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ÉTUDES SUR *L'ÉMILE*

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THE VICAR'S LADDER

by Howard R. Cell

What one says means nothing if one has not prepared the moment for saying it. Before sowing, the earth must be plowed; the bed of virtue sprouts with difficulty, long preparation is required to make it take root.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile*.

Writing to Néaulme, the intended publisher of *Émile*, on 5 June 1762, Rousseau says:

I am extremely sorry about the difficulties you say you are experiencing with regard to the Profession of Faith, but I tell you, once and for all, that neither censure, nor danger, nor violence, nor any power on earth will make me retract a single syllable of it... In glorifying God, and speaking for the true good of men, I have done my duty; whether or not they turn my teachings to account... is their affair...¹

Néaulme has not been alone in "experiencing difficulties" with the Savoyard Vicar's *Profession of Faith*, for even among those who might be tempted to agree with Rousseau that the *Profession* is "the best and most useful work" written in the 18th century,² there has been no agreement as to the nature and purpose of Rousseau's teaching in the *Profession* not regarding how it might be "turned to account." For instance, Albert Schinz noted — in 1928 — that many distinguished Rousseau scholars considered the *Profession* as the veritable "keystone of Rousseau's thought," though none, apparently, had systematically studied *how* the *Profession* might play such a crucial

1. Cited in Jean Guehenno, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966). Vol. II, p. 83.

2. Cf. Rousseau, *Lettre à C. Beaumont*, in Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond, eds., *Œuvres complètes*, (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1959-69), p. 960.

role.³ And more recently, Roger Masters has argued that “of all the difficulties posed by the works of Rousseau, the status and meaning of the “Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar” is one of the most complex and least carefully analyzed.”⁴ It might seem, therefore, that Rousseau would have done us all a considerable service if he had followed the advice of Néaulme (and others) and retracted not just an occasional syllable, but the whole of the *Profession*.

Still, I shall endeavor, in this paper, to defend Rousseau’s adamant refusal to follow such advice. Specifically, I shall argue that the *Profession* is an indispensable component of Rousseau’s teaching about the true human good — or, as he puts it, about “the most necessary art for a man and a citizen, which is knowing how to live with his fellows;”⁵ and, moreover, I shall argue that the status and meaning of this indispensable component is indeed more nearly a function of *knowing how* than of *knowing that*. At the very least, I intend to take Rousseau seriously when he says:

I have transcribed this writing [viz., the *Profession of Faith*] not as a rule for the sentiments that one ought to follow in religious matters, but as an example of the way one can reason with one’s pupil in order not to diverge from the method I have tried to establish. (Bloom, 313; emphasis mine)

In other words, the rationale for including (and for refusing to retract) the *Profession* in (from) *Émile*, Book IV, may well concern what it illustrates — a method of reasoning or inquiry — rather than the particular beliefs which are derived by the Vicar’s application of the method.

I have divided my argument into three sections: first, a brief account of the problem which is to be encountered, and solved, in *Émile*, Book IV; second, a more extended analysis of the solution, which includes — by way of illustration — the Vicar’s *Profession*; and finally, a brief sketch of the significance of this solution for that art which Rousseau deems “most necessary for

3. Albert Schinz, «Le Pragmatisme religieux: À propos de la «Profession de foi du Vicaire Savoyard,» *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger*, Vol. 106 (1928), p. 280.

4. Roger D. Masters, *The Political Philosophy of Rousseau*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 54.

5. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile or On Education*, tr. and ed. by Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1979), p. 328. [Hereafter, most references to the *Émile* will be indicated in the text of my paper by the page number of Bloom’s translation.]

a man and a citizen." In mounting such an argument, I — like so many others who have attempted to interpret the *Profession of Faith* — shall undoubtedly "experience certain difficulties;" but then, nothing ventured, nothing gained.

