

I do not wish to downplay the existence of ambiguity in the dialogue, and I agree that an interpretation of the dialogue as a whole is quite elusive. Nonetheless, I would argue that the parts of the dialogue form a coherent unity around the tension between the aspirations of Critias/Charmides (for power and glory) and Socrates (for wisdom). In paying attention to these aspirations, the reader is provoked to draw the connection between Critias's commitment to reflexivity and his political career. The ending therefore prompts us to ask: What is the relationship between tyranny and self-knowledge as Critias understands it? What is the relationship between philosophy and self-knowledge as Socrates understands it? How might Socratic philosophy and self-knowledge answer to Critias's aspiration for reflexivity and power? Is there anything in the dialogue that can help us prevent the political tragedy that comes after the drama of the dialogue ends? In provoking these questions, I would suggest that Plato makes an unambiguous criticism of Critias and Charmides and displays for us and *defends* the Socratic alternative (both in Socrates's speech and deed), an alternative that still remains viable for those witnessing the conversation, and that perhaps can save us from tyranny—indeed, perhaps *this* is the benefit of Socratic self-knowledge.

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Gary M. Kelly: *The Human Condition in Rousseau's "Essay on the Origin of Languages."* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 2021. Pp. xviii, 242.)

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Robert Solomon, in *Continental Philosophy since 1750*, wrote that Jean-Jacques Rousseau discovered the self in its contemporary sense. But what is this self that Rousseau discovered? Is it the radical contract cosigner of the *Social Contract*, the corrupted civil man of the *Second Discourse*, or the adult Émile (let alone Julie or Sophie)? Is it some other self that roams contemporary Rousseau scholarship like Christopher Kelly's author in *Rousseau as Author*, Jason Neidleman's truth seeker in *Rousseau's Ethics of Truth*, or Frederick Neuhausser's *amour-propre* manager in *Rousseau's Theodicy of Self-Love*? Is the self some combination of all of these possible selves, and if so, how? Into this milieu, Gary M. Kelly's *The Human Condition in Rousseau's "Essay on the Origin of Languages"* offers the audial self, a worthy addition to a motley crew.

The activity of speech defines the audial self: speaking, listening, hearing. This activity, Kelly argues, "connects sound to sense and soul," meaning, if

I understand correctly, that sound brings together sensation and sentiment, the physical and the moral, passion and action, sensing and reasoning—elements of lived experience that never quite obtain precise definitions in Rousseau's works (4). This conceptualization of the self and its philosophical task may remind readers of Foucault's "man and his doubles" in *The Order of Things*, and indeed, Kelly is offering an ordering principle; in his words, the audial self is an "originator" that uses reason to unite disparate elements of its lived experience (5). In an existential sense, the self is the origin of the meaning of its experience; in Kelly-Rousseauian language, the audial self joins the practical activity of speech with moral reasoning that moves the heart.

Beyond its philosophical value, the audial self has a textual role as well, Kelly contends: it provides unity to Rousseau's *Essay on the Origin of Languages*. Kelly argues fairly that scholarship often treats this slippery text either according to theme, picking out bits of Rousseau's theory of human nature from it to compare with more organized pronouncements voiced elsewhere, or according to discipline, extracting discrete bodies of knowledge from it like a speculative history of language development or music theory (5). By contrast, Kelly holds that on his approach "reason in the audial experience of speech and language, can link disciplines as diverse as poetry, oratory, grammar, and music" (xi). The whole task, then, is twofold: to give an account of the rational, audial self that at the same time provides coherence to the *Essay on the Origin of Languages*.

Kelly finds success on both counts. After an introduction explaining these dual goals, his first chapter delivers a careful, blow-by-blow account of each chapter of the *Essay*. Kelly's second chapter interprets. Drawing on Rousseau's argument pitting lively audial speech against stultifying visual, written representation in codified languages, Kelly focuses on the idea that moving the locus of reason from the socially driven visual back to the self-centered audial can protect the self from social corruption: the self can use its own activity of speech to begin and control its narrative, so to speak (62). In this sense, "the *Essay's* origin [of languages] has an originator, a speaking and listening self whose activity of speech is the centerpiece of the audial experience and a signature human characteristic" (67). Via the activity of speech, moreover, the self is capable of developing this origin, finding a pinnacle in the rational composition of melody (70). "The reason in the discipline of melodic music situates the origin in the originator": that is, in melodic design, the self joins sound and word in a morally meaningful union of its own creation (74). Kelly's interpretive move here both discloses an interesting audial self in Rousseau's thinking and unites ideas present in the disparate-seeming language, music, culture, and human nature focused chapters of the *Essay*.

Kelly develops the audial self further in chapter 3. Here, he details the "sleight of reason"; that is, the clever movement of reason from servicing the visual back to servicing the audial. The argument holds that as visual representation gains importance in a culture, reason becomes passive and

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beholden to it (91). However, reason can reassert itself in the audial realm through “passionate accent,” which gives the audial priority in this sense: reason can develop melody to portray passionate accent to powerful effect, conveying feeling and meaning (92–93). A tool for this musical representation is “stealth of reason”: use of imitation to deliver moral qualities to music (95). Stealth of reason has two techniques of imitation in particular: substituting for an object the movement it excites in the heart (98), thus contributing moral meaning (102); and sequencing sound to deliver this meaning (103). For example, a song might substitute a rationally sequenced melody for a cry for help, conveying a persuasive moral demand to care for the other that moves the heart. Chapter 4 continues this line, arguing that Rousseau’s concern over contemporary “degeneration” in music reflects a general failure of his peers to inculcate song in speech in order to preserve passionate accent and the rationally constructed moral value of melody (127). Indeed, degenerated music will not persuade us to be moral, which Kelly takes to be the true topic of Rousseau’s cryptic call for “philosophic study” at the end of the *Essay* (150). Or, at least, I believe this is the idea. Kelly’s text is sometimes hard to follow, like the *Essay* itself.

Bringing his work to summation, Kelly’s final chapter spends some time reconciling the audial self with some of Rousseau’s more famed others. Kelly gives smart analyses of moments in *Émile* that use the activity of speech to impart moral lessons, although *Émile*’s tricky developmental story can only receive partial treatment in Kelly’s book. The audial self is also intended to thread the needle between “man” (the self of abstract human nature) and “men” (actual selves as they exist in unique cultures), a task featured in the *Discourse on Inequality*. Kelly does make a strong case that practical, physical activity of speech, responding to human needs, can circumscribe cultural differences, thus joining “man” and “men.” Nevertheless, interpreting Rousseau’s many selves (and there are so many!) is an enormous task, and it remains an unsettled horizon for future scholarship.

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