les ouvrages qu'ils fabriquent. Nous avons vu des ouvriers qui travaillent depuis quarante années, sans rien connaître à leurs machines.

D'Alembert identified certain categories of the population that would live and work instinctively, that is, without any resort to Reason. They would live without any conscious awareness of themselves or knowledge of what they are doing: They went through their lives like automata. This differentiation among men is a recurrent theme. Simon Shaffer remarked that "Enlightened science imposed a division between subjects that could be automated and those reserved for reason. It seemed as if most subjects had never been, could perhaps never be, enlightened."[283]

Though universalism was one the main tenets of the Enlightenment project, it appears that the process of enlightening people was already considered complicated, if not impossible in the eighteenth century. As most people proved unreceptive to the teaching of Reason and to the advancement of philosophy, it was only through subordination to the Enlightenment project that human beings would profit from it.

Diderot, in his book *Jacques the fatalist*, referred repeatedly to what "was written above" to explain human feelings and actions as well as random occurrences and events. The fatalism of his protagonist is "in reality biological and psychological

[283] William Clark, Jan Golinski, and Simon Shaffer, The Sciences in Enlightened Europe (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1999) 164.

determinism, a complex philosophy which is not explained but assumed."[284] Human beings are shown be incapable of ruling their lives; they are merely the helpless, passive victims of providence.

In his *Philosophy of Humanism*, Corliss Lamont notes that Voltaire "typified perfectly Humanism's reliance on reason and science, its faith in the educability of human beings, and its determination to do away with evils that afflict human race."[285] For Lamont, the eighteenth century witnessed a "profound humanist upsurge."[286] Though it is widely admitted that the Enlightenment championed freedom and progress, Lamont further argues that

> Human freedom always operates within certain definite limits, including those laid down by the conditioning of the past […]. And in general human beings must conform to natural laws such as that of gravity. In this sense human life can aptly be compared, to take a cherished example, with the game of chess. There are stated and established rules of chess, representing determinism, that every player is required to follow. Yet within that broad framework an enormous variety of individual moves is possible; and the moves actually made exhibit freedom of choice.[287]

The determinism defined by the Enlightenment thinkers is linked with their assumed necessity to condition human beings to value the social edifice and the requisite sacrifices that social life entails.

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[284] Denis Diderot, Jacques the Fatalist (Cambridge (UK) / New York : Oxford University Press, 1999) xix.

[285] Corliss Lamont, The Philosophy of Humanism 8th ed. (Washington, DC : Humanist Press, 1997) 71.

[286] Corliss Lamont 71.

[287] Corliss Lamont 174-175.

Lamont's use of chess to illustrate human freedom points to another issue. Since chess "is a game with no randomness whatsoever,"[288] and since freedom was valued by the Enlightenment philosophers, they nonetheless defined the need to limit and frame freedom of thought in a context which did not allow any room for contingency. The project that initially intended to break up any forms of oppression paradoxically planned to enforce feelings and attitudes.

Applied to politics, the logic of chess then assumed the form of a social determinism compatible with private freedom. As the human chessboard is made of sensitive pawns, the thinking ability of its elements is recognized as much as it is intended to be governed. The disciplines inspired by the Enlightenment were not only punitive; they penetrated the private sphere and the minds of every citizen. It was not so much the control of thought that was intended but the insurance that everybody would somehow at the same time be controlled and free to do what they want. This paradoxical project could only be achieved by limiting the scope of freedom, that is, to inscribe autonomy in a framework that would let social members act and interact as they felt like.

4.2 The man of system

In 1759, three years before the first publication of Rousseau's *Social Contract*, Adam Smith published *The Theory of the Moral Sentiments*, in which he discussed legal, political, and psychological theories about society. Smith distinguished two

[288] John Evans, Structures of Discrete Event Simulation: An Introduction to the Engagement Strategy (Chichester : Ellis Horwood Ld, 1988) 104.

types of Legislators: the first is the man of "public spirit" and the second the "man of system." For Smith, the latter,

> seems to imagine that he can arrange the different members of a great society with as much ease as the hand arranges the different pieces upon a chess-board. He does not consider that the pieces upon the chess-board have no other principle of motion besides that which the hand imposes upon them; but that, in the great chess-board of human society, every single piece has a principle of motion of its own, altogether different from that which the legislature might choose to impress upon it.[289]

The man of "public spirit," on the other hand, "will not disdain to ameliorate the wrong [...], when he cannot establish the best system of laws, he will endeavor to establish the best that the people can bear."[290] The political thinker who formulated a legal system in which the Legislator was a combination of Adam Smith's distinctive legal approaches is Rousseau. The eighteenth century French intellectual envisioned a Legislator that would be a "man of system" with authority over the public spirit . Rousseau relied excessively on natural laws to understand men and organize society. He believed that all facts and events should abide by natural laws. As a result, determinism was the keystone to his understanding of the perfect social organization.

Rousseau's political theory, though allegedly inspired by Nature, found a perfect model in a game created by mankind. First intended to liberate men, his legal theories turned out to be the theoretical background of the modern subjection of social beings. Among the numerous eighteenth century legal and political writings, the treatises by Montesquieu and Rousseau have had the greatest influence on the

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[289] Adam Smith, The Theory of Moral Sentiments (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1976) 110.

[290] Adam Smith 233-234.

constitution of governments and regimes. Though they both imagined better institutions for their fellow men, they laid the basis for social subjection. While a century earlier, in his *Pensées*, Pascal saw the human ability to think as the distinctive quality of mankind, Rousseau's political apparatus would invade human consciousness to direct and influence thought. Humans remained the thinking reeds as defined by Pascal, but a reed that needed to be disciplined. Montesquieu and Rousseau had both conceptualized the ideal society. While the former championed a society in which the nobles would occupy the core legal and political functions, the latter envisioned a brand new social organization, one that would take into account the natural state of humans and transform them into social beings.

> It is a weakness of the whole school which descends from Montesquieu that they overlook the really strong passions of humanity. The very conception of a government which contemplates it as a machine to be put together by skilful devices, assumes that the materials of which it is composed are colorless and lifeless. They are mere draughts on the political chessboard, to be arranged by the fancy of the legislator.[291]

The Baron d'Holbach, one of the precursors of sociology, acknowledged that men ought to be controlled by the Legislator. In his *Système de la nature ou des loix du monde physique et du monde moral* he argued that "man is not free. He is necessarily conditioned by the impressions he receives from the external world, by the ideas which come into being within his brain."[292] In d'Holbach's system of Nature, men were powerless creatures who needed to be controlled by an invisible power. For him,

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[291] Leslie Stephen, History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century (New York : G. P. Putnam's sons, 1876) 218.

[292] Paul Henri Thiry Holbach, Système de la nature ou des loix du monde physique et du monde moral (Londres, 1780) 9.

men were no more than pieces on a chessboard that needed to be guided, branded and whose actions and thoughts were to be determined surreptitiously. D'Holbach believed that freedom was an ideal worth fighting for but totally unattainable since "the man who believes himself to be free is like a fly who believes he is in control of the movements of the whole machine of the universe, while it is merely being carried along by it unbeknownst to himself" (9). His ideas are symptomatic of the Enlightenment. Nature was indeed at the core of all rationales in the eighteenth century. As philosophy was meant to encourage freedom and to elevate man above his current conditions, the *philosophes*' ideology expanded beyond the mere domain of metaphysics. Their thoughts were to have concrete and immediate repercussions in the elaboration of new legislations, a fairer society and a morality inspired by civil values. This notion, far from celebrating freedom, hypothesized that man needed to be insidiously instructed. Far from being an isolated conviction, the necessary passivity of human and social beings became a concordant argument of Enlightenment philosophers.

4.3. Rousseau and the control of volition

Lester Crocker has described the management of individual behavior as "the key to Rousseau's sociopolitical program." Rousseau's entire social organization gave "moral prescriptions the same mechanical necessity as that of physical laws."[293] Indeed Rousseau's government has to make its subjects virtuous. And all his political

[293] Lester G. Crocker, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (New York: Macmillan, 1968) 69.

works revolve on the methodology and the apparatus necessary to enforce the official morality. In *Emile: Or, On Education*, he contends that "Society must be studied by means of men, and men by means of society. Those who want to treat politics and morals separately will never understand anything."[294] As politics and morality cannot be dissociated, then it is perfectly normal for Rousseau that moral education enters the realm of politics. In his pedagogical treatise *Emile*, Rousseau combines his political and educational philosophy to raise, educate, and condition a young boy according to natural precepts. The nature that is so much referred to is actually a figment of Rousseau's imagination alone. In doing so, he makes evident the strategy of his political projects and more especially his "programs for behavioral control."[295] What matters for Rousseau is "to control desire, or the will."[296] The tutor manipulates every aspect of Emile's environment so that he won't be contaminated by the corruption of the human world: "Emile must be allowed to see and to know only what his master decides he should."[297] By organizing the world in which the pupil lives, the tutor enables himself to "arrange all around [Emile] the lessons [he] wants to give him without his ever thinking he is receiving any."[298] Emile lives in an artificial world where everything has a hidden purpose.

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[294] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Emile: Or, On Education (New York: Basic Books, 1979) 235.

[295] Lester G. Crocker, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (New York: Macmillan, 1968) 136.

[296] Lester G. Crocker, 137.

[297] Lester G. Crocker, 138.

[298] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Emile: Or, On Education (New York: Basic Books, 1979).120.

The education that the Tutor is providing to Emile is reminiscent of Clarens where the will of the master is surreptitiously and carefully ingrain in the members of the community. In these two novels, Rousseau "originated motivation research and behavioral engineering."[299] The method he advocated was one of disguised authority that gave the pupil the illusion of freedom but that left the master totally in charge. In the following passage, Rousseau described his pedagogical philosophy:

> Take an opposite route with your pupil. Let him always believe he is the master, and let it always be you who are. There is no subjection so perfect as that which keeps the appearance of freedom. Thus the will itself is made captive. The poor child who knows nothing, who can do nothing, who has no learning, is he not at your mercy? Do you not dispose, with respect to him, of everything which surrounds him? Are you not the mater of affecting him as you please? [300]

Convinced that he is in charge of his own life, the child will never rebel against an authority that he cannot perceive anyhow. The subtle power that guides his life and conditions his tastes is sure to remain in control as long as it remains undetected. The "illusion of self-government"[301] is therefore an extremely effective and formidable power in that the less obvious its authority is, the more enduring it gets.

As a result, the tutor in *Emile* and Wolmar in *La Nouvelle Héloise* are all-powerful. They form those subjected to their philosophy according to their own needs and their own principles. This system "depends on managers having such unchecked power; once they have it, their accountability for it – at least, as long as they do not

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[299] Lester G. Crocker, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (New York: Macmillan, 1968) 139.