I. The Stage Four Problematic: In summarizing the results of Émile's education prior to its fourth, and perhaps decisive, stage, Rousseau claims that

Émile has only natural and purely physical knowledge. He does not know even the name of history, or what metaphysics and morals are. He knows the essential relations of man to things but nothing of the moral relations of man to man. He hardly knows how to generalize ideas and hardly how to make abstractions... He seeks to know things not by their nature but only by the relations which are connected with his interest... He has a healthy body, agile limbs, a precise and unprejudiced mind, a heart that is free and without passions. *Amour-propre*, the first and most natural of all the passions, is still hardly aroused in him. (207, 208)

It is during his adolescence, then, that Émile is to acquire an accurate understanding of interpersonal, moral relations. At the same time, and as the inevitable concomitant of his developing sexuality, Émile's *amour propre* will be aroused; indeed his heart will soon be filled with passions. In short, both Émile's understanding and particularly his passions are liable, at this stage, to undergo a "stormy revolution." (311)

To be sure, such a revolution would hardly be unique to Émile; for — at the Vicar remarks to Rousseau — this is

the sad fate of mortals, floating on this sea of human opinions without rudder or compass and delivered to their stormy passions without any other guide than an inexperienced pilot who is ignorant on his route and knows neither where he is coming from nor where he is going. (267)

What is different about Émile's situation is precisely the presence of an experienced pilot, his tutor — Rousseau, who will simultaneously chart Émile's course on "the sea of human opinions" and prevent him from being "delivered to his stormy passions." The revolution is inevitable; Émile must undergo "the rites of passage" from childhood to manhood; but, with Rousseau as his pilot, the force of the storm can be reduced and "the sad fate of mortals" largely averted. How so?

Rousseau maintains that,

since in... society there are inevitable causes by which the progress of the passions is accelerated, if one did not similarly accelerate the progress

of the enlightenment which serves to regulate these passions, then one would truly depart from the order of nature, and the equilibrium would be broken. When one cannot moderate the too rapid development of one aspect, it is necessary to manage with the same rapidity the development of the others which ought to correspond to it. In this way the order will not be inverted, what ought to go together will not be separated, and man, whole at every moment of his life, will not have reached one stage of development with respect to one of his faculties while he remains at another stage with respect to the rest. (259, 260)

The fundamental problematic of the fourth stage in *Émile's* education is, therefore, that of maintaining an equilibrium between the understanding and the passions, of ensuring that these faculties will develop together and at the same relative pace: in a word, the present problem is to preserve the integrity and wholeness of *Émile's* personality through this most traumatic period of his life. But, since *Émile* is to live in society,⁶

it suffices that, enclosed in a social whirlpool, he not let himself get carried away by either the passions or the opinions of men, that he see with his eyes, that he feel with his heart, that no authority govern him beyond that of his own reason. In this position it is clear that the multitude of objects striking him, the frequent sentiments affecting him, and the various means of providing for his real needs are all going to give him many ideas that he would never have had or that he would have acquired more slowly [were he relegated to the depths of the woods]. The progress natural to the mind is accelerated but not upset. (255)

During *Émile's* childhood (Stage II) and preadolescence (Stage III), the tutor had devoted himself to cultivating *Émile's* "sensual reason;" but now, during *Émile's* adolescence (Stage IV), the tutor must cultivate *Émile's* "intellectual reason" in order that "the progress natural to his mind" will be accelerated in proportion to the progress of his passions and also in order that *Émile's* reason, in both its sensual and intellectual aspects, will be properly constituted as his sole authority — i.e., that he become autonomous. And a major part of the cultivation of *Émile's* "intellectual reason" will involve teaching him "how to generalize ideas and to make abstractions;" for the knowledge of how to perform these operations is a prerequisite for developing

6. *Ibid.*, p. 205: "There is a great difference between the natural man living in the state of nature and the natural man living in the state of society. *Émile* is not a savage to be relegated to the desert. He is a savage made to inhabit cities. He has to know how to find his necessities in them, to take advantage of their inhabitants, and to live, if not like them, at least with them."

