

## *Che cos'è una autobiografia? Modelli e problemi della confessione*

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*In the first paragraph of his Confessions, Jean-Jacques Rousseau defined his undertaking as one «qui n'eut jamais d'exemple, et dont l'exécution n'aura point d'imitateur». We should not be prepared to assume that, in disregarding all predecessors, he was merely indulging an habitual penchant toward rhetorical exaggeration, nor that his failure to mention the most famous book of Confessions ever written before his, that of Saint Augustine, was a product of neglect or distraction. It can be argued, rather, that Rousseau wrote and entitled his Confessions as a refutation, however veiled, of a specifically Catholic and Augustinian conception of man.*

*Curiously enough, critics confronting both visions of human nature have customarily agreed with Rousseau's own evaluation of his teaching as the more humane and enlightened. But one easily forgets that any concept cuts both ways; and without attempting a final resolution one might argue that it is Augustine's Confessions, not Rousseau's, that provide a more open vision of man's capacity, not just for "salvation" in a theological sense, but for self-development and self-realization in one's own life.*

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1. Tutti crediamo, almeno in apparenza, di sapere intuitivamente che cosa sia una autobiografia, vale a dire, secondo i termini greci che compongono la parola, la testimonianza scritta della propria vita. E, almeno in un primo momento, tutti tendiamo a considerare questo genere come un fenomeno universale, proprio di tutti i tempi e di tutte le culture, poiché da sempre l'uomo ha cercato di lasciare una testimonianza di se stesso, e quindi anche della propria vita. In realtà, proprio in convegni specifici dedicati