[300] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Emile or on Education (New York: Basic Books, 1979) 120.

[301] Lester G. Crocker, 181.

violate the system itself- is illusory."[302] Rousseau's imaginary world features invulnerable characters that guide the individual who lives in the illusion of freedom.

In fact, *La Nouvelle Héloïse* and *Emile* gave life to Rousseau's legal and political philosophy. They mirrored his entire conception of law. While they featured an unreal environment, they nonetheless revealed genuine aspects of his philosophy and the incidences of his behavioral control. In his essay *Économie politique*, Rousseau explained how the law should regulate conduct:

> Par quel art inconcevable a-t-on pu trouver le moyen d'assujettir les hommes, pour les rendre libres? d'employer au service de l'Etat les biens, les bras, et la vie même de tous ses membres, sans les contraindre et sans les consulter? d'enchaîner leur volonté de leur propre aveu? de faire valoir leur consentement contre leur refus, et de les forcer à se punir eux-mêmes, quand ils font ce qu'ils n'ont pas voulu? Comment se peut-il faire qu'ils obéissent et que personne ne commande, qu'ils servent et n'aient point de maître; d'autant plus libres en effet que sous une apparente sujétion, nul ne perd de sa liberté que ce qui peut nuire à celle d'un autre? Ces prodiges sont l'ouvrage de la loi. C'est à la loi seule que les hommes doivent la justice et la liberté.

A fair and natural legal system leads citizens to punish themselves, to monitor the society without the need of a master. What matters is once again to utilize every working force without any resort to restraint. Everybody feels free and at the same time lives for the benefit of the community. "'Freedom' has the sense of automatic response of the desired kind, a specific output to a specific input" (Crocker 139). The citizens' independence is vital for society to exist. Their subjection to the general will is however required as well. Independence can only be reached through submission: "The will the citizen 'freely' obeys is no longer that of his subjective or egoistic self

[302] Lester G. Crocker, 185.

[…], but that of a new social self (*le moi commun* or collective self)" (Crocker 179). The definition of this new social identity belongs to the Legislator, the invisible master of the citizens' lives. His duty consists in defining laws that will be accepted by everyone as their own and to ensure that they will be abided by. The Legislator is the hidden force that determines people's lives.

In *The Social Contract*, Rousseau tried to define a new legitimate political authority. Witnessing the dire straights of his contemporary social order, Rousseau planned to free his contemporaries that lived "everywhere in chains." In his treatise, he identified the ideal society to be the product of a social contract. Prior to this social bond, there were no rules, no common agreement and no shared objectives. The only natural association identified by the philosopher was the family that was dominated by the father figure. Any other "primitive" organization could not be considered a social group, since Rousseau's concept of society involved the idea of sacrifice: men give up their natural freedom in order to become social beings and to gain the advantages a social existence provides. Civilization was born out of the understanding that men needed to congregate in order to improve their way of life. Society implied the awareness that every member worked for the public good and left aside his or her natural liberty to accept the conditions of social life. Rousseau's social contract depended however on a prior commitment to live in a society: In order to be a social member, one had to realize the usefulness of social life and agree on a moral pact, which simply consisted of playing by the rules. Rousseau imagined the prototypical society: it would democratic and just. Every citizen being subordinated to the General

Will is the first condition. Anyone who refuses the legitimacy of the General Will violates the social pact and loses his citizenship. As Augustin Cochin points out, "Le Contrat social n'est pas un traité de politique c'est [...] la théorie d'une volonté extranaturelle, créée dans le cœur de l'homme naturel, substituée en lui à sa volonté actuelle, par le mystère de la loi."[303] The aforementioned extranatural will is defined by the Legislator and diffused in every citizen's heart to the extent that it supersedes any particular will and that everyone has to conform to it.

Though promoting the idea of freedom, the *philosophe* conjured up a social and political organization that paradoxically turned out to be a society in which the citizens are subjected to the social and political apparatus. Rousseau created modern surveillance and control strategies in which the incontrovertible verdict of public opinion, or the production of truth, would reinforce the moral authority placed upon individuals and its power of subjection. Like Natural Law, Natural Politics is an invention. It introduces social controls to be exercised through the alignment of individual opinion to the public opinion, forcing on the social being the enlightenment that would have eventually and allegedly come from him.[304]

The social contract produced an ideal political organization where "each, coalescing with all, may nevertheless obey only himself, and remain as free as

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[303] Augustin Cochin, Les sociétés de pensée et la démocratie moderne (Paris : Copernic, 1978) 138.

[304] "Quand un individu se met à l'écoute de l'opinion publique, il n'a pas à pratiquer une conversion, où joueraient aussi ses dispositions et ses inclinations particulières, il se soumet à un éclairage auquel il pourra d'autant moins se soustraire qu'il émane de sa propre raison"
Mona Ozouf, " L'opinion publique" The political culture of the the old regime V.1. Ed. Keith Michael Baker (New York : Pergamon Press, 1987) 427.

before."[305] Rousseau looked for new legitimacy, one that would rest on popular sovereignty and would no longer be the expression of a monarch's or a tyrant's will. He laid the basis of an equitable state in which each member would give up his natural freedom and accept to subject himself or herself to the General Will, that is "the unvarying will of all the members of the state."[306]

The first difficulty of the political body was determining what belonged to public utility. As Rousseau's state distinguished itself from the "primitive" society by defining public welfare, his republic brought together a group with various and often conflicting particular interests. The *philosophe* claimed that what is "common to these different interests forms the social bond; and unless there were some points in which all interests agree, no society could exist."[307] It is therefore vital for any society to define that common interest.

Furthermore, the fair state and ideal republic can emerge and survive only in a limited territory. As the number of citizens would grow and the surface of the administered state would spread, the community would be harder to manage. On the one hand, while the General Will resulted from the constant will of the society members, the very definition of the General Will became problematic. On the other hand, Rousseau realized that a larger nation required a stronger government "charged

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[305] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract: Or, Principles of Political Right (Ware, UK: Wordsworth Editions Ltd, 1998) 14.

[306] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract: Or, Principles of Political Right (Ware, UK: Wordsworth Editions Ltd, 1998) 108.

[307] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract: Or, Principles of Political Right 25.

with the execution of the laws and with the maintenance of liberty both civil and political."[308] The political body would also be reinforced for "the less the particular wills correspond with the general will, that is, customs with laws, the more should the repressive power be increased."[309] Not only does Rousseau contrast the particular to the general will, he also equates the particular will with morals, that is, personal behavior and free will. In order to survive, the state has to exact its strength to repress any digression from the General Will. It also needs to correct morals and to quell rebellious minds. Morality is at the heart of the social contract: to accept that pact and to abandon the natural state to the civil state, mankind gives their actions the morality that they have lacked before. It is only thanks to a system that would look at the respect of morality and moral behavior, that the political authority will maintain the social pact.

The second difficulty is to convince the people to accept and subject themselves to the communitarian effort. For the republic not to corrupt itself, citizens must acknowledge the constraints imposed by their association. As Rousseau manifests little confidence in his fellow men, he advocates leading them towards reasonable thinking: "Individuals see the good which they reject; the public desire the good which they do not see. All alike have need of guides. The former must be compelled to conform their wills to their reason; the people must be taught to know

[308] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract: Or, Principles of Political Right 58.

[309] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract: Or, Principles of Political Right 59.

what they require."[310] The people must literally be chaperoned to understand the general will. Only through the proper use of Reason can the people comprehend the value of the general will. And this not only requires the instruction of the people, but also their constant monitoring in order to detect any digression from the general will. In his *Lettres écrites de la montagne*, Rousseau gives another insight into his political philosophy:

> Quel meilleur gouvernement que celui dont toutes les parties se balancent dans un parfait équilibre, ou les particuliers ne peuvent transgresser les lois parce qu'ils sont soumis à des juges, et ou ces juges ne peuvent pas non plus les transgresser, parce qu'ils sont surveillés par le peuple. [311]

Hence Rousseau's state rests on a unique principle: surveillance. Each citizen, whatever their rank or function may be, is subjected to the judgment of others. General will, which guarantees the survival of the political body, "ought to proceed from all in order to be applicable to all."[312] Without any permanent control of every member of the Republic by all the others, authority cannot ensure that public welfare will always be observed and therefore loses its legitimacy. Everyone's vigilance towards every other member is the essential condition to the social pact.

The revolutionaries gave life to Rousseau's ideas and established surveillance as one of the pillars of their new Republic. In order to prevent any conspiracy against

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[310] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract: Or, Principles of Political Right (Ware, UK: Wordsworth Editions Ltd, 1998) 39.

[311] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Lettres écrites de la montagne (ARTFL Project: computer file, 1996) 155.

[312] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract: Or, Principles of Political Right (Ware, UK: Wordsworth Editions Ltd, 1998) 32.

the governement and to protect the State, Robespierre planned to distribute the surveillance responsibility to every citizen. In a treatise on the freedom of the press, he wrote that "dans tout état libre, chaque citoyen est une sentinelle de la liberté, qui doit crier, au moindre bruit, a la moindre apparence du danger qui la menace."[313]

As surveillance constitutes the essence of Rousseau's social contract and political authority, he imagined the means by which to enforce supervision and defined it as a state apparatus. Public opinion becomes the only way to guarantee every citizen's subjection to the General Will. Laws are the groundwork of the State and political authority but they are not sufficient to regulate the social body and discipline morality. For the laws to be accepted by the people, the legislator must "have recourse to an authority of a different order, which can compel without violence and persuade without convincing."[314] The control of people's morality and opinion should therefore be insidious. The more invisible the thought-control will be, the more efficient it will turn out to be.

For Rousseau, civilizations of all times have resorted to divine authority to make people "obey willingly, and bear submissively the yoke of the public welfare."[315] While ancient republics consolidated their power by attributing the laws to Gods, the modern conception of the state does not owe anything to divine providence. Its durability and strength is established otherwise: "What renders the

[313] Maximilien de Robespierre, Œuvres de Robespierre (Paris: F. Cournol, 1866) 176.

[314] Jean-Jacques Rousseau 42.

[315] Jean-Jacques Rousseau 42.

constitution of a state really solid and durable is the observance of expediency in such a way that natural relations and the laws always coincide."[316] The good morals must be respected, and to that end, Rousseau advocates the supervision of public opinion since "the declaration of the general will is made by the law, the declaration of public opinion is made by the censorship."[317] If Rousseau does not develop at length the notion of public opinion in his *Social Contract* and if he devotes only one chapter to censorship, the will to control the *Cité*'s consciousness has nevertheless a considerable impact on the management of the population. In the eighteenth century, public opinion is a fledging concept that most likely has a particular meaning for Rousseau. The definition he offers in his Social Contract is however quite ambiguous: "Public opinion is a kind of law of which the censor is minister, and which he only applies to particular cases in the manner of the Prince."[318]

Public opinion defines what corresponds to the general will and what enters the realm of public utility. Far from being natural, it is fabricated as are the laws conceived by the Legislator. Rousseau depicts his vision of the public and shares his conception of the state administration where there are four types of relation between the population and the laws. The first is "the action of the whole body acting on itself" and refers to the public laws." The second is "that of the members with one another, or with the body as a whole" and it is from where "civil laws arise." The third relation

[316] Jean-Jacques Rousseau 53.

