

PREFACE

This analysis is primarily the reading of a text, namely, Rousseau's *Emile, ou De l'éducation*. The original version was composed as a dissertation in education at the University of Chicago, which was successfully defended in 1984. The current text (from 2015) reproduces that original work as a whole, while including some minor corrections, revisions, and additions. The analysis is based upon the original French version as edited and annotated by Charles Wirz and Pierre Burgelin in volume four of the Pléiade edition of his *Oeuvres complètes* (Rousseau 1959-69, 4). To help readers who are not fluent in French, I have chosen to present Rousseau's words in the excellent translation by Allan Bloom (Rousseau 1979). For ease in reading, I have abbreviated citations and included them in the text as follows: after a quotation from *Emile*, page references to the Bloom translation are preceded by a "B" and page references to the French Pléiade edition are preceded by an "*Oc*". In those few places where I have altered Bloom's translation, I have indicated briefly in a footnote why and have given the French words at issue. Also, when Bloom italicizes words which Rousseau does not, I have identified those instances after the page references as "Bloom's italics."

References follow the author-date system and refer the reader to the Bibliography. References to works other than *Emile* are almost exclusively restricted to Chapters One and Six. Unless otherwise indicated, translations from the French are my own.

Finally, out of conviction, not just convention, I would like to express my thanks to several individuals for their help in this project. I am indebted, first of all, to Professor Leonard Olsen, who demonstrated to me in a year-long tutorial the importance and the method of close textual analysis of philosophic works. Of the professors on my dissertation committee, Charles Wegener, in a number of courses, helped me to discover my intellectual world and repeatedly encouraged me to voyage about in it. Philip Jackson, both in and out of class, critically stimulated my interest in the connections between educational theory and curricular practice. Harold Dunkel introduced me to *Emile*, read with great critical insight my first formulation of the present inquiry, and followed this project, in a manner well beyond professional courtesy, through to completion.

I want to extend a special word of thanks to the Director of my dissertation, Robert McCaul. The sign of a great teacher is the capacity not only to stimulate students but also to provide the means by which they may pursue purposes on their own. Professor McCaul did both. He urged me to develop the project along the lines I believed most fitting; and when my ideas, energy, or determination failed, he went out of his way, figuratively and literally, to counsel me back along lines of productive work. I can only hope that as I have practiced the profession, I have been able in a similar way to help my students fulfill their own intellectual purposes.

I wish also to acknowledge two personal debts. One is to Ralph Goren, for unflagging friendship. The other is to my family, for their patience in what must have appeared to be an unending enterprise, and for their loving support.

PART I

ROUSSEAU ON EDUCATION

CHAPTER ONE

The Problem of Interpretation

I am persuaded that one can be clear, even in the poverty of our language, not by always giving the same meanings to the same words, but by arranging it so that as often as each word is used, the meaning given it be sufficiently determined by the ideas related to it and that each period where the word is found serves it, so to speak, as a definition. One time I say children are incapable of reasoning; another time I make them reason quite keenly, I do not believe that with that I contradict myself in my ideas; but I cannot gainsay that I often contradict myself in my expressions (B 108 fn.; *Oc* 345 fn.).

I. Rousseau: A Continuum of Views

A. His thought in general. In July of 1978, Cambridge University's Trinity College hosted a bilingual colloquium in commemoration of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's death on July 2, 1778 (Leigh 1982). The diversity of papers read and discussed by the one hundred scholars present testifies both to the current interest in Rousseau as a major thinker in the history of ideas and to the breadth of his contribution to the modern world. Some of this interest and breadth is suggested by papers such as: "Rousseau and Kant: principles of political right," by Stephen Ellenburg; "La place et l'importance de la notion d'égalité dans la doctrine politique de Jean-Jacques Rousseau," by Robert Derathé; "Rousseau and Marx," by Jean-Louis Lecercle; "La cité et ses langages," by Bronislaw Baczko; "From the orang-utan to the vampire: towards an anthropology of Rousseau," by Christopher Frayling and Robert Wokler; "L'héritage littéraire de Rousseau," by Bernard Gagnebin; "Rousseau and his reader: the technique of persuasion in *Emile*," by Ronald Grimsley; "Rousseau et la morale du sentiment (lexicologie, idéologie)," by John Stephenson Spink; and "Modernité du discours de Jean-Jacques Rousseau sur la musique," by Marie-Elizabeth Duchez. In his introduction to these papers, R.A. Leigh concludes that Rousseau remains important for the contemporary world because "he raised the fundamental question of where modern civilization was leading mankind" (Leigh 1982, ix).

Whatever his importance, however, Rousseau remains an extraordinarily difficult figure with which to come to grips. Any attempt to evaluate his contribution must strive to separate both the man and his work from the continual controversy that has enveloped them from the

eighteenth century to this day.¹ His deeply troubled personal life led to breaks with friends, like Diderot and Hume, and with important patrons, such as Mme d'Epainay, as well as to protracted, chaotic relations with a mendacious set of in-laws. The posthumous publication of his self-revelatory *Confessions* in 1781 served only to further exacerbate controversy about the man himself. His activity as a writer, on the other hand, early attracted hostile attention when he took a seemingly perverse position in an essay that won first prize from the Dijon Academy in 1750. In the intellectual struggle between the philosophes and the Catholic Church, he sided first with the former, then broke with them, initially questioning their attacks on religion, as in a letter sent to Voltaire dated August 18, 1756, regarding the issue of providence in Voltaire's poem on the Lisbon Earthquake (Rousseau 1967, 37-84), then making a public attack two years later in his "Letter to d'Alembert." In addition, after enjoying unprecedented popularity following publication in 1761 of *Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse*, he less than two years later had to flee France because of the condemnation of *Emile* and *Du contrat social, ou Principes du droit politique* (*The social contract*), finding that first Geneva (the city of his birth), then Bern, would deny him refuge.

