

Tracy B. Strong (University of Southampton; UCSD Distinguished Professor, emeritus): “The Question of Spectacle: Rousseau, Nietzsche and Michael Fried”

“denn da ist keine Stelle, / die dich nicht sieht. Du mußt dein Leben ändern.

[for there is no place / which does not see you. You have to change your life.]” (Rilke)

Abstract. Michael Fried’s early and seminal essay, “Art and Objecthood” is built around a set of assertions about the phenomenology of the experience of art. He also refers to himself as a “Diderotian” critic and in a later book on Diderot engages in a brief discussion of Rousseau on this question. From an analysis of Diderot, Rousseau’s *Lettre à M. d’Alembert sur les spectacles* and Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy*, I argue that his criticism in fact rather shows deep resemblances to the second two thinkers but that their analyses go deeper than does Fried and raise a question he avoids or overlooks about the relation of aesthetics to the political.