[317] Jean-Jacques Rousseau 127.

[318] Jean-Jacques Rousseau 127.

pertains to "punishable disobedience" and gives "rise to the establishment of criminal laws."[319] Rousseau further adds a fourth relation which he calls public opinion and which he introduces as "the most important of all"[320] as a relation that "creates the real constitution of the state"[321]:

> I speak of manners, customs, and above all of opinion — a province unknown to our politicians, but one on which the success of all the rest depends; 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 vault, of which manners, slow to develop, form at length the immovable keystone.[322]

Whatever the legitimacy of the political authority may be, it can only survive with the control of public opinion. For society to exist it is necessary to create a link between each individual. Rousseau's advocated method is mind control. For him, it is the only way to protect the republic. In his *Social Contract*, he goes as far as to present a method that would ensure that judgments and opinions never go astray from those defined by censorship.

Censorship in Rousseau's State is in charge of public opinion. And the censor's art is to manipulate it and surreptitiously shape the "immovable keystone' of the State, to control the citizens' values and tastes. The sovereign is the social body and has to define some sorts of civil dogmas that will establish exactly "sentiments of

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[319] Jean-Jacques Rousseau 54.

[320] Jean-Jacques Rousseau 54.

[321] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract: Or, Principles of Political Right (Ware, UK: Wordsworth Editions Ltd, 1998) 55.

[322] Jean-Jacques Rousseau 55.

sociability, without which it is impossible to be a good citizen or a faithful subject."[323] Rousseau advocates a "purely civil profession of faith"[324] that would institute collective happiness and faith in the *Cité*. Civil values must be set as objects of cult so that the people eventually adopt and live by those values. Rousseau's censorial tribunal is paradoxical in that, it is supposed to officially relay the people's opinion and "so soon as it departs from this position, its decisions are fruitless and ineffectual."[325] But Rousseau gives it extraordinary powers and put it in charge of the surveillance. In Rousseau's ideal State, the censors monitor the citizens' behaviors, and if needed, correct them:

> In all nations of the world it is not nature but opinion which decides the choice of their pleasures. Reform men's opinions and their manners will be purified of themselves. People always like what is becoming or what they judge to be so; but it is in this judgment that they make mistakes: the question, then, is to guide their judgment. [326]

The censor is no longer merely the vehicle of his administered people's points of views, he defines their opinions and straightens out rebellious attitudes. This moral control implies a government of mentalities as well as the need for any citizen to be educated.

Rousseau claims that "censorship supports morality by preventing opinions from being corrupted, by preserving their integrity through wise applications,

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[323] Jean-Jacques Rousseau 137.

[324] Jean-Jacques Rousseau 137.

[325] Jean-Jacques Rousseau 127.

[326] Jean-Jacques Rousseau 127.

sometimes even by fixing them when they are still uncertain."[327] The function of the censor goes beyond the frame of surveillance. To maintain the morality of a nation, censorship needs to govern the spirit. Hence, the men, who have lost their natural liberty, also give up their freedom of thought. Through civil liberties, Rousseau promotes the transformation, if not the fabrication of opinions, and, if needed, the reeducation of some social elements. The Social Contract imposes conduct rules and ushers in civil moral directions. The will to supervise society does not date back to Rousseau but to long before the eighteenth century. However, the Enlightenment philosophy, through the meticulous application of reason to politics and law, imagined "real, corporeal disciplines." [328]

In this respect, the Enlightenment project turned out to be a dictatorship of the mind, a systematic subjection of social beings to the General Will. Demonstrating a constant preoccupation about moral matters, willing to define the citizens' social and political usefulness, the *philosophes* spelled out the theories and mechanisms necessary to the constitution and subjection of the individual. As Graeme Garrard has remarked, "The 'Enlightenment project' of rationally justifying morality has failed and the ethical nihilism that has allegedly haunted Western civilization ever since is a direct consequence of this failure."[329] Jürgen Habermas explains how the notion of public opinion was radicalized during the Revolution. The *Opinion publique* derives

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[327] Jean-Jacques Rousseau 127-128.

[328] Michel Foucault, Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison (New York: Vintage Books, 1995) 222.

[329] Graeme Garrard, Counter-Enlightenments. From the eighteenth century to the present (New York : Routledge, 2006) 99.

its attribute "from the citizens assembled for acclamation and not from the rational-critical public debate of a *public éclairé*."[330] Therefore, with the rationalization of morality, modernity has reinforced public authority at the expense of the individual. The government of social beings can only be efficient through the control of public opinion, which involves a control of the volitions and infiltrates the private sphere.

Joseph de Maistre was a fierce detractor of the French Revolution and of the Enlightenment in general. Though he wrote his book *Against Rousseau On the State of Nature and On the Sovereignty of the People* in 1794 and 1795, his criticism of Rousseau's political philosophy was only published in 1870, nearly 50 years after his death. Discussing political constitution, Joseph de Maistre argued that the founder of a nation is a skillful hand, that "divines those hidden forces and qualities that form the character of his nation" and that "divines the means to bring them to life, to put them in motion, and to get the most from them."[331] Supporter of papal authority, Joseph de Maistre criticized Rousseau's methodology and argued that only a genius could create the constitution of a nation. He paraphrased what he thought Rousseau's political and philosophical logic was. He claimed that the *philosophe* had extended his "philosophic ruler over the surface of the globe" and that he has then divided "it like a chess-board, and, in the middle of each square of 2000 measures per side, [he has built] a beautiful city of Geneva which for more surety [he has filled] with gods."[332]

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[330] Graeme Garrard 99.

[331] Joseph Marie Maistre, Against Rousseau: "On the State of Nature"; and "On the Sovereignty of the People" (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996) 67.

[332] Joseph Marie Maistre 153.

Rousseau had thought he could organize and control an entire political and moral world as easily as the pieces on a chess-board. For Rousseau, men needed to be guided towards happiness and morality. In order to accomplish this, he assumed the role of the chess player and took charge of the human and social chess-board. He imagined himself as the Legislator who designed the invisible force that would guide, control, and determine people's lives and feelings. After analyzing the concept of the hidden hand in relation to Rousseau's work, it is clear that Rousseau's political philosophy hinges on an imperceptible power and it becomes possible to suggest that the political organization he conceived was very much influenced by the logic, the strategy, and the rules of chess.

A major goal for a number of Enlightenment thinkers, including Jean-Jacques Rousseau, was to organize a new social arrangement, to elaborate a new judicial system, and to propose a new social model and order. In that regard, Michel Foucault has judged them very successful and has argued that the Enlightenment "has determined, at least in part, what we are, what we think, and what we do today."[333] Among the eighteenth-century thinkers who have imagined modern societies, Rousseau has undeniably been the most influential and the most recognized among the *philosophes*. Though he was criticized and misunderstood by his contemporaries, his philosophy was remarkably comprehensive. Any attempt at summarizing the legacy of his ideas is bound to be limited and selective as Allan Bloom has plainly noted when he describes the extent of Rousseau's influence on modern philosophy:

[333] Michel Foucault, The Essential Foucault (New York / London: The New Press, 2003) 45.

> Rousseau's presence is ubiquitous, and often where conservatives or leftists would least like to recognize him. He is the seedbed of all these schools and movements that enrich, correct, defend, or undermine constitutional liberalism. His breadth and comprehensiveness make it impossible to co-opt him completely into any single camp. The schools that succeed him are all isms, intellectual forces that inform powerful political or social movements with more or less singleness of purpose. Rousseau resists such limitation. For him the human problem is not soluble on the political level […]. One can always find in him the objections to each school that depends on him. Therefore Rousseau did not produce an ism of his own, but he did provide the authentically modern perspective. His concern for a higher, nonmercenary morality is the foundation of Kant's idealism. His critique of modern economics and his questions about the legitimacy of private property are at the root of socialism, particularly Marxism. His emphasis on man's origins rather than his ends made anthropology a central discipline. And the history of the movement from the state of nature toward civil society came to seem more essential to man than his nature – hence historicism. The wounds inflicted on human nature by this process of socialization became the subject of a new psychology, especially as represented in Freud. The romantic love of the beautiful and the doubt that modern society is compatible with the sublime and pure in spirit gave justification to the cult of art for art's sake and to the life of Bohemian.[334]

Defining Rousseau's legacy appears therefore to be a complex task since he has inspired so many theories and political ideologies: From politics to psychology, many found useful theoretical backgrounds in his work and were able to develop and adapt them in order to arrange new social practices and define new governmental ideologies. Rousseau's conception of a new society inspired the structure of power which "would not therefore be sought on the side of violence or of struggle, nor on that of voluntary linking (all of which can, at best, only be the instruments of power), but rather in the area of the singular mode of action, *neither warlike nor juridical*, which is

[334] Allan Bloom, "Rousseau's Critique of liberal Constitutionalism,"in The Legacy of Rousseau By Clifford Orwin and Nathan Tarcov (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1997) 145-146.

government." The government as defined by Foucault designates "the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed." [335] Those governmental practices have individualized the population, instrumentalized the individuals, and, to that purpose, have defined tactics that rule private lives. As Rousseau's discourse was significantly inspired and structured by the logic of chess and has been a major resource for philosophers and thinkers, then the rationality and the system of the game should consequently be noticeable in his manifold legacies.

[335] Michel Foucault, Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison (New York: Vintage Books, 1995) 221.

CHAPTER FIVE

CHESS AND GOVERNMENTALITY

In the 1943 painting by Maria Elena Vieira da Silva, "The Chess Game," two central figures face each other in a game of chess. Although the frame of a table is clearly discernible, the pattern of the chessboard blankets the entire drawing. These characteristic black and white squares, as they extend beyond the table, over the two human figures and to all corners of the painting, are mixed with various shades of brown, yellow and dark green. Chess and the human world have blended. The space around the chessboard is not only checkered, but there is a distinct presence of black and white in the squares as well. The chessboard displays the same phenomenon. It incorporates the colors from the background in the board itself, thus Vieira da Silva's painting is a perfect representation of chess as a strategic and rational organization of the world. This painting is significant in four particular regards that will constitute the four different sub-categories of this chapter.