Neither his withdrawal from publishing his writings later in life nor his death quieted the controversy surrounding his life and work. In recording the ebb and flow of Rousseau's reputation since his death, Albert Schinz in 1941 described seven "waves" or stages, only two of which were not "anti-Rousseauist" (Schinz 1941, 4-5). He commented that despite the revolutionary eras of 1789 and 1848, when for extrinsic, political reasons the author of *The social contract* was temporarily regarded more highly, it was not until the twentieth century that Rousseau was treated seriously, receiving objective analysis and balanced judgment. The revival of Rousseau's general reputation seems, in fact, to have begun a little sooner than Schinz suggests, namely, with Geneva's public 1878 commemoration of his death. At ceremonies there, Henri-Frederic Amiel gave a speech on the "Caractéristique générale de J.-J. Rousseau" that remains even today one of the most balanced assessments of Rousseau; it, along with several other informed evaluations of Rousseau, was subsequently published in *J.-J. Rousseau jugé par les Genevois d'aujourd'hui* (Brillard *et al.* 1879). A decade later, not to be outdone, the French followed suit with a collection of appreciations entitled *J.-J. Rousseau jugé par les Français d'aujourd'hui* (Grand-Carteret 1890). In 1898, Harald Höffding, a Danish scholar, published a study of Rousseau, apparently the first to treat Rousseau's philosophy in a critically objective fashion, a study subsequently translated into German, French and English (Höffding 1930). In 1904, the Société Jean-Jacques Rousseau was founded at Geneva with a Rousseau scholar, Bernard Bouvier, Professor at the University of Geneva, as the first President. The first *Annales* of the Société appeared in 1905, and subsequent volumes up to the present have provided a wide variety of scholarly articles, book reviews, and a world-wide bibliography of works related to Rousseau. A year after the first *Annales* appeared, Frederika MacDonald published a lengthy study which helped to rehabilitate Rousseau's personal reputation. She discovered the original manuscript of the *Mémoires* of Mme d'Epainay, Rousseau's onetime patron, and found that they had been malevolently altered by her friend Grimm in order to injure Rousseau's reputation.

The year 1912, the bicentennial of Rousseau's birth, saw the flowering of the renewed interest in him with a number of commemorative activities at Geneva and in France, including a

¹ The most complete bibliography of writings by and about Rousseau is found in the *Annales de la Société Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (Société 1905-). Useful summaries include: Schinz 1941; Sènelier 1950; Voisine 1964; Chanover 1973.

fine collection of speeches given at the *Ecole des hautes études sociales* (Baldensperger *et al.* 1912). In addition, several periodicals devoted entire issues to articles on Rousseau, the most notable probably being the May issue of the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*. Finally, in the *Annales* appeared what has become probably the most cited article on Rousseau, Gustave Lanson's "L'unité de la pensée de Jean-Jacques Rousseau" (Lanson 1912). Lanson here gives the first extended treatment of what has grown to be one of the most vexed questions in Rousseau scholarship: does his work, despite its obvious paradoxes, reflect any unity of conception, and if so, what kind of unity?

Since the First World War—and even during it: for example, P.-M. Masson's consideration of Rousseau's religious thought (Masson 1916; Rousseau 1914)—Rousseau scholarly controversy has grown voluminous. By 1941 Schinz wrote that the Rousseau bibliography "equals at least that of giants like Plato, Dante, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Goethe" (Schinz 1941, v). It has expanded even more rapidly since Schinz's time. The 1962 combined commemorations of the 250th anniversary of his birth and the 200th anniversary of the publications of *Emile* and *The social contract* saw a vast outpouring of materials. Periodicals such as *Le contrat social*, the *UNESCO Courier*, *Europe*, and *Yale French Studies* devoted issues to him; collections of papers read and speeches delivered at colloquia were published, with titles such as *Jean-Jacques Rousseau et son oeuvre* (Comité national 1964) and *Jean-Jacques Rousseau et l'homme moderne* (Republique française 1965); and the Bibliothèque nationale mounted an exhibition on him, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 1712-1778* (1962). Even more recently, the 1978 bicentennial commemoration of his death once again called forth special observations of Rousseau's importance today. One need only look at the Cambridge University colloquium (Leigh 1982) or the special issues of *L'éducation* or *Daedalus*.