Émile's understanding of moral relations and, perhaps surprisingly, for "transforming his *amour propre* into a virtue." (252)

II. The Vicar's Ladder: Rousseau suggests that, when he went to live with the Vicar, he was "an unhappy fugitive who was very close to moral death." (264) The Vicar became concerned about Rousseau and "made long-range plans for the execution of the project of rendering to virtue the victim he had snatched from infamy." (263) These plans included gaining Rousseau's confidence, studying his sentiments and character, awakening his *amour propre* and self-esteem and then seeking to transform this *amour propre* into compassion, and finally selecting a suitable time and place for a long conversation with him. Such steps were necessary, because the Vicar understood very well that "what one says means nothing if one has not prepared the moment for saying it." (319)

Likewise, Rousseau tries to prepare his readers for the teaching exemplified in the Vicar's *Profession* and for turning such a teaching to account. Thus, the process of imparting a teaching through illustration of its application has been well established prior to *Émile*, Book IV: for example, the inculcation of primary notions such as property and contract (Book II, 98-101); the teaching of Socratic interrogation, so that one will "want to know nothing but what is useful" (Book III, 179-183); and the cultivation of sensual reason, so that one will correctly "order his judgments about the true relations of things" (Book III, 184 ff). Moreover, in Book III, Rousseau introduces his readers – more than once, in fact – to the critical distinctions between images and ideas, and between sensual and intellectual reason.⁷

7. For the distinction between images and ideas, cf. *Ibid.*, p. 107: "Before the age of reason the child receives not ideas but images; and the difference between the two is that images are only absolute depictions of sensible objects, while ideas are notions of objects determined by relations. An image can stand all alone in the mind which represents it, but every idea supposes other ideas. When one imagines, one does nothing but see; when one conceives, one is comparing. Our sensations are purely passive, while all our perceptions or ideas are born out of an active principle which judges. This will be demonstrated hereafter [viz., in the *Profession*]." cf. also, p. 203. For the distinction between sensual/intellectual reason, cf. p. 124, 125 and especially p. 157, 158: "It remains [after an extensive discussion of how to cultivate the different modes of sensation, and thus "sensual reason"] for me to speak in the following books of the cultivation of a sort of sixth sense called *common sense*, less because it is common to all men than because it results from the well-regulated use of the other senses, and because it instructs us about the nature of things by the conjunction of all their appearances.

But in Book IV, by way of a more immediate preparation for the *Profession*, Rousseau asks his readers to consider different procedures for acquiring ideas – that is, for generalization and abstraction from sense experience:

...since we are limited by our faculties to things which can be sensed, we provide almost no hold for abstract notions of philosophy and purely intellectual ideas. To arrive at them we must either separate ourselves from the body – to which we are so strongly attached – or make a gradual and slow climb from object to object, or, finally, clear the gap rapidly and almost at a leap, by a giant step upward of which childhood is not capable and for which even men need many rungs especially made for them. (255)

The first procedure is reminiscent (pun intended) of Socrates' recommendation in the *Phaedo*: "that if we are ever to have pure knowledge of anything, we must get rid of the body and contemplate things by themselves with the soul by itself."⁸ But such advice is in conflict with the stated limitation on acquiring "intellectual ideas" – that is, with the empiricist premise that "our senses are the first instruments of our knowledge" (255) – and with Émile's education prior to adolescence which has been devoted to cultivating just these instruments. No such difficulties attend the second and third procedures, which involve climbing a sort of epistemic ladder, with sense experience being included among its rungs, and which differ only in terms of the speed with which one is able to make the climb.

Now any ladder, epistemic or otherwise, is composed of sidepieces and rungs, and is used to climb from one location up to some other desired location. In the case of the Vicar's ladder, the point of departure is "that frame of mind of uncertainty and doubt that Descartes demands for the quest for truth." (267) Actually, as more than one commentator has

This sixth sense has consequently no special organ. It resides only in the brain, and its sensations, purely internal, are called *perceptions* or *ideas*. It is by the number of these ideas that the extent of our knowledge is measured. It is their distinctness, their clarity which constitutes the accuracy of the mind. It is the art of comparing them among themselves that is called *human reason*. Thus what I would call *sensual* or *childish reason* consists in forming simple ideas by the conjunction of several sensations, and what I call *intellectual* or *human reason* consists in forming complex ideas by the conjunction of several simple ideas." [Rousseau's emphases]

8. In H. Tredennick, tr., *Plato: The Last Days of Socrates*, (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1959), p. 111. Cf., however, *Émile*, p. 292: "Why is my soul subjected to my senses and chained to this body which enslaves it and interferes with it?"