First, the painting details a grid of squares that engulfs the scene. Not only does it represent the influence of a chess-like strategy in the arrangement of human life, it also shows the universalization of the chess model. In this regard, the game is not just an intellectual activity; it acts as the overarching logic of the world. Essential to this pervading rationale is the focus on the individual, on his body that will become the center of the government's attention. Born from the militarization of society, the focal point on the politicization of the body culminated in the twentieth century.

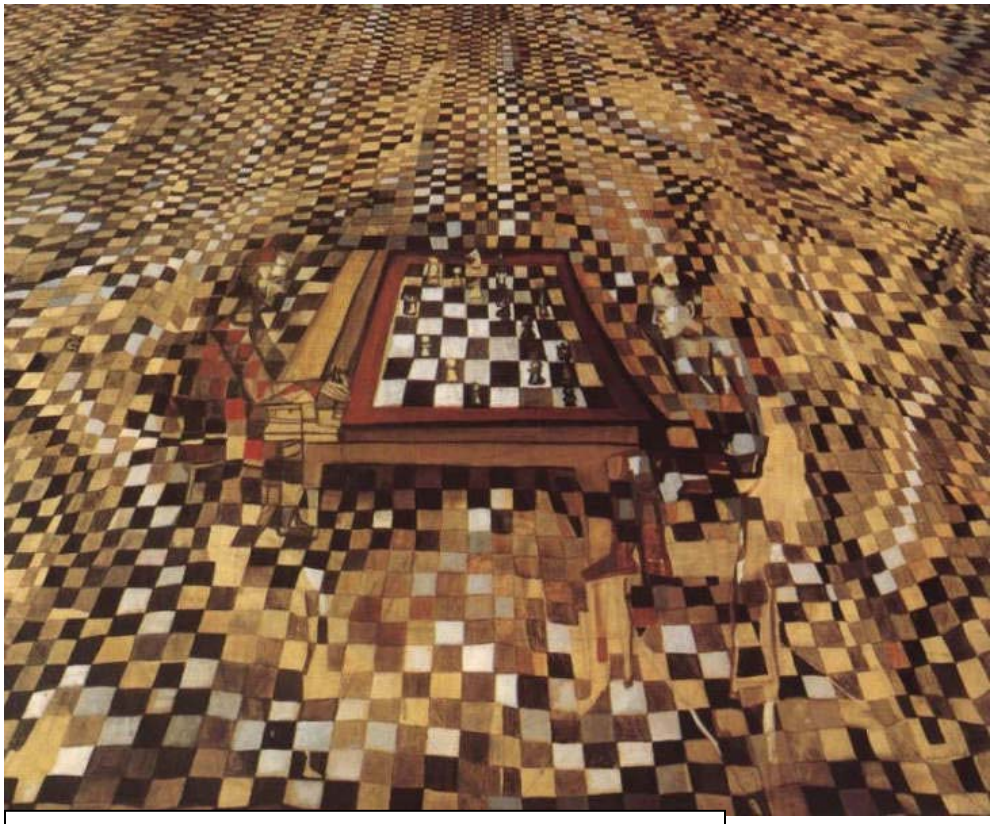

Figure 4: Vieira da Silva *The Chess game* (1943)

The second important feature of this painting is the grid of squares that partition the scene thus symbolizing the propagation of limits to the human environment. These square perimeters define appropriate and inappropriate behaviors, morality, and

aesthetic, they erect limits around the individuals in order to secure an efficient population government. The perimeters are born from discursive practices that institute an individualizing power over the population.

In a third aspect, the picture suggests that the game is no longer limited by the chess set; the value and logic of the chess board incorporate the entire space. In this regard, chess logic and tactics shape human perceptions of the world; they have become self-referent and have created their own world and reality.

Lastly, the picture illustrates the need to set oneself free from the globalizing form of government and to constitute oneself outside the grid of squares and the techniques of power.

The ideas that these four aspects convey are now explored in depth in the following four sub-categories.

5.1. The pervasion of chess rationale through western societies

Chess is widely seen as an allegory to war. It is a battle of wits, of two minds travelling over 64 squares with 32 men. The strategic use of 8 pawns and 8 pieces engages the players in a continuous intellectual effort to checkmate their opponent. It is however a metaphoric, spiritual, and civilized war waged against an opponent with the same original strength at the start. Only their personal skills, their ability to adapt and react make the players stand apart.

The concept of war in chess is reminiscent of the *Social Contract* in which Rousseau claimed that “it is a concurrence of things, and not of men, that occasions

war, and the state of warfare cannot rife out of simple personal concerns, or exist between man and man, either in a state of nature, where there is no settled property; or in a civil state, where all are under the authority of the laws."[336] Wars are not the responsibility of men, they are the result of a flawed society. Rousseau contended that laws would reach perfection only if the legislature mediated individuals' interactions. His theory did not eliminate conflicts but aimed at supervising and enclosing conflicts between legal structures. In Rousseau's model of society, men lived in a constant state of social tensions regulated by laws. These tensions did not exist only between individuals but between the individuals and the laws, they were contained and regulated within the overall social arrangements. Michel Foucault identified them as relations of power which, he argued, can only be analyzed according to two models: "a) the one proposed by law (power as law, interdiction, institutions) and b) the military or strategic model in terms of power relations."[337] Foucault's definition of the relations of power echoes Rousseau's social contract. The former has identified the relations of power as either the result of the legal system or the logic of warfare. Inverting Clausewitz's famous formulation "War is politics by other means," Foucault explores the notion that "politics is war by other means in its relation to race, class

[336] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract: Or, Principles of Political Right (Ware, UK: Wordsworth Editions Ltd, 1998) 22.

[337] Michel Foucault, Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977-1984 (New York: Routledge, 1988) 123.

struggle, and, of course, power,"[338] and thereby gives evidence of the disciplining of society.

German sociologist Max Weber has argued that "the discipline of the army gives birth to all discipline."[339] Military regulation has been reproduced in all levels of society from institutions of slavery on ancient plantations to hospitals and prisons. For Weber, military discipline had undeniably been adapted to the modern world and had become "the ideal model for the modern capitalist factory" which was "founded upon completely rational basis."[340] His rational led him to consider man as a tool programmed to execute required functions: "the psycho-physical apparatus of man is completely adjusted to the demands of the outer world, the tools, the machines – in short, to an individual 'function.'"[341] In that regard, Weber's conception of discipline exercised on individuals is very close to that of Foucault. Discussing the militarization of the peasant body, Foucault remarked that "what was then being formed was a policy of coercions that act upon the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behaviors."[342] One major effect of the dominion imposed on the bodies is the creation of a power that determines the individuals, regulates their actions and reactions, and ensures that they fit into the social order.

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[338] Michel Foucault, Society must be defended: lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76 (London: Penguin, 2004) xv.

[339] Max Weber and S. N. Eisenstadt, Max Weber on Charisma and Institution Building; Selected Papers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968) 37.

[340] Max Weber and S. N. Eisenstadt 38.

[341] Max Weber and S. N. Eisenstadt 38.

[342] Michel Foucault, Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison (NY: Vintage Books, 1995) 138.

History has shown that totalitarian regimes have used the disciplines and techniques of government imagined by the Enlightenment for the benefit of the masses and the detriment of individuals. The alleged promise of emancipation of the Enlightenment paradoxically produced modern days' use of control and surveillance. Through the militarization of the population, governments managed to enforce ideologies that favored the masses over the individual. Dictatorial regimes are well-known for the disciplines they exact on their population. Among them, the Nazi regime and its systematic militarization of the German population through the Hitler's Youths Program takes the prime seat.

For Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman the Enlightenment is the origin of the greatest political catastrophes that modernity has suffered: The Holocaust was collateral damage, which resulted from the modern determination to enforce a calculated and controlled social environment. It was a project that spiraled out of control. The Holocaust was proof that modern civilization, in falling into an uncontrolled rationalization, in trying to achieve its ideals of perfection and in eliminating all kinds of resistance, unleashed the worst human enterprises. Bauman equated Nazi ideology and the Holocaust with the myth of the Enlightenment, with the belief in human perfectibility, in the eradication of corruption, and in the cleansing of the social organization[343]. The Enlightenment project of Hitler's regime was an effort to upgrade German society, to cleanse it from corruption and vices, with no regard to the individuals who were either eliminated or seen as canon fodder.

[343] Relevantly enough, Joseph Goebbels was *« Reichministerium für Volkaufklärung und Propaganda »* or the Minister of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment in the Third Reich.

In his article *The Uniqueness and Normality of the Holocaust*, Bauman did not explain Hitler's rise to power on the sole account of the disastrous economic crisis in Germany in the 1920's and 1930's. He sounded out the very foundations of western civilization in order to single out the clues, the essential flaws that gave birth to such a monster. For him Nazi or communist concentration camps are a natural offspring of civilization: "Without modern civilization and its most central essential achievements, there would be no Holocaust."[344] What distinguish modern genocides from the various forms of mass murders throughout history is that they are rational: "Modern genocide is genocide with a purpose."[345] Modern genocides inscribe themselves in an optimistic vision of society, a society that needs to be upgraded and purified in order to come always closer to perfection. Hitler's death camps or Stalin's Gulags cannot be discriminated in that regard. They all resulted from the ideal of human and social perfectibility: "[Hitler's and Stalin's] killing was not the work of destruction, but creation."[346] Modern genocides were political projects that implemented rational thinking and maneuverings.

How is it that the ideal of social and scientific progress and the fight for liberty that characterized the Enlightenment could have given birth to modern subjections? Zygmunt Bauman gave a precise yet worrying answer to that question:

> In the face of an unscrupulous team saddling the powerful machine of the modern state with its monopoly of physical violence and coercion,

[344] Zygmunt Bauman, Modernity and the Holocaust (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000) 87.

[345] Zygmunt Bauman 73.

[346] Zygmunt Bauman 92.

> the most vaunted accomplishments of modern civilization failed as safeguard against barbarism. *Civilization proved incapable of guaranteeing moral use of awesome powers it brought into being*.[347]

Politics would not have turned immoral but amoral. For Bauman, modern genocides show what the dreams and efforts of modern civilization are able to accomplish "if not mitigated, curbed, and counteracted."[348] It is precisely the Enlightenment dream that Bauman blamed for engineering large-scale massacres:

> These dreams and efforts have been with us for along time. They spawned the vast and powerful arsenal of technology and managerial skills. They gave birth to institutions which serve the sole purpose of instrumentalizing human behaviour to such an extent that any aim may be pursued with efficiency and vigour, with or without ideological dedication or moral approval on the part of the pursuers. They legitimize the rulers' monopoly on end and the confinement of the ruled to the role of means. They define most actions as means, and means as subordination – to the ultimate end, to those who set it, to supreme will, to supra-individual knowledge. [349]

The scientific, institutional, and social advances were so significant that they lost any ethical and human features: Politics became a means to an end and totally disregarded the independence of the individuals. It adapted the military discipline and maintained war by other means, a state in which the discipline exacted on the population defined, controlled, and determined people like figures on a chess board.