Turning from this rough formal sketch of the controversies in treatments of Rousseau's life and work up to the present, we can ask about what substantive issues seem to lie at the center of our current picture of Rousseau. If we set aside, as beyond the frame of our present attention, issues regarding Rousseau's biography—such as those in John Morley's first treatment in English of Rousseau's life, published in 1873 (Morley 1921), in Lester Crocker's psychoanalytic interpretation (Crocker 1968 & 1973), or in Jean Guéhenno's illuminating attempt to relive Rousseau's life day by day (Guéhenno 1966)—as well as issues regarding Rousseau's romanticism and aesthetics—whether in his novels, drama, or musical endeavors—, we are left primarily with social, political, and philosophic issues. In an excellent critical bibliography, "Reading about Rousseau," Peter Gay notes that in this context, most interpretations of Rousseau have focused on his political thought, and he distinguishes four types of conclusions arrived at (Gay 1964, 211-61; cf. Gay 1966 & 1969). One type of critic views Rousseau as a radical individualist; another sees him as exactly the contrary, an authoritarian collectivist; a third finds him to be an individualist who shifted in mid-career to collectivism; and finally, a fourth despairs of finding any coherence to his work, seeing him only as a confused, self-contradictory enthusiast. In terms of political philosophy, it is difficult to conceive of more widely divergent positions being attributed to one man. A second set of critics, Gay adds, have gone beyond the political writings in search of unity in Rousseau's thought; among these he distinguishes seven different approaches used to account for whatever unity is found!

I think that if we look behind Gay's formulation of the controversies over Rousseau, we can see what might be characterized as the central issue in all Rousseau interpretation, one that

can be represented by the opposition between Irving Babbitt and Ernst Cassirer. The former made one of the most famous attacks upon Rousseau in the twentieth century. He finds the entire thrust of Rousseau's work to be a flight from reality: "Rousseau builds up a fictitious world, that *pays des chimères*, which is alone, as he tells us, worthy of habitation" (Babbitt 1919, 73). The resulting attack on civilization, on human arts and sciences, demonstrates for Babbitt that "Rousseau is the first of the great anti-intellectualists" (Babbitt 1919, 166). Cassirer, by contrast, in a masterful critique, attempts to demonstrate

that Rousseau's fundamental thought, although it had its immediate origin in his nature and individuality, was neither circumscribed by nor bound to that individual personality; that in its maturity and perfection this thought puts before us an objective formulation of questions; and that this formulation is valid not for him or his era alone but contains, in full sharpness and definiteness, an inner, strictly objective necessity (Cassirer 1954, 40).

The central issue in Rousseau, one that possibly concerns him uniquely among major western thinkers, is simple to state, if not to answer: can we take his work seriously? Is it the product of a dreamer of irrelevant fantasies, a mélange of contradictions and incoherencies, as Babbitt would have us believe; or does it have objective coherence, a seriousness of intellectual purpose that requires our attention, if not our assent, as Cassirer would have us think? Is it, in short, rational?

B. His educational thought. Taking the foregoing discussion as the context within which to look at Rousseau's educational thought, we should not be surprised that controversy surrounds his work here, too, from the condemnation of *Emile* in 1762 onwards. Though Rousseau gained a certain following in the nineteenth century among educational practitioners, most notably Pestalozzi, Froebel and Basedow (Curtis & Boulwood 1966), the most common treatment of his educational theory—at least, by those who grant that he has something to offer—is that of Thomas Davidson.

In so far as Rousseau laid bare the defects and abuses of the society and education of his time, and demanded reforms in the direction of truth and simplicity, he did excellent work; but when he came to tell how such reforms were to be accomplished, he propounded a system which, from a social and moral point of view, has hardly one redeeming feature, and which is frequently in glaring contradiction with itself. It is pure Romanticism (Davidson 1898, 223-24).

This view of Rousseau as a Jekyll/Hyde figure—the shrewd critic of eighteenth century educational practice joined to the perverted dreamer of fantastic utopias—has had enduring currency in the literature. It is picked up by R. L. Archer, who equates *Emile* in education to the French Revolution in politics: both swept away long-standing institutions and stimulated needed reforms, but both were disastrous in their specific reforms (Rousseau 1912, 1-5). A much more extended and sophisticated discussion, but one essentially in the same vein, is that of Jean Château, who sees Rousseau continually vacillating between reality and fantasy. He comments that

in the *Emile*, what it is necessary above all to look for is perhaps less the conclusions than the problems. . . . To be fair to the philosophy of education of Rousseau, it is necessary to take it

not as a metaphysics of education but as the prolific dreams of a spirit of a unique depth and of a heart unceasingly torn (Château 1962, 244-45).

In refutation of this view that although Rousseau may see the problems of education, his pedagogical solutions are fantastic, André Oltramare in 1878 delivered a speech in which he isolated two principles which guide Rousseau's educational work: nature and liberty (Oltramare 1879). Edouard Claparède followed up on the question of nature and isolated five "laws" which guide his "functional education," laws so pervasive that "one would almost be able to redistribute all the *Emile* under these five headings" (Claparède 1912, 397). In the same year François Vial also argued that Rousseau's pedagogy was coherent, resting on two principles similar to Oltramare's, namely, liberty and natural human development (Vial 1912).