observed,⁹ there is a significant difference between “the disturbing and painful” quality of the Vicar’s doubts concerning “ideas of the just, the decent, and all the duties of man” – doubts which reflect a severe religious and moral crisis, and the methodological doubt embraced by Descartes in order “to establish a firm and permanent structure in the sciences.”¹⁰ Indeed, Charles Sanders Peirce, in *The Fixation of Belief* – an essay which illuminates rather strikingly the theory of inquiry contained in the *Profession*, claims that “there must be a real and living doubt, and without this all discussion is idle.”¹¹ The “gloomy observations which had overturned” the Vicar’s understanding of moral relations, not to mention his personal disgrace, had reduced him to just such a “real and living doubt”: that is, “the same point reached by Rousseau” – namely, the condition of “an unhappy fugitive close to moral death.” (267 & 264) Genuine doubt, then, comprises the ground upon which the Vicar’s ladder is to be placed.

But as the Vicar observes,

doubt about the things it is important for us to know is too violent a state for the human mind, which does not hold out in this state for long. It decides in spite of itself one way or the other and prefers to be deceived rather than to believe nothing. (268)¹²

Now despite the fact that the Vicar “no longer knew *what* to think,” regarding “the cause of his being and the principle of his duties” (268), he did discover *how* to think – that is, the framework for a process of inquiry, the sidepieces of his epistemic ladder.

9. Cf., e.g., P.-M. Masson, *La Religion de J.-J. Rousseau*. (Paris: Hachette, 1916), Vol. II, Chpt. III; Albert Schinz, ‘«La Profession de foi du Vicaire Savoyard» et le livre «De l'esprit.»’ *Revue d'Histoire littéraire de la France*, Vol. 17 (1910) p. 225-261, and ‘Le Pragmatisme religieux: À propos de la «Profession de foi du Vicaire Savoyard.»’ *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger*, Vol. 106 (1928), p. 280-309; George Beaulavon, ‘La philosophie de J.-J. Rousseau et l'esprit cartésien.’ *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, Vol. 44, #1 (1937), p. 325-352; and Henri Gouhier, ‘Ce que le Vicaire doit à Descartes.’ *Annales de la Société J.-J. Rousseau*, Vol. 35 (1959-62), p. 139-160.

10. René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* in Elizabeth S. Haldane & G.R.T. Ross, transl., *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967), Vol. I, p. 144.

11. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, eds., *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 5.376 [The conventional notation for citations from Peirce involves reference to volume and paragraph number in this edition of his works.]

12. Cf. *Ibid.*, 5.373: “The irritation of doubt causes a struggle to attain a state of belief. I shall term this struggle *inquiry*...”

These sidepieces delimit the scope of his inquiry "to what is immediately related to his interest, "while remaining profoundly and quite happily ignorant of everything that is not so related. (269) And, to ensure — so far as possible — that he will make no false steps in his "gradual and slow climb from object to object", he decides "to consult the inner light." In other words, he will test the stability of each rung of his ladder by making sure that it is securely fastened to the sidepieces which determine what is in his true interest, as confirmed by conscience — "an innate principle of justice and virtue which is man's true guide." (289 & 286) And so, he proceeds to

the examination of the knowledge that interests me. I am resolved to accept as evident all knowledge to which in the sincerity of my heart I cannot refuse my consent; to accept as true all that which appears to me to have a necessary connection with this first knowledge; and to leave all the rest in uncertainty without rejecting it or accepting it and without tormenting myself to clarify it if it leads to nothing useful for practice. (269-270)

This examination begins with the Vicar's awareness of himself as a being who is "continually affected by sensations" (270); it begins, that is, with "the impression of sensible objects" as the first, or empiricist, rung; and then proceeds by abstraction and generalization to "the principal truths that is mattered for me to know" — viz., the three (or so) articles of faith. (286) (The Vicar is indeterminate as to the precise number of these higher rungs. [Cf. p. 281]) But, given the obscurity and confusion that attend these "principal truths," as the Vicar candidly acknowledges, their real value — as attested by "the inner light" — lies in the possibility of "drawing from them rules of conduct which I ought to prescribe for myself in order to fulfill my destiny on earth." (286) The realization of this possibility is often difficult, given the protean character of virtue and the timidity of the guide (i.e., conscience) which seeks to lead us to its true form; and even in the Vicar's case,

constantly caught up in the combat between my natural sentiments, which spoke for the common interest, and my reason, which related everything to me. I would have drifted all my life in this continual alternation — doing the bad, loving the good, always in contradiction with myself — if new lights had not illuminated my heart, and if the truth, which settled my opinions, had not also made my conduct certain and put me in agreement with myself. (291)