Just as Zygmunt Bauman drew a parallel between the Enlightenment ideals and their applications carried to the extreme by the Nazi Regime, Foucault has

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[347] Zygmunt Bauman 111.

[348] Zygmunt Bauman 93.

[349] Zygmunt Bauman 93.

ascribed to the Enlightenment and its inventions of disciplines the technology of power employed by National Socialism:

> After all, Nazism was in fact the paroxysmal development of the new power mechanisms that had been established since the eighteenth century. Of course, no State could have more disciplinary power than the Nazi regime. Nor was there any other State in which the biological was so tightly, so insistently, regulated. Disciplinary power and biopower: all this permeated, underpinned, Nazi society (control over the biological, of procreation and of heredity; control over illness and accidents too).[350]

The Nazi regime built a disciplinary State where techniques of submission and individualization permeated the lives of the German citizens. The investment of State authority in the individual body reached its climax under Hitler's administration and confirmed the extreme and abhorrent uses of such a power. The control over the body is what Foucault has coined *bio-power* and is what power has evolved into. Not only has power pervaded the minds and psyches of the individuals, it also has invaded their bodies:

> Western man was gradually learning what it meant to be a living species in a living world, to have a body, conditions of existence, probabilities of life, to have a body, conditions of existence, probabilities of life, an individual and collective welfare, forces that could be modified, and a space in which they could be distributed in an optimal manner. For the first time in history, no doubt, biological existence was reflected in political existence; the fact of living was no longer an inaccessible substrate that only emerged from time to time, amid the randomness of death and its fatality; part of it passed into knowledge's field of control and power's sphere of intervention. Power would no longer be dealing simply with legal subjects over whom the ultimate dominion was death, but with living beings, and the mastery it would be able to exercise over them would have to be applied at the

[350] Michel Foucault, Society must be defended: lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76 (London: Penguin, 2004) 259.

> level of life itself; it was the taking charge of life, more than the threat of death, that gave power its access even to the body. If one can apply the term *bio-history* to the pressures through which the movements of life and the processes of history interfere with one another, one would have to speak of *bio-power* to designate what brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and make knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life.[351]

The body becomes an object to be "transformed," an entity that, rather than to be enslaved or forcefully coerced to obey, is manipulated and controlled to operate freely within the boundaries of government mastery.

While exploring the expansion of psychiatric power, Foucault discovered and coined the concept of *bio-politics*, a form of disciplinary power that operated directly on the body and meant to manage it through protections, risk evaluations, interventions and regulations. Bio-politics comes down to the expertise of an understanding of the body and refers to its study and knowledge. It is in the eighteenth century that Foucault situated the birth of biopolitics that is directly linked to a growing series of discourses on, among others, health, criminality, education, and sexuality. The wellbeing and the safety of all the administered becomes one of the administration's greatest concerns: "Bio-power is the increasing ordering in all realms under the guise of improving the welfare of the individual and the population."[352] Therefore, the eighteenth century saw the emergence of *dispositifs* of power and knowledge that took into account the life and body of the individual and

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[351] Michel Foucault, "Right of Death and Power over life" in Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002) 82.

[352] Hubert L. Dreyfus, Paul Rabinow, and Michel Foucault, Michel Foucault, Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983) xxvi.

enforced the regulation of mechanisms of power and knowledge. Linked to the notions of *bio-politics* and *bio-power* is the idea of disciplines and objectification of the social body. The governmental strategy shifted from a monolithic view of the population to a focus on the individual and the possibility of controlling and modifying him. This transformation of the government's treatment of the population had considerable consequences. Foucault spoke of this form of mastery as shifting forces, changing strategies and techniques of power and identified a significant effect of the development of bio-power that "was the growing importance assumed by the action of the norm, at the expense of the juridical system of law."[353] In fact, for Foucault, "a normalizing society is the historical outcome of a technology of power centered on life."[354]

Norms are the result of techniques of power which form the population according to a particular model, a mold that shapes the individual and that assures the contribution and productivity of each citizen for the welfare of all. Norms are evasive, they are "particles" of discourses:

> Loin d'être des formes produites par un sujet originaire, qu'il s'agisse du travail, de la vie, du pouvoir, du désire ou de ce que l'on voudra, ces réalités que nous appelons "des normes" sont des atomes de matière discursive suspendus dans le vide, déviés incessamment par le hasard des luttes, entrant dans des configurations mobiles.[355]

Had norms been rigid, they could not have imposed general restraints on the population. Accordingly, the principles that guide their strategy are flexibility and

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[353] Michel Foucault and Paul Rabinow, The Foucault Reader (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984) 266.

[354] Michel Foucault and Paul Rabinow 266.

[355] Stéphane Legrand, Les normes chez Foucault (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2007) 307.

fluidity: The normative power can only reach its pinnacle when it adapts its tactics to the complexity of the individuals. Stéphane Legrand has noted that:

> Nous avons vu que la normation disciplinaire, comme modèle d'actions possibles, ne consistait pas à donner une forme rigide à la conduite des individus normés, mais à configurer leur subjectivité, en tant que celle-ci est précisément une matrice d'actions. Une relation de pouvoir porte sur un agencement de virtualités qu'elle configure et limite, et elle doit précisément le faire à travers les énoncés normatifs, comme éléments de code par rapport auxquels pourront et devront se situer, se penser, se vivre ceux qui dans son champ adviennent à eux-mêmes comme sujet.[356]

Paradoxically, it is only by considering the individual as unique that the normative power can take effect and assure its grip on the population. This new organization of power took place "around the eighteenth century,"according to Michel Foucault, who further added:

> I don't think that we should consider the 'modern state' as an entity which was developed above individuals, ignoring what they are and even their very existence, but on the contrary as a very sophisticated structure, in which individuals can be integrated, under one condition: that this individuality would be shaped in a new form, and submitted to a set of very specific patterns.[357]

Whoever crosses the boundaries erected by the power, becomes hitherto an abnormal being that requires the scrutiny of the state and that triggers a discursive reaction of the power: the deviant will be defined according to his transgression. What matters for the "modern state" is to fabricate "normal" constituents, "normal" in its etymological sense, that is, that fit the norms. This normative process is generated by the

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[356] Stéphane Legrand, Les normes chez Foucault (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2007) 154.

[357] Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power" in John Scott, Power: Critical Concepts (London: Routledge, 1994) 223.

transmission and the retention of knowledge: "*Il y a donc, par le savoir, un procédé d'enfermement de la pensée, un conditionnement de l'individu comme producteur, ou travailleur, et comme reproducteur d'un sens en cours.*"[358] By defining a limited set of liberty and confining the individual to a preset grid of actions and knowledge, the "modern state" assures the endurance of its authority.

5.2. Mapping, limits, and governmentality

Let us reconsider now Maria Elena Vieira da Silva's painting "The Chess Game" on the perspective of limits. The chess game is no longer limited to the board, nor to the table, its limits have pervaded the entire room and have engulfed the players themselves who have integrated the chess board. The game has its own limits: the rules, the players, and the squares. Although the squares have multiplied out to the infinite, they are still delimitating a space, a potential move. "The Chess Game" becomes significant here in that it portrays a dual and antagonistic concept: that of limited infinite. It is a grid, a closed space, which spreads on a limitless surface. The reason why this image of the chess game becomes so significant is that it portrays the legacy of the Enlightenment conceptualization of government as well as Foucault's notion of governmentality.

In a game of chess, there are limitless opportunities and possibilities for moving pieces on the board. The limits are nonetheless vital for the game; they actually define the game itself. The limits are the rules and the way a piece can be

[358] Stéfan Leclercq and Françpis-Xavier Ajavon, Abécédaire de Michel Foucault (Collection Abécédaire, no 1. Mons, Belgique: Sils Maria, 2004) 153.

moved, they are materialized by the 64 squares of the board, and also by the board itself which confines the game into a definite space. Chess is a game of rules, no one can pretend to play chess without accepting its conventions. In order to become proficient at chess, one has to learn the rules and submit oneself to its normative standards. But, when the players accept to submit themselves to the laws of the game, they are free to play any move, any piece, to define and follow their own strategy. Just as in chess, the population needs to be arranged and conditioned to interact within the boundaries of the checkerboard, within the limits of what falls under the government's administrative power and control. In fact, Stéfan Leclercq argues that for Foucault the partitioning of society is a much more widespread process in that it is present in a multitude of micro-organized systems:

> Un pouvoir est constitué de parties, chacune s'exerçant sur un domaine précis de ce qui peut constituer une société: la police est un pouvoir sur le citoyen, l'officier sur le soldat, le cure sur les fidèles, le patron sur les ouvriers, le professeur sur ses élèves. Chacun de ses micro-pouvoirs, se rapportant à un concept de pouvoir en exercice, agissant singulièrement sur leur objet. Le policier n'agit pas comme l'officier, le curé, le patron ou le professeur, même si leur idée du pouvoir peut être la même. Il y a une singularité du mode d'expression du pouvoir. Cette expression singulière du policier, du curé, du patron et du professeur quadrille leur objet, le citoyen, le fidèle, le soldat, l'ouvrier ou l'élève. Le mot quadrillage, l'objet du pouvoir est agencé. Le quadrillage appartient donc a un programme, il n'est ni spontané, ni improvisé. Ce programme du quadrillage se développe par un savoir, ou par une sélection du savoir, que détient le pouvoir. A l'école, toute matière n'est pas enseignée, et au sein d'une matière, tout ce qu'elle recèle n'est pas édictée. Le pouvoir sélectionne le savoir, et ce qui est enseigné est d'abord une partie productive de ce savoir, c'est-à-dire ce qui permettra à l'élève de devenir productif. En cela, par exemple, il y a quadrillage de l'élève : son savoir et la pensée qu'il peut susciter ne peuvent se produire que par un schéma de pensées a priori dont le sens

est immanent au savoir inculqué.[359].