The importance of nature in Rousseau's pedagogy has been granted by many commentators, but not all agree with the three men just cited that Rousseau conceives of nature correctly. In the same period Gabriel Compayré attacked Rousseau's stages-of-development notion of human nature as being *unnatural*, and he concluded, like Davidson and others, that Rousseau's questions were more important than his answers (Compayré [1898]). Albert Schinz a decade later argued that Rousseau so misconstrued human nature as to assert that no objective, scientific thought is possible, leaving only the applied reasonings of a pragmatic character that foreshadows William James (Schinz 1909). An attitude less hostile than Schinz's was Dewey's. In *Democracy and Education*, for instance, Dewey's dialectical consideration of nature and society pays Rousseau the compliment of extended criticism, if not wholehearted agreement: regarding "nature as a standard" for educational reform, Dewey states that "no one has stated in the doctrine both its truth and falsity better than Rousseau" (Dewey 1916, 131). A more recent evaluation is the Sahakians' introductory textbook treatment, which argues that Rousseau's conception of nature is inconsistent and seriously distorts his pedagogy (Sahakian & Sahakian 1974). Not all recent criticism, however, has attacked Rousseau's conception of nature. Rolf Tobiassen has given a lucid defense of it, finding, like the three early commentators, that nature is at the heart of Rousseau's pedagogical importance (Tobiassen 1961).

The second principle that Oltramare and Vial pointed out, namely, freedom, has had an equally heated history. One could sum up the pedagogical debate here in terms similar to those suggested by John W. Chapman's title, *Rousseau: Totalitarian or liberal?* (Chapman 1956). At one extreme are those who see Rousseau as an anti-social advocate of absolute personal license. Jeannette Tresnon states that

Rousseau, regarding the moral conflict as a condition produced from without by artificial means, longs for *freedom from all restraint* in order that his moral nature may be restored to its natural goodness; i.e., he would flee from society, to whose laws he is enslaved (Tresnon 1928, 1013—Tresnon's italics).

Others, such as George Bantock, argue that Rousseau is not so much anti-social in his pedagogy as anti-authoritarian (Bantock 1965). Yet some see in his work a sinister undercurrent, namely, the enslavement of students by an authoritarian dictator disguised as a teacher. David C. Bricker argues that

Rousseau proposes that teachers be inauthentic, that they withhold their purposes from students and secretly control the students' environment, thereby eliciting the behavior which they want (Bricker 1973, 543).

Finally, some also find authoritarian control of the student, yet they see it not as a sinister but as an enlightened necessity leading to a proper understanding of, and habituation in, the discipline inherent in autonomous freedom. Robert McClintock expounds this position:

Rousseau cannot properly be considered a creator of an anti-authoritarian pedagogy—as Bantock considers him to be, for instance—for Rousseau clearly held the educator responsible, not only for exercising great authority over the student, but further for doing it with incredible sensitivity. . . . The key problem in pedagogy ceases to be the proper balance between freedom and authority and becomes a matter of properly relating freedom to necessity (McClintock 1974, 328).

Twentieth century editors of *Emile* have themselves found little agreement about the work. François and Pierre Richard's edition contains an Introduction which argues that Rousseau's pedagogy is systematic, being based on four principles; but they conclude that his methods and even his principles are flawed in practice, leaving as his chief contribution his emotional defense of children and of family (Rousseau 1939, i-xl). By contrast, Pierre Burgelin's Introduction to his 1969 edition contains a much more enthusiastic defense of Rousseau's work: the essence of nature is order, and the unity of *Emile*—for it is unified—lies in the preservation of the individual's natural order, that is, his sense of the present, his "sentiment of existence" (Rousseau 1959-69, 4:lxxxviii- cli; cf. Burgelin 1973). Pierre-Maurice Masson in 1914 published an edition of the "Profession of faith of the Savoyard Vicar," an excerpt from Book IV (Rousseau 1914; cf. Masson 1916). He argued there that the "Profession" does not fit into the structure of *Emile* at all: it presents Emile as a complex being, made up of body and soul, whereas up until then Rousseau has presented only a materialistic, sensational creature. Masson's critique moved André Ravier to write a two-volume reply in which, after discussing the sources and composition of *Emile*, he applies Lanson's conception of unity to the work and finds that the "Profession," far from being an extraneous insertion, is an essential element of Rousseau's conception (Ravier 1941).

The last two authors, Masson and Ravier, represent a common occurrence in commentaries on Rousseau's educational thought, namely, the subordination of pedagogic to other questions—in the case of Masson and Ravier, to religious ones. As further examples of this tendency, we could note the work of Peter D. Jimack and Madelaine B. Ellis. Jimack turns to textual examination of the various manuscripts leading up to the *Emile* and concludes that Rousseau's real educational thought is in an earlier manuscript, called the Favre, and that the *Emile* itself distorts that original purpose by transforming an educational treatise into a romance (Jimack 1960). Ellis, by contrast, accepts the *Emile* as embodying Rousseau's true intentions, finds that it is a structured whole, but claims that it is really an extended allegory similar to Plato's *Republic*, one in which the neophyte Emile seeks initiation into the mysteries of, and eventual union with, the holy Sophie, seen as the emblem of *sophia*, wisdom (Ellis 1977).