In other words, with his conscience re-awakened (say, by a

regimen of Powdermilk Biscuits) to service as his guide, the "truths" or articles of faith can achieve their proper purpose: to settle his opinions concerning "the cause of his being and the principle of his duties," thereby removing his doubts, "making his conduct certain," and realizing an harmonious self.

The goal of inquiry, the condition to be reached by climbing the Vicar's epistemic ladder, is therefore not any sort of *indubitandum* à la Descartes, but simply the settlement of opinion in order to terminate the "constantly disagreeable" state of doubt (268). Now, as Peirce observes,

we may fancy that this is not enough for us, and that we seek not merely an opinion, but a true opinion. But put this fancy to the test, and it proves groundless; for as soon as a firm belief is reached we are entirely satisfied, whether the belief be false or true... The most that can be maintained is, that we seek for a belief that we shall *think* to be true.¹³
[Peirce's emphasis]

The Vicar, certainly, *thinks* his articles of faith to be true; and since the first two concern matter moved by will and ordered by intelligence, his inquiry results in a settled opinion as to "the cause of his being," namely, God. Likewise, the third article — "that man is free in his actions and as such is animated by an immaterial substance" (281) — yields a settled opinion regarding "the principle of his duties": namely, "to order himself in relation to the whole; to measure his radius and keep to the circumference so that he is ordered in relation to the common center, which is God, and in relation to all the concentric circles, which are the creatures." (292). In effect, this ordering principle serves, rather like Kant's categorical imperative, as the means of determining what is one's duty in particular situations. And, to the degree that one orders his moral relations in this way, rather than "ordering the whole in relation to himself, thereby making himself the center of all things" — which is the mark of the wicked person (*Ibid.*), he will not only love but also do the good; his conduct will be made (morally or practically) certain; and he will be in agreement with himself.¹⁴

13. *Ibid.*, 5.375.

14. According to Kant, there are two radically distinct "dispositional maxims which can comprise the underlying common ground of all of one's particular maxims: the good principle, which involves one's allegiance to the moral law; and the evil principle, or allegiance to the law of self-love." By allegiance, moreover, Kant means the way in which an individual orders the moral law and the law of self-love respectively. This is, "the distinction between a good man and one who is evil cannot lie in the difference between the incentives which they adopt into their

Moreover, an understanding of this pattern of moral relations is not only the main feature of "the most necessary art for a man and a citizen, which is knowing how to live with his fellows" (328); it is also the first step in "the whole of human wisdom in the use of the passions, with the second being to order all the affections of the soul according to these relations." (219) Thus, by climbing the Vicar's ladder to the desired point of having settled opinions, by learning to abstract from "the impression of sensible objects" to those truths, or at least firm beliefs, which serve to guide action rightly,¹⁵ one can also learn "to extend *amour-propre* to other beings thereby transforming it into a virtue." For,

the less the object of our care is immediately involved with us, the less the illusion of particular interest is to be feared. The more one generalizes this interest, the more it becomes equitable, and the love of mankind is nothing other than the love of justice. (252)

The Vicar's ladder does indeed lead to what would be useful to believe; and so he suggests "that you — Rousseau is addressed, but *Émile* and everyone else is included as well — will profit from thinking as he does." (295, and note; cf. also 266)