Michel Foucault has ascribed the partition of society to the political response to plague-infested towns and population which forced political power to move away from exclusion and enforced inclusion:

> It seems that the model of the "exclusion of lepers," the model of the individual driven out in order to purify the community, finally disappeared roughly at the end of seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries. However, something else, a different model, was not established but reactivated. This model is almost as old as the exclusion of lepers and concerns the problem of plague and the spatial partitioning and control (*quadrillage*) of plaque-infested towns. It seems to me that essentially there have been only two major models for the control of individuals in the West: one is the exclusion of lepers and the other is the model of the inclusion of plague victims. And I think that the replacement of the exclusion of lepers by the inclusion of plague victims as the model of control was a major phenomenon of the eighteenth century. To explain this I would like to remind you how quarantine was enforced in a town in which the plague had broken out. A certain territory was marked out and closed off: the territory of a town, possibly that of a town and its suburbs, was established as a closed territory. However, apart from this analogy, the practice with regard to plague was very different from the practice with regard to lepers, because the territory was not the vague territory into which one cast the population of which one had to be purified. It was a territory that was the object of a fine and detailed analysis, of a meticulous spatial partitioning (*quadrillage*)."[360]

The model of the plague-infested society became an ideal form of political control "and this is one of the great inventions of the eighteenth century,"[361] it was "an exhaustive sectioning (*quadrillage*) of the population by political power, the capillary

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[359] Stéfan Leclercq and François-Xavier Ajavon, Abécédaire de Michel Foucault (Collection Abécédaire, no 1. Mons, Belgique: Sils Maria, 2004) 152-153.

[360] Michel Foucault, Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1974-1975 (New York: Picador, 2004) 44-45.

[361] Michel Foucault, Abnormal 48.

ramifications of which constantly reach the grain of individuals themselves, their time, habitat, localization, and bodies."[362] This spatial partitioning and subdivision is ingrained in the eighteenth century "juridico-political theory of power" which is "centered on the notion of the will and its alienation, transfer, and representation in a governmental apparatus."[363] This form of political power makes evident the dependence of the authorities on their faculty to mark out a territory where their power and administration can be exercised. Rather than excluding its members, the government favored the inclusion of its constituents, that is, the total supervision of the population through the encompassment of the subject. It is an individualizing form of power that exacted a much more efficient form of population management.

The government's control rests on one major tactic: the delimitation of society, the individual, and the self. It needs to delineate what is acceptable and what is not. Whatever the individuals may think or do, it has to fall within the limits of the law, within the partitioning of social acceptability. In his analysis of abnormality, Michel Foucault gives a very eloquent description of what and who is considered deviant or even monstrous by political power: "The monster is the transgression of natural limits, the transgression of classifications, of the table, and of the law as table."[364] Whoever crosses the lines delineated by the moral, legal, or communitarian laws becomes thereby a human monster:

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[362] Michel Foucault, Abnormal 47.

[363] Michel Foucault, Abnormal 49.

[364] Michel Foucault, Abnormal 63.

> The notion of the monster is essentially a legal notion, in a broad sense, of course, since what defines the monster is the fact that its existence and form is not only a violation of the laws of society but also a violation of the laws of nature. Its very existence is a breach of the law at both levels. The field in which the monster appears can thus be called a "juridico-biological" domain. However, the monster emerges within this space as both an extreme and an extremely rare phenomenon. The monster is the limit, both the point at which law is overturned and the exception that is found only in extreme cases. The monster combines the impossible and the forbidden.[365]

This is a play on limits and transgression which is imposed on the individual. As soon as any legal or moral demarcations are crossed, it triggers a discursive reaction of the power. Not only are the actions condemned, but the nature of the individual itself falls under the classifying power of the discourse: the deviant individual becomes an abnormal being, a subject of analysis, and a case for correction. Foucault speaks of dividing practices: "The subject is either divided inside himself or divided from others. This process objectivizes him. Examples are the mad and the sane, the sick and the healthy, the criminals and the 'good boys.'"[366]

The strategy employed by the government focuses on the subject and objectifies him. Graham Burchell explains that "the political objectification of civil society plays a central role in determining a relatively open-ended and experimental problem-space of how to govern: that is of finding the appropriate techniques for a

[365] Michel Foucault, Abnormal 56.

[366] Hubert L Dreyfus, Paul Rabinow, and Michel Foucault, Michel Foucault, Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983) 208.

government oriented by a problematic of security."[367] The government's purpose is to study, characterize, and singularize the subject in order to define the most efficient tactics to curb his resistance and meet a given situation.

Fundamental to this governmental logic are the partitioning of society and the inclusion of the self in a state apparatus, but as Thomas Flynn explains, "When Foucault speaks of 'mapping,' we can see this as an analogue for the discourse in practice."[368] Those discourses become power relations which Michel Foucault defined as "forms of rationality"; they "are multiple [...] they can be in play in family relations, or within an institution, or an administration – or between a dominating and dominated class power relations having specific forms of rationality, forms which are common to them, etc."[369] Power relations are invasive: they are the tensions that animate any social, political, or professional interactions. In order to illustrate Foucault's relations of power and the tensions that underlie and develop from them, Barry Smart used a chess metaphor: "Power in a game of chess is paradigmatically exercised [...] by one piece over another at the moment of capture. In Foucault's model, the capture is indeed a "micro-power," but it is also the effect of the overall arrangement of the pieces at the time as well as of the strategy leading up to and

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[367] Michel Foucault, Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller. The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality : with Two Lectures by and an Interview with Michel Foucault. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) 141.

[368] Thomas R Flynn, Sartre, Foucault, and Historical Reason (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 2005) 127.

[369] Michel Foucault and Lawrence D. Kritzman, Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977-1984 (Trans. Alan Sheridan. Routledge, 1998) 38.

including the capture."[370] The rationality that rules the game of chess epitomizes the relations and discourses of power that govern modern society.

Discussing Levi-Strauss's research methodology in ethnology, Foucault remarks that the reason why certain demeanors are prohibited in society is because "there is a checkerboard, as it were, with barely perceptible gray or light blue squares that define a culture's mode of existence."[371] The checkerboard is a set of rules, of social practices that are both morally and legally acceptable. Anything that departs from this legal and moral surface is condemned both by the legal apparatus and the law-abiding population itself. The squares of the grid delineate an array of authorized behaviors. It is these squares and more precisely "the weave [*trame*] of these squares that [Foucault] wanted to apply to the study of systems of thought." His research focuses on "what is rejected and excluded" and mainly adopts a "method of working that was already recognized in ethnology."[372] Foucault investigates the limits established within the boundaries of governmental control, the definition of what is bad and what is good, of what is true and false. Though the chessboard has now become a cliché for the government exercise, Foucault's approach centers on the limits and the grid of squares in order to reveal their individualization and power of subjection.

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[370] Barry Smart, Michel Foucault : critical assessments (London / New York : Routledge, 1994) 182-183.

[371] Michel Foucault, The Essential Foucault (New York: New Press, 2003) 370.

[372] Michel Foucault, The Essential Foucault (New York: New Press, 2003) 370.

For Foucault, the "population comes to appear above all else as the ultimate end of government" which takes responsibility for its welfare, "the improvement of its condition, the increase of its wealth, longevity, health, and so on."[373] The administration and control of individual lives have become the main objective of the political economy: "the population is the subjects of needs, of aspiration, but it is also the object in the hands of the government, aware, vis-à-vis the government, of what it wants, but ignorant of what is being done to it."[374] To characterize this shifting preoccupation of the sovereign towards the population, Foucault used the neologism *governmentality* whose origin he directly attributed to the Enlightenment:

> We live in the era of a 'governmentality' first discovered in the eighteenth century. This governmentalization of the state is a singularly paradoxical phenomenon, since if in tact the problems of governmentality and the techniques of government have become the only political issue, the only real space for political struggle and contestation, this is because the governmentalization of the state is at the same time what has permitted the state to survive, and it is possible to suppose that if the state is what it is today, this is so precisely thanks to this governmentality, which is at once internal and external to the state, since it is the tactics of government which make possible the continual definition and redefinition of what is within the competence of the state and what is not, the public versus the private, and so on; thus the state can only be understood in its survival and its limits on the basis of the general tactics of governmentality.[375]

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[373] Michel Foucault, The Essential Foucault (New York: New Press, 2003) 241.

[374] Michel Foucault, The Essential Foucault (New York: New Press, 2003) 242.

[375] Michel Foucault, The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality : with Two Lectures by and an Interview with Michel Foucault (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) 103.

This *governmentality* is intrinsically linked to the efficiency and hence the survival of the state; it consists of tactics, strategies and techniques of power. It engulfs the entire mechanisms and practices of population government, that is:

> the ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses, and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security.[376]

Additionally, governmentality is "a set of reversible relationships."[377] Like a game of chess, the power relations among the pieces or between the players are always shifting. As Paul Veyne suggested, it is this constant shift and instability of power which governs society:

> Foucault's philosophy is not a philosophy of the 'discourse,' but a philosophy of relation. For "relation" is the name of what some have designated as "structure." Instead of a world made of subjects or of objects or of their dialectic, of a world in which consciousness knows its objects in advance or is itself what the objects make of it, we have a world in which relation is primary; it is structures that give their objective faces to matter. In this world we do not play chess with eternal figures like the king and the fool [the bishop]; the figures are what the successive configurations on the playing board make of them.[378]

The tensions on the chessboard are everywhere, exercised by every piece onto another. A king can be checkmated by a pawn and each piece, whatever its initial value may be, is a threat as much as it is threatened by another. But contrary to chess,

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[376] Michel Foucault, The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality 102.

[377] Michel Foucault, The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the College de France 1981-1982 (Macmillan, 2005) 252.

[378] Paul Veyne, "Foucault revolutions history" in Foucault and his interlocutors (Chicago: The University Press of Chicago) 177.

the world does not rest on the intrinsic value or initial importance of a person. The individuals are caught in a web of power relations that determine who they are. It is their ability to play, to interact, to resist to and exercise power that is predominant. The game does not revolve around the value of its elements; it constantly creates, reinvents, and reinitializes their value. It is a game of combinations; each element exists only in relation with others.

Foucault's study focused on the individual's capacity to remain autonomous before the forms of political rule and economic exploitation: "governmentality draws attention to all those strategies, tactics, and authorities – state and non state alike – that seek to mold conduct individually and collectively in order to safeguard the welfare of each and of all."[379] In the governmental apparatus, individuals are the products of an all-encompassing strategy that condition them to perform functional tasks. The technologies of power subject individuals and turn them into programmable and expandable pawns that are only valued when they can be producible and useful for the overall governmental scheme.

5.3. The discourses of power shape human perceptions of the world

It is only in the later years of his life that Michel Foucault adopted an innovative outlook on the State and expressed his desire to investigate governmental practices rather than the State's legitimacy or theory. He has shown that "power

[379] Jonathan Xavier Inda, Anthropologies of Modernity: Foucault, Governmentality, and Life Politics (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005) 6.

relations, governmentality, the government of the self and of others, and the relationship of self to self constitute a chain, a thread,"[380] they are all connected and are the offspring of a form of political economy that was discovered in the eighteenth century. As "the Enlightenment, which discovered the liberties, also invented the disciplines,"[381] the eighteenth-century political ideal gave birth to social and political structures ruled by discourses of power that worked between institutions, groups and individuals. Rousseau, for one, in his treatise on *Political Economy* and in his *Social Contract* gave "a new definition of the art of government"[382] which has followed the logic of chess, has shaped governmental practices, and has been one of the main legacies of the Enlightenment to the world. This new notion of government hinges on tactics, strategies, and discourses of power, that fabricate and arrange the self so that it fits the social standards and contributes to the objectives designed by the state.

