



# **The Confessions and Correspondence, Including the Letters to Malesherbes (Collected Writings of Rousseau)**

*Jean-Jacques Rousseau*

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When Rousseau first read his Confessions to a 1770 gathering in Paris, reactions varied from admiration of his candor to doubts about his sanity to outrage. Indeed, Rousseau's intent and approach were revolutionary. As one of the first attempts at autobiography, the Confessions' novelty lay not in just its retelling the facts of Rousseau's life, but in its revelation of his innermost feelings and its frank description of the strengths and failings of his character.

Based on his doctrine of natural goodness, Rousseau intended the Confessions as a testing ground to explore his belief that, as Christopher Kelly writes, "people are to be measured by the depth and nature of their feelings." Re-created here in a meticulously documented new translation based on the definitive Pléiade edition, the work represents Rousseau's attempt to forge connections among his beliefs, his feelings, and his life. More than a "behind-the-scenes look at the private life of a public man," Kelly writes, "the Confessions is at the center of Rousseau's philosophical enterprise."

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