If we turn to doctoral dissertations on Rousseau, we find, not surprisingly, the same concerns and controversies as in the published literature. The first recorded American dissertation on Rousseau was one devoted to his educational thought (Munson 1916). A second early disser-

tation on Rousseau's educational ideas sought to connect them to some recently published, and hitherto unknown, correspondence (Rochedieu 1934). The main dissertation activity, however, regarding Rousseau in general, not only his educational thought, has taken place in the last two decades. McEachern corrects what she considers some errors that occurred in Jimack's study (1979); Horn (1978) attempts to illuminate the disagreement between Masson and Ravier over the role of the "Profession of faith" in Rousseau; and Darstek (1980) lists similarities and differences in the educational theories of Locke and Rousseau. In attempts to locate the heart of Rousseau's contribution, Brasor (1975) finds the *Confessions* to be the key to his moral thought and to his unresolved conflict between private fantasy and public rationalization; by contrast, Cassidy (1979) believes the "Discourse on the origin of inequality" contains the basic conception of freedom that is subsequently "projected" into *The social contract* and *Emile*, giving them their coherence. Some attention has focused on his conception of morality: Cook (1971) finds that morality is the key to Rousseau's pedagogy, which can only be understood in a social context; Salkever (1972) makes a comparison of Rousseau and Aristotle and finds that the former's analysis of virtue is inadequate. As in the published literature, Rousseau's view of nature has here also stimulated much analysis: Piano (1968) argues that sensibility is the key element of human nature that sets limits to the demands of sexuality; Marshall (1972) holds that Rousseau's attack on the Enlightenment's materialism and belief in progress has a crucial lesson for today's social sciences; and Fennell (1976) asserts that Rousseau's pedagogy is based on a coherent interpretation of nature. Finally, writers of dissertations have not ignored the feminist critique. Not unlike the position taken by a past-President of the Philosophy of Education Society, Jane Roland Martin (1981), the arguments of Misenheimer (1979; cf. 1981) and of Butler (1979) conclude that Rousseau both reflected and contributed to sexist attitudes regarding the education of women.

C. **Summary.** This survey demonstrates that whenever one looks at Rousseau's life or work, including his educational thought, one soon discovers that every aspect gives rise to impassioned debate which reveals a vast diversity of conclusions, a diversity that appears to leave little common ground for interpretation, thereby forcing a potential critic to choose sides from the beginning. If such is the case, it is extraordinarily difficult to evaluate Rousseau's true standing in the history of educational ideas except from some particular, partisan point of view.

II. *Emile*: The Question of Scope

A. **Where is common ground?** A rehearsal, similar to the one above, of controversial oppositions in interpretation could, of course, be produced for virtually any major theorist. Rousseau, however, appears to offer an unusual case in that so little common ground exists upon which to build an interpretation and in that the controversies tend to become uncommonly intemperate. In a review of a study on Rousseau (Dobinson 1969), Harold B. Dunkel has characterized this difficulty with a humor that has more than a hint of truth, observing that

books on Rousseau necessarily resemble the protocols obtained from the Rorschach or other projective tests: they are largely free creations of the author and probably tell us as much about him as about Rousseau (Dunkel 1970, 163-64).

The problem, consequently, is this: does any way exist by which, on the one hand, we can locate a common ground for the interpretation of his educational thought, a ground to which all critics must refer even if not agreeing to be restricted to it, and by which, on the other hand, we can

conduct an inquiry into Rousseau's meaning without engaging in controversial debate or projecting our unconscious? This problem is important in that, of course, knowledge of Rousseau's meaning is propaedeutic to any just evaluation of his contribution to the history of educational ideas.

Much of the diversity of opinion about Rousseau is the result, I would suggest, of different assumptions concerning the way in which one goes about interpreting a writer's expressed thought. On the one hand lies that group of commentators who believe that one must go beyond the text of those works intended for publication to other sources in order to gain the true meaning of Rousseau's words. Paul H. Meyer, for example, finds basic criteria for interpreting *Emile* to lie in the character of the age in which it was written. He views Rousseau not as a utopist but as a realist hoping to educate Emile in the context of his social circumstances, namely, eighteenth-century France. Thus, *Emile* is seen to be of uneven value today.

The date of the work explains why today, when the decadent feudalism of Rousseau's time is a thing of the past, the earlier and justly famous pages of *Emile*, which describe the fundamentals of an education in conformity with human nature as Rousseau saw it, communicate a more vital and enduring message, whereas the latter books of his treatise would have to be written somewhat differently (Meyer 1958, 113-14).

To understand what he wrote, others turn not to the character of the age but to the character of the man; they hold that his life cannot be divorced from his thought. Charles W. Hendel, for instance, finds that biography gives essential meaning to Rousseau's words, removing apparent contradictions in his work.

It is necessary to scrutinize at every moment the occasions which made him write, and his studies and meditations, his friendships and relations with the world at large, his personal letters, and the unpublished fragments which disclose aims that were never quite achieved. . . . Biography is essential at all times for the understanding of Rousseau's thought (Hendel 1962, xiv).

Others take a more limited biographical approach in order to reveal Rousseau's true meaning. As noted earlier, Jimack's study of the history of the composition of *Emile* concludes that we cannot trust Rousseau's published words, that the manuscripts'

principal interest is, without doubt, to confirm the suspicion that it is necessary to have with regard to the romantic aspect of the work, and to prohibit one from considering the fifth book of *Emile* as the accurate expression of Rousseau's thought on this part of education (Jimack 1960, 380).