In order to understand the form of subjectivity exacted by discourses of power, no better theory than that of Ferdinand de Saussure, the Swiss linguist, can give a more enlightening explanation. Saussure distinguishes two parts in language: the *langue* which is a system of rules and the *parole* which is an individual act of speech. The Swiss linguist also divides the linguistic sign into a concept and sound-image, that is, a signified and a signifier. As these two parts are arbitrarily linked, language

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[380] Michel Foucault, The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1981-1982 (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2005) 252.

[381] Michel Foucault, Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison (New York: Vintage Books, 1995) 222.

[382] Michel Foucault, The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) 101.

creates its own system of representation, its own reality. Saussure uses chess to illustrate his innovative definition. The rules of chess remain the same after each move, they are "fixed once and for all." Language follows the same principles, the rules "are the unchanging principles of semiology."[383] Moreover, "in order to describe the position on the board, it is quite useless to refer to what happened ten seconds ago. All this applies equally to a language, and confirms the radical distinction between diachronic and synchronic. Speech operates only upon a given linguistic state, and the changes which supervene between one state and another have no place either."[384] Saussure argues that the value of a chess piece depends on its respective position on the chessboard. On its own, removed from the chessboard, the piece is irrelevant and devoid of meaning. It acquires meaning and significance in the network of the system: "a state of the board in chess corresponds exactly to a state of the language. The value of the chess pieces depends on their position on the chess board, just as in the language each term has its value through its contrast with all the other terms."[385] Therefore, for Saussure, chess is a staged representation of how language operates in a natural form.

The importance of language goes beyond communication and interaction. Language is a representation of the world, and as men's words were "seen as peripheral to men's understanding of reality, men's understanding of reality came to be

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[383] Ferdinand De Saussure, Course in General Linguistics (LaSalle, Ill: Open Court, 1986) 88.

[384] Ferdinand De Saussure, Course in General Linguistics (LaSalle, Ill: Open Court, 1986) 88.

[385] Ferdinand De Saussure, Course in General Linguistics (LaSalle, Ill: Open Court, 1986) 88.

seen as revolving about their social use of verbal signs."[386] For Saussure, language, which is based on the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign, detaches itself from men's reality: "Language, in other words, is self referential, enclosed, and separated from any concrete connection to that which resides outside of it, the real."[387] Language makes it possible to construct an artificial and malleable perception of the world, to influence the individual understanding of reality, and, above all, to define, delineate, and express truth. Little wonder then that language has turned into a very effective weapon for the exercise of population government.

Government here is not be understood as a state institution, it rather refers to "the activity that consists in governing human behavior in the framework of, and by means of, state institutions,"[388] and "to govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of action of others."[389] Language, through which Michel Foucault has studied and identified the technologies of power, has been one of the main focuses of his research:

> each discipline marks out an area of body and mind for control. First the mad and the sick, then the children and the criminals, domestic life and its great untamable, sex. Each is brought under the terrible domination of language – the discourse of power.[390]

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[386] Ferdinand De Saussure, Course in General Linguistics (LaSalle, Ill: Open Court, 1986) ix.

[387] Sean P. Murphy, James Joyce and Victims: Reading the Logic of Exclusion (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003) 113.

[388] Michel Foucault, The Essential Foucault (New York / London: The New Press, 2003) 203.

[389] Michel Foucault, The Essential Foucault (New York / London: The New Press, 2003) 138.

[390] Fred Inglis, Media Theory: An Introduction (Oxford / Cambridge: B. Blackwell, 1990) 107.

The discourses of power are the tensions that underlie any human interaction: Foucault contends that they are immanent to any free society.

The disciplines that Foucault expressed are "*dispositifs* of power,"[391] which "operate neither through repression nor through ideology." They consist of "a diffuse and heterogeneous multiplicity [...] they referred to a diagram, a kind of abstract machine immanent to the entire social field."[392] These *dispositifs* are diffused throughout the entire social body by what Foucault coined "discourses of power-knowledge." They form a multiplicity of networks and power relations that operate through the social body and define, limit, and condition the individual: "The power exercised on the body is conceived not as property, but as strategy, that its effects of domination are attributed not to "appropriation," but to dispositions, maneuvers, tactics, techniques, functionings; that one should decipher in it a network of relation."[393] The body is therefore the product of knowledge and techniques that "constitute what might be called the political technology of the body."[394] The body enters the political sphere – it becomes the object of power relations – as much as it is invested by political dominance:

> The body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs. This

[391] Gilles Deleuze, "Desire and Pleasure" in Arnold Ira Davidson, Foucault and His Interlocutors (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997) 183.

[392] Gilles Deleuze 184.

[393] Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (Vintage Books, 1979) 27.

[394] Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (Vintage Books, 1979) 27.

> political investment of the body is bound up, in accordance with complex reciprocal relations, with its economic use; it is largely as a force of production that the body is invested with relations of power and domination; but, on the other hand, its constitution as labor power is possible only if it is caught up in a system of subjection (in which need is also a political instrument meticulously prepared, calculated and used).[395]

For Foucault, this form of power is dynamic and flexible, it is "exercised rather than possessed" and reacts to "the overall effect of its strategic positions"[396]:

> These 'power- knowledge relations' are to be analyzed, therefore, not on the basis of a subject of knowledge who is or is not free in relation to the power system, but, on the contrary, the subject who knows, the objects to be known and the modalities of knowledge must be regarded as so many effects of these fundamental implications of power-knowledge and their historical transformations. In short, it is not the activity of the subject of knowledge that produces a corpus of knowledge, useful or resistant to power, but power-knowledge, the processes and struggles that traverse it and of which it is made up, that determines the forms and possible domains of knowledge."[397]

Just as Saussure dismissed the individual ability to represent reality on their own without resorting to language, Foucault argues that "it is discourse, not the subject, which produces knowledge. Discourse is enmeshed with power, it is not necessary to find 'a subject' for power/knowledge to operate."[398] The discourses of power do not require a subject, they exist by themselves and follow their own logic: "*everything* is never said"[399] and "because statements are rare, they are collected in unifying

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[395] Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (Vintage Books, 1979) 26.

[396] Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (Vintage Books, 1979) 27.

[397] Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (Vintage Books, 1979) 27-28.

[398] Margaret Wetherell, Simeon Yates, and Stephanie Taylor, Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader. (London: SAGE, 2001) 79.

[399] Michel Foucault, Archaeology of knowledge (Routledge classics. London: Routledge, 2002) 134.

totalities, and the meanings to be found in them are multiplied."[400] Their imprecision and ambiguity serve two purposes: on the one hand they blur the discourses' referenciality and their connection to human reality; on the other hand they reinforce their power of subjection and their control on human understanding:

> Discourse – the mere fact of speaking, of employing words, of using the words of others (even if it means returning them), words that the others understand and accept (and, possibly, return from their side) – this fact is in itself a force. Discourse is, with respect to the relation of forces, not merely a surface of inscription, but something that brings about effects.[401]

These "effects" that Foucault mentions are the process of individualization: "the play of signs defines the anchorages of power."[402] Power is exacted on the individuals, it defines them: "it is not that the beautiful totality of the individual is amputated, repressed, altered by our social order, it is rather that the individual is carefully fabricated in it, according to a whole technique of forces and bodies."[403] Power is found in and traverses everything, it "forms knowledge, produces discourse."[404] Most importantly, power defines truth which is "a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power."[405]

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[400] Michel Foucault, Archaeology of knowledge (Routledge classics. London: Routledge, 2002) 135.

[401] Michel Foucault, Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1975-76 (New York: Picador, 2003) xx.

[402] Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (Vintage Books, 1979) 217.

[403] Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (Vintage Books, 1979) 217.

[404] Michel Foucault and Paul Rabinow, The Foucault Reader (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984) 61.

[405] Michel Foucault and Paul Rabinow, The Foucault Reader (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984) 72.

Society is therefore crisscrossed by relations of power and power/knowledge that define knowledge and institute truth:

> In this sense, knowledge is not only linked to the powers that be, it is not only a weapon of power, it is not even power at the same time that it is knowledge; knowledge is only power, radically, for one can only speak truly by virtue of the force of the rules imposed at one time or another by a history whose individuals are at once, and mutually, actors and victim.[406]

The production of truth — "a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements."[407] — dictates what can be considered valid and appropriate, and at the same time it delineates and distinguishes what is not; it establishes the "domains in which the practice of true and false can be made at once ordered and pertinent."[408] Men are not only caught in this universalizing strategy which has imposed disciplines and technologies of power on them, they are defined by them. Foucault explains that "All the practices by which the subject is defined and transformed are accompanied by the formation of certain type of knowledge, and in the West, for a variety of reasons, knowledge tends to be organized around forms and norms that are more or less scientific."[409] The subject is then caught in a game of truth that is a network of procedures and rules for the

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[406] Paul Veyne, "The Final Foucault and His Ethics" in Arnold Ira Davidson, Foucault and His Interlocutors (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997) 227.

[407] Michel Foucault and Paul Rabinow, The Foucault Reader (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984) 74.

[408] Michel Foucault, Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller, The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality : with Two Lectures by and an Interview with Michel Foucault (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) 79.

[409] Michel Foucault, Sylvère Lotringer and Lysa Hochroth, The Politics of Truth (Semiotext(e) foreign agents series. Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2007) 151.

productions of truth. He is the result of power/knowledge tensions and lives within a web of power relations: “it is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power."[410] Consequently, the individual is like a chess piece on the board and exists only through and thanks to these relations of power. It is the tensions that underlie every social relation that define human beings, the knowledge and the power to express the truth that conditions their behaviors. Taken out of this network of knowledge, out of the relations of power, the individual is as worthless as a single chess piece without a grid of squares. In order to exist, to be valuable and respected, human beings need to find their places on the social checkerboard: they have to play the game and accept the rules. If they place themselves outside of the grid, they are immediately classified as mad, dangerous or abnormal.

The two characters in da Silva’s painting who are playing chess, are, at the same time, enmeshed, unaware of their participation in another giant game of chess in which they are only pieces. They are in control of their strategy on the chess board in front of them, but they fall victim to a much broader mapping system: They are both “actors and victims.” The two players in the painting are unaware of their involvement in a game of a much larger scale that engulfs their lives and conditions their behavior: “the techniques of the self do not require the same material apparatus as the production of objects; therefore they are often invisible techniques.”[411]

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[410] Michel Foucault and Colin Gordon, Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980) 52.

[411] Michel Foucault and Paul Rabinow, The Foucault Reader (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984) 369.

The two players are engaged in relations of power on the chess board which harbor the battle between two forces, two strategies that are reversal: any move and any strategy are opposed to a counter-move, a resistant strategy: "where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, the resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power."[412] At the same time, the two characters are part of an all-inclusive strategy, a game of truth that is mapping out their entire universe. For Foucault the coercion on the individuals is "exercised according to a codification that partitions as closely as possible time, space, movement."[413] This methodology allows "the constant subjection of [the body's] forces and imposed on them a relation of docility-utility, might be called 'disciplines,'"[414] which, in turn, "increase production, […] develop the economy, spread education, raise the level of public morality."[415] By defining and revealing the relations of power, the governmentality, and the games of truth, Michel Foucault has shed light on the universal and multiple processes of individualization.

5.4. The creation of the self as a work of art

During the last years of his life, Foucault focused on the relationship between ethics and politics and challenged "not only the practices of domination that are found

[412] Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality (New York: Vintage Books, 1980) 95.

[413] Michel Foucault and Paul Rabinow, The Foucault Reader (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984) 181.

[414] Michel Foucault and Paul Rabinow, The Foucault Reader (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984) 181.

[415] Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan, Literary Theory: An Anthology (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2004) 556.

in the prison, but also the morality which justifies and rationalizes these practices."[416] The ability to define truth or general morality means to impose a code of conduct, of thoughts, and of values. In a system where politics mixes with morality, public authority can freely instill the moral values that will best serve its projects. The morality used in the public domain is an action exercised on personal and public opinions and turns out to be real state propaganda. As men are the product of institutions, power relations and games of truth, they are subjected to "a form of morality acceptable to everybody in the sense that everyone should submit to it."[417] The morality imposed by the State conditions and normalizes the individual whose judgments and principles are defined by political power, which, thanks to the games of truth, identifies the moral standards that human beings ought to accept and respect.

It is only by questioning the moral codes of society however that individuals can free themselves from the state and its globalizing form of power. Foucault intends to "construct an analytics of power that no longer takes law as a model and a code."[418] Political apparatuses need to consider the individual's independence, uniqueness, and ability to demonstrate critical thinking. "We have to promote new forms of subjectivity"[419] and refuse the type of individualization imposed by the State and its

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[416] Saul Newman, From Bakunin to Lacan: Anti-Authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power (Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 2001) 82.

[417] Michel Foucault, The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the College de France 1981-1982 (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2005) 532.

[418] Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978) 90.

[419] Michel Foucault, The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1981-1982 (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2005) 544.

institutions. It is only through the constitution of an ethics that the subject will make it possible to adopt original and independent thinking. Foucault discards the idea that a legal system can regulate moral, personal, and intimate human existence. He introduces his concept of ethics as "*une lutte politique pour le respect des droits, de la réflexion critique et contre les technique abusives de gouvernement*."[420]

In this sense, Foucault attacks Rousseau's vision of the ideal society where each citizen should conform to the general will in order to enjoy freedom. Just as Rousseau ushered in morality in the political administration of the nation, Foucault also considers morality to be political. However, for him, morality takes on the form of resistance. The constitution of a general morality defines what is good or bad and prevents the individual's critical and personal thinking. In a political system that defines subjects of law, Foucault suggests that it is "an urgent, fundamental, politically indispensable task" to "constitute an ethics of the self."[421] Morality needs to be personal, defined individually, and driven by personal wisdom. It is through morality and the search for the appropriate moral code that men can live freely. Foucault's critical view about population government has shown the need to question our system of evidence. The self should be formed following the creation of a work of arts; it should be an original and unique creation. Foucault redefined political economy so that it ceased to consider the individual solely as a legal subject. He revealed the processes of subjection, so that human beings can constitute themselves

[420] Michel Foucault, Dits et écrits: 1954-1988. IV, 1980-1988 (Bibliothèque des sciences humaines. Paris: Gallimard, 1994) 728.

[421] Michel Foucault, The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1981-1982 (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2005) 241.

as ethical, autonomous, and thinking subjects, and he promoted a new formation of the self, which has "to be created as a work of art."[422]

Aristotle believed that "the art of self-making would mean […] the harmonious development of all one's powers, rational, moral, and aesthetic, carefully avoiding excess and defect."[423] Foucault adapted this idea of the famous Greek philosopher and demonstrated the urgency to constitute oneself independently from governmental strategy and techniques of power. Studying Michel Foucault's purpose, Mitchell Dean noted that "What is at stake is not the social or psychological construct of the human subject, but the forms in which human is problematized, interrogated and invested with meaning, within the frame of governmental and ethical practices."[424] Away from the state apparatus, the self can fulfill itself and its aspiration without the government's moral stamp of approval or disapproval. Fundamental to the freedom and the autonomy of the individual are the formation and the development of the self outside the grid of squares that compartmentalizes the individual and allows power relations to take effect.

Returning to the reference of the chessboard, individuals can create themselves as "works of arts," that is, as unique and original, like an isolated chess piece would create its own "game,"its own "importance" without the limits, the rules, and the

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[422] Michel Foucault and Paul Rabinow, The Foucault Reader (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984) 362.

[423] Herbert Martin, The Inquiring Mind; Introductory Philosophic Studies (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1947) 186.

[424] Mitchell Dean, "Foucault, government and the enfolding of authority" in Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-Liberalism, and Rationalities of Government (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996) 225.

tactics that govern the chessboard. Individuals can form themselves as ethical subjects only outside the realm of the governmentality and only if they disenfranchised and disinvested themselves from the tactics and strategies of power that govern the social chessboard.

CONCLUSION

Interpreted as a form of rationality, as a conceptual paradigm useful for understanding the functioning of human thought and behavior, the game of chess stands in marked contrast with the Cartesian model of an autonomous, self-directed, and self-motivated subject, as well as nineteenth-century humanism, which is predicated on transcental and a priori notions of human nature: "*le sujet comme substance logique anhistorique, opérateur de systèmes unifiants, donation de sens. Expérience originaire, support transhistorique de valeurs universelles*."[425] Through its celebration of reason, the Enlightenment gave birth to different kinds of rationalities. One strain has placed the subject at the core of its preoccupations and has given rise to humanism, which is a way of guaranteeing the status quo, and can be used for all sorts of purposes. Another strain has defined the state apparatus and the techniques that would allow individuals to enjoy progress and freedom. While Enlightenment thinkers invented innovative and efficient government technology, they failed to anticipate that technical advancement would progressively compromise the very freedom of the individual they sought to uphold.

[425] Frédéric Gros, Michel Foucault (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1996) 93.

As the logic of chess is elaborated by Rousseau and others, it becomes a strategy for effectuating social and political control and management. It implies a diminished importance of human agency in history and, in the twentieth century, the validity of the paradigm was reinforced by a number of thinkers and critics, most notably by Michel Foucault's archeological and genealogical approach to the construction of human subjectivity. Foucault's approach has emphasized the anonymity of systems of rules ordering knowledge, the "*asservissement massif de la pensée à des systèmes de règles*,"[426] and has developed the notion of a subject that is dependent on its positioning in grids of knowledge/power that are formed according to certain "*régularités, ou contraintes secrètes du savoir … un système anonyme de règles régissant l'ensemble des savoirs d'une époque*."[427] Foucault has also noted the historical realm of knowledge and its changeable validity as, during each given period, the discourses of knowledge become true discourses. This knowledge is not a universal structure but belongs to the domain of the punctual, of the singular: "*La connaissance n'est pas une faculté ni une structure universelle. Même quand elle utilise un certain nombre d'éléments, qui peuvent passer pour universels, la connaissance sera seulement de l'ordre du résultat, de l'événement, de l'effet.*"[428] Whatever universal aspects it may assume, knowledge always belongs to the realm of the immediate, concrete effect. Furthermore knowledge is a normative and

[426] Frédéric Gros, Michel Foucault (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1996) 40.

[427] Frédéric Gros 38-40.

[428] Michel Foucault, Dits et écrits. 1954-1988 II, 1976-1988 (Quarto. Paris: Gallimard, 2001) 551.

individualizing power that is always focused on the subject and its constitution: "*La connaissance est toujours une certaine relation stratégique dans laquelle l'homme se trouve placé.*"[429] In addition to investing individuals with strategies and tactics, knowledge exacts a normative power and becomes a very efficient instrument in population government.

Analyzing the Enlightenment through the prism of chess has revealed that eighteenth-century philosophy relied excessively on dehumanized reason and tried to free itself from an essential human essence and a certain kind of anthropocentric thought. It has instead envisioned a society ruled by disciplines and traversed by relations and strategies of power. Just as a chess piece on a checkerboard, the subject is neither conscious nor autonomous; he is caught in a network of tactics and strategies that define him and condition his actions. Fundamental to this notion of Power/Knowledge is the effect of coercion and subjection:

> for nothing can exist as an element of knowledge if, on one hand, it does not conform to a set of rules and constraints characteristics, for example, of a given type of scientific discourse in a given period, and if, on the other hand, it does not possess the effects of coercion or simply the incentives peculiar to what is scientifically validated or simply rational or simply generally accepted.[430]

The Enlightenment is not to be seen as mere juridical advancements but as the formation of mechanisms of power that are "deployed according to procedures, instruments, means and objectives which can be validated in more or less coherent

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[429] Michel Foucault, Dits et écrits. 1954-1988 II, 1976-1988 551.

[430] Michel Foucault, The Politics of Truth 61.

systems of knowledge."[431] From this perspective, the eighteenth century did not seek to uncover a meaning for the world but invented the disciplines that would allow knowledge to be diffused and invested in each individual. The Enlightenment invented the technology of power, and, through the politicization of the individual, conceptualized the fabrication of the subjects and their individualization.

The paradigm of chess has helped to appreciate the rationality of the Enlightenment political thinking, and, at the same time, it has shed light on the logic that ruled the innovative social and political organizations conceived in the eighteenth century. It has shown that the subject was eventually to be formatted and was the product of numerous techniques of power associated with knowledge. By disclosing the discourses of power, the normative patterns of knowledge, and the subjection of the self, Michel Foucault has revealed at the same time the grid of knowledge that regulates modern societies along with the multiple strategies and relations of power that traverse the social body. He speaks of this power as "a machinery that no one owns,"[432] as an independent apparatus entirely dehumanized. The promise to liberate human beings through the rational organization of society has proven faulty. Originally employed to master and organize Nature, the instrumentalization of reason eventually became a means to control human beings as well. Accordingly, the paradigm of chess may well constitute a more accurate description of what motivates and determines human thought and behavior than the Cartesian/Kantian model. In

[431] Michel Foucault, The Politics of Truth 61.

[432] Michel Foucault and Colin Gordon, Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980) 156.

light of such interpretations, the notion of Reason and the ideals promoted by Humanism appear as convenient guises, masking the actual processes of control and domination at work in modern societies.

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