On the other hand, a second group of critics believes that they can reach a satisfactory understanding of Rousseau by attending directly to his published works, but even here controversy appears. Some hold that an individual work can only be understood in the context of the whole *corpus*. Leo Strauss contends that Rousseau speaks in two different voices, that of the common man and that of the philosopher, and one must know all of his works in order to know which voice is speaking. He holds that

Rousseau revealed in his later writings certain points which he did not reveal in the [First] *Discours*; for by failing to reveal in the later writings certain points which he had revealed in the *Discours*, he succeeded in never revealing his principles coherently and hence fully, or in speaking through his publications merely to those whom he wanted to reach. It is only by combining the information supplied by the *Discours* with that supplied by Rousseau's later writings that one can arrive at an understanding of the principles underlying each and all of his writings (Strauss 1972, 270).

William Boyd also agrees that one must go beyond the individual text, but he argues that the proper referent is not the entire *oeuvre* but those works directly related philosophically.

As I grew more intimate with his writings, I was reluctantly forced to the conclusion, already indicated by Rousseau himself in one of the last of his Dialogues, that the right method of approach to his theory of education is not through the *Emile* but through his whole social philosophy (Boyd 1911,vi; cf. Rousseau 1911a & 1956).

Nancy Senior, by contrast, evaluates the ideas of one work by their relation to a subsequent, not antecedent, work. In attempting to fully understand *Emile*, she turns to its sequel, *Les solitaires*, where, she maintains,

it is Emile's education, as much as that of Sophie, which fails. . . . There are in her case two kinds of failure: first, where education determines her conduct, the result is unsatisfactory; and second, where her conduct is admirable, it is not determined by her education. As for Emile, whatever may have been the intention of the author, his education fails in the first sense mentioned. In the first crisis he must face, he runs away from all responsibility (Senior 1976, 528).

Those critics who focus their attention on a single work, for example, on *Emile*, still can disagree over whether that text forms a whole, or if it does, what kind of whole. A central question here is whether the first three Books fit together with the last two. Salkever, referred to above, concludes that Rousseau never resolves the expression of individuality with the constraints of citizenship.

Far from removing the dichotomy between goodness and virtue presented at the beginning of Book I, the conclusion of the *Emile* simply reinforces it. The choice between the two moral lives, between being a man and being a citizen, appears unavoidable (Salkever 1972, 114).

In a second instance, as also noted above, Masson extracts the "Profession of faith" from Book IV and treats it as a whole independent of the larger work (Rousseau 1914).

Of those who find *Emile* does form a whole, numerous grounds are put forth to account for that unity. Allan Bloom considers the grounds of unity to be sexual. For him, Books IV and V

undertake in a detailed way the difficult, if not impossible, task of showing how the higher [i.e., "psychic phenomena"] can be derived from the lower [i.e., "bodily gratification"] without being reduced to it, while at the same time giving us some sense of what Rousseau means by the sublime or noble. It has not been sufficiently emphasized that everything in Books

IV-V is related to sex, and that without making that connection the parts cannot be interpreted nor the whole understood (Bloom 1978, 146; cf. Rousseau 1979, 3-28).

Pierre Burgelin finds the principle of *Emile* in the Savoyard Vicar's "Profession of faith," that is, in religion, and would reject any attempt to reduce the movements of the soul, of the "heart," to Freudian sublimation of the physical appetite of sex.

This all-important passage is not an extraneous piece, a parenthesis in the progress of an education; it is the very center and determines the later developments. It is a profession of faith, and thus no longer concerns the visible, but the invisible. A faith expresses an individual and cannot be proved. It comes from a heart which opens itself to another heart, through the intermediary of plausible speech (Burgelin 1961-62, 108).

Others have denied that the work's unity is logical. Rather, say Brumbaugh and Lawrence, it is "a work of literature, a novel," and whatever wholeness exists is that of the novelistic "unity and sequence of plot" (1963, 80). The reader, in other words, should

recognize that philosophies may, and in fact must, sometimes be expressed through a literary rather than an abstract discursive form. . . . [Then] we are able to see why *Emile* gives the feeling of unity it does, while an abstract summary of its "argument" is either incoherent or hopelessly incomplete (Brumbaugh & Lawrence 1963, 79).

André Ravier disagrees with all these accounts of the work's unity and offers us another.

Emile is neither a novelistic web of impossible illusions, nor a dogmatic treatise on pedagogy, nor a bundle of intuitions on children: it is a Dream in Rousseau's sense of the word, that is to say Thought and Life. . . . He has written it as an essential, definitive chapter in his philosophy of man, a chapter which would be able moreover to be self-sufficient in itself and yet offer the world a brief synthesis of his thoughts (Ravier 1941, 2:497).

B. The text as common ground. Through this diversity of approaches, nevertheless, runs a common thread. At some point, *all* interpretation of Rousseau's thought must refer to those formal expositions of his ideas that were intended for publication. Whether an interpreter begins his critique with such reference, includes it in the middle, or ends with it, he must give serious attention ultimately to *what* Rousseau said. Moreover, in the treatment of the text, all critics must account for what Rousseau thought he was *doing* in such texts. A critic may or may not accept at face value the enterprise Rousseau stated he was engaged in, but all must recognize that *he* thought he was doing something. Although focusing on what Rousseau said and on what he thought he was doing will obviously neither quiet debate nor protect one from "reading in" meaning, such focus does provide a public, common referent by which immediately to test conclusions reached. The text as a starting point has additional value both in that it is something that all critics struggle with—and is thus of common interest—and in that it provides a benchmark by which to gauge more clearly the relations among the variety of stances taken with regard to the meaning of Rousseau.

If the solution to the problem of locating a common ground of interpretation is an analysis of individual texts within the context of the author's intentions as expressed in each, the ques-

tion then arises: what text or texts are necessary for an interpretation of Rousseau's educational thought?

Emile, or on education is Rousseau's sole work devoted wholly to education which was written explicitly for publication. It was preceded by earlier attempts at formulating a theory of education. These are all more or less incomplete manuscripts and were intended only for the eyes of friends and patrons. They include a "Memorandum presented to Monsieur de Mably on the education of his son," a similar "Project for the education of Monsieur de Sainte-Marie," and an early version of *Emile*, known as the Favre Manuscript.² An incomplete sequel to *Emile*, called *Emile and Sophie, or the hermits*, also exists, but it saw publication only posthumously (Rousseau 1959-69, 4:cliii-clxviii). Rousseau wrote many other works intended for publication, and in them he occasionally touched on educational themes. One can find certain educational considerations, for example, in *Julie, or the New Heloise*, Section V, Letter 3, in the "Considerations on the government of Poland," Ch. 4, and in the *Confessions*; but these arise only incidentally. *Emile* represents, then, the fullest, most conscious working out of his theory of education.

To focus on the text of *Emile* would be, moreover, to treat the fullest expression of his ideas as *he* explicitly intended that they be treated. In the first of his *Letters written from the mountain*, defending the conception of religion professed by the Savoyard Vicar, he notes the difficulty of defending himself from his critics

when they do not judge me on what I have said, but on what they assert that I meant to say, when they seek in my intentions the evil which is not in my Writings (Rousseau 1959-69, 3:696).

He is fully aware, notice, of those difficulties that arise when interpretation moves away from a focus on what is said, difficulties we have seen above in a different context. On the page following this warning, he gives his estimate of the value of what he actually wrote in *Emile*: he believes himself to be a man who

full of confidence hopes one day to say to the Supreme Judge: deign to judge in your clemency a weak man; I have done evil on earth, but I have published this Writing.

This estimate of *Emile* as the principal justification of his life remained constant with Rousseau. In his later *Confessions*, he still saw in *Emile* "the publication of my last and best work" (Rousseau 1959-69, 1:566).

If the controversy surrounding Rousseau, especially that surrounding his educational thought, leads us to a common ground in his published work, and if the text of *Emile*, as his fullest, most considered educational writing, is the ground we choose, then we have located in the continuum of Rousseauan materials, primary and secondary, an object for our examination. But what in *Emile* shall we look at? One can look into the text and find numerous individual issues treated here and there, for example, the psychology of learning in Book II, the theology of the

² For a complete discussion of these works, see their respective Introductions in *Oeuvres complètes* (Rousseau 1959-69, 4:xviii-clii; cf. Rousseau 1911a).

Savoyard Vicar in Book IV, the political theory of *The social contract* in Book V. Or one can examine the use of a single term, for example, nature or virtue, throughout the work. In either case, the nearly universal practice of critics of *Emile* is to select individual statements from the text, frequently from widely different locations, and add them together to build an interpretation. Such isolation of sentences from their functional context tends to fix their meaning absolutely and to produce apparent contradiction when juxtaposed with other sentences selected from other contexts, sentences that have similarly become fixed in meaning. As the quotation at the head of this chapter suggests, Rousseau believes that he does not use words in this fashion: although he admits he may contradict himself "in my expressions," he asserts that if the context is taken into account, he does not do so "in my ideas."

Taking seriously Rousseau's clue to his use of language, then, we need to examine the context in which statements occur. But how large a context? This thesis will examine the whole context of *Emile*, or more precisely, the context of *Emile* as a whole. By that I mean the structure of the argument which the entire work lays before the reader. My approach here is based on that developed by Professor Richard P. McKeon in unpublished lectures given at the University of Chicago in the history of thought,³ and on the closely related technique of literary criticism associated with McKeon, R. S. Crane, and others, which came to be known as the "Chicago school" of criticism (Crane 1952, Introduction). The essence of this method of interpreting poetic works,⁴ as Crane states it, is that it

takes as its starting point the peculiar natures of the artistic wholes their writers were engaged in constructing and . . . attempts to explain and appreciate their parts, and the relations these bear to one another, as poetically necessary or desirable consequences of the writers' commitment to certain kinds of poetic structures and effects rather than others (Crane 1952, 15).

It is important to recognize that this approach excludes from consideration, at least initially, many of the concerns that have attracted much attention in critiques of Rousseau. Again, Crane:

What is held constant in this criticism is the whole complex of accidental causes of variation in poetry that depend on the talents, characters, educations, and intentions of individual authors, the opinions and tastes of the audiences they address, the state of the language in their time, and all the other external factors which affect their choice of materials and conventions in particular works (Crane 1952, 20).

³ I have been engaged in compiling and editing several of the introductory courses McKeon taught. To date, *On Knowing—The Natural Sciences*, edited with Zahava K. McKeon has appeared (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1994); and *On Knowing—The Social Sciences*, edited with Joanne K. Olson, will be published in spring, 2016, by the University of Chicago Press. A third volume, *On Knowing—The Humanities*, is in preparation and will complete a full introductory overview of the scope of McKeon's work.

⁴ *Poetic* can here be taken in the largest sense (as this study will do), that is, referring to *any* made thing, including any verbal construction, whether of "poetic" or prose form, in any subject matter, whether natural sciences, social sciences, or humanities. *Artistic* can be taken in the same way in the quotation which follows.

My intention, I should add, is less to make a formal application of McKeon and the "Chicago school" than to use their perspective on interpretation as a stimulus to reflective reading. Working with Rousseau's text has led me to view this kind of reading rather as if it were an intellectual anatomy: I open the work to view its parts in functioning relation to the whole creation; I look for the greater and lesser bones and organs, examine each in its relations to others, and find the junctures, the joints, where one ends and another begins. It is these last, the distinctions, transitions, openings and closings, which usually reveal the most about what the part itself is, how it fits with other parts, and consequently, what the whole is within which and for which each acts.

C. **Reading *Emile* as a whole.** The answer here, therefore, to the question of scope—not the only possible answer, certainly, not the answer, for example, that will reveal Rousseau the man, his thought in general, the nature of his times, the character of his language—the answer here to scope is one of a mean: neither too much nor too little, neither issues outside the text nor isolated portions of the text, however great or small. The scope is *Emile* as a structured whole.

III. Prospectus

A. **Part II: An exploration of the principle, method, and interpretation of *Emile*.** What follows in Part II is an examination of *Emile* as an intellectual argument. Because the focus will be on the structure of the whole, I will not be explicating the vast number of details which enrich the text; such is the work of a commentary, and an excellent one—two-thirds as long as the text itself—already exists in the Pléiade edition (Rousseau 1959-69, 4). What I will set forth is Rousseau's habitual way of treating the various issues that arise, and I shall sketch this structure of thought in terms of its *principle*, *method*, and *interpretation*. These three topics, based on Professor McKeon's work, will here be treated as heuristic devices, serving to discover, respectively: Rousseau's beginning points, the most fundamental assumptions upon which he bases his thought; the way in which he moves from point to point in the argument, the connections he makes between issues; and the conclusions at which he arrives with regard to the nature of our experience and of the world. To anticipate in cursory fashion what we shall find, Rousseau assumes as principle an englobing whole which both includes and defines what lies within. His method is what I will call, in formal terms, rhetorical, and in material terms, operational; by that I mean that he first states or does something and then subsequently judges or responds to the consequences produced in order to make new statements or to take new actions. His interpretation involves a radical distinction in kinds of existences in the world, most notably between physical and spiritual ones. These three topics will appear in the commonplace distinctions, respectively, of whole/part, active/passive, and internal/external. I will not here describe further these distinctions because they would now appear most arbitrary, whereas in Rousseau's work I find that they grow most naturally from their actual use. The reader need only be aware of their future importance.

Two additional points. One is that I have chosen a single term, freedom, to aid in this journey through his book. I am using a single term because as a single term by itself, it lacks fixed meaning and definition until actually employed by the author; one can thereby start with the least number of preconceptions regarding what is being said and what is going on. I am using freedom as that isolated term because, first, Rousseau himself observes that it is central to his conception of education.

The truly free man wants only what he can do and does what he pleases. That is my fundamental maxim. It need only be applied to childhood for all the rules of education to flow from it (B 84; *Oc* 309).

Second, the term freedom transfers explicitly from the individualistic context of Books I through III, with their issues concerning the freedom of the natural man, to Books IV and V, with their issues of the freedom of the social man and of the citizen. Other terms lack this obvious scope: morality, for example, is mostly absent from the first three Books, while, let us say, nature is prominent in those initial Books but more difficult to locate in the last two. Freedom, then, allows one to traverse without interruption Rousseau's entire argument from beginning to end, thereby revealing the structure of the whole as well as providing context for the parts selected for examination. Finally, freedom, now as always, is one of the most important ideas in human relationships to think carefully about. In *Emile*, I contend, Rousseau does think carefully about freedom, and those thoughts are inextricably bound up with his view of the nature of education.

The second point is really a caveat. The argument I see in *Emile* is one about education, as the work's full title states explicitly. Consequently, the focus will be toward pedagogic issues. Education is the perspective from which issues of knowledge, religion, politics, and so on, are viewed. The latter may well be of critical importance, but their treatment always leads back to teaching and learning.

B. **Part III: Conclusions.** This last brings us to Part III, which will draw some educational conclusions from what has gone before. The structure of Rousseau's argument in *Emile*, the style of his thought, if you will, has important consequences for the practical activity of education. One may well draw conclusions regarding psychology, theology, political theory, anthropology, and more, from this work. The main weight of the argument I am looking at, however, leads into considerations of the meaning and function of teaching, learning, the curriculum of studies, and the context in which education takes place. Therefore, I will suggest in the last Part where and how freedom fits into such activities.