III. Turning the Vicar's Ladder to Account: The *Profession* is inserted between *Émile's* initial and indirect exposure to civil society, through the experiences of others — as recorded in

maxim (not in the content of the maxim), but rather must depend upon *subordination* (the form of the maxim), i.e., which of the two incentives he makes the condition of the other. Consequently man (even the best) is evil only in that he reverses the moral order of the incentives when he adopts them into his maxim. He adopts, indeed, the moral law along with the law of self-love; yet when he becomes aware that they cannot remain on a par with each other but that one must be subordinated to the other as its supreme condition, he makes the incentive of self-love and its inclinations the condition of obedience to the moral law; whereas, on the contrary, the latter, as the *supreme condition* of the satisfaction of the former, ought to have been adopted into the universal maxim of the will as the sole incentive..." [Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, translated by Theodore Greene et al. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), p. 16-32 *passim*; Kant's emphases.] For Kant, then, to choose the good principle as one's dispositional maxim is to give one's primary allegiance to the moral law, to give priority to the claims of that law whenever they conflict with the incentives associated with self-love. In my view, the Vicar's ordering principle constitutes an equivalent formulation of this "dispositional maxim;" and as such, it supplies "the common ground of all one's particular maxims," the *principle* of one's duties, rather than a casuistry of duties *per se*.

15. As Peirce observes, "it is certainly best for us that our beliefs should be such as may truly guide our actions to as to satisfy our desires; and this reflection will make us reject every belief which does not seem to have been so formed as to insure this result." *Loc. cit.*, 5.375.

works of history, biography and fable, and his experiential study of moral (including conjugal) relations, social practices, the principles of taste and – in Book V – civil relations. But since the role of the *Profession* is to illustrate how “to accelerate the progress of the enlightenment which serves to regulate those passions whose natural development is inevitably accelerated by society” (259), its location is appropriate and its teaching indispensable. Precisely how Rousseau turns this teaching to account, as he guides Émile into society in such a way as to master “the most necessary art for a man and a citizen, which is knowing how to live with his fellows” – not to mention knowing how to live with Sophie, must be the subject of another paper. Such an exploration might well begin by connecting the Vicar’s *Profession*, in which Rousseau learns how to be happy, with Rousseau’s own discourse to Émile on this point. (Cf. p.442-449) Its ‘terrible preamble’ – i.e., pretending that Sophie is dead – makes Émile attentive to Rousseau’s lesson, which seems to be summarized as follows:

Do you want, then, to live happily and wisely?... Let your condition limit your desires; let your duties come before your inclinations; extend the law of necessity to moral things... (446)

The first point – “to balance one’s powers and one’s desires” – had been identified, in Book II (Cf. p. 80 ff), as “the road to happiness” and as the essence of human freedom, and this point seems to be reflected in the ladder’s sidepieces; the second relates “the principle of one’s duties” which is one of the settled opinions reached by climbing the rungs of the Vicar’s ladder; while the third reinforces both “the road to happiness” and “the principle of one’s duties” by implying that these be viewed *as if* they were laws of nature,¹⁶ or at least as having the force of well-established habits. To explore the manner in which these three admonitions frame the balance of Émile’s education, as he enters upon conjugal and civil relations while retaining his autonomy, would demonstrate that the Vicar’s ladder is indeed

16. I believe that this admonition, “to extend the law of necessity to moral things,” is essentially equivalent to Kant’s most fruitful formulation of the categorical imperative – a formulation which he calls “the universal imperative of duty”: “Act as though the maxim of your action were by your will to become a universal law of nature.” *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, transl. by Lewis White Beck, (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1959), p. 39. Cf. also Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, transl. by Lewis White Beck, (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1956), p. 72.

an indispensable part of the process of "forming the moral man." (314), and therefore of learning "the most necessary art for a man, which is knowing how to live with his fellows."

But this exploration might also show how Rousseau could turn the Vicar's teaching to account in his political theory: viz., in elaborating and clarifying the Lawgiver's role in "founding a people." For the Vicar's ladder contributes to the process of "forming the moral man" by establishing a framework and procedure for learning how to generalize ideas and make abstractions, in order to reach settled opinions that reidentify one's true interest as the common interest. (Cf. p. 291) And the Lawgiver, who must "change human nature by substituting a partial and moral existence for the physical and independent existence we have all received from nature," is confronted with the following problem:

there are a thousand kinds of ideas that are impossible to translate into the language of the people. Overly general views and overly remote objects are equally beyond its grasp. Each individual, appreciating no other aspect of government than the one that relates to his private interest, has difficulty perceiving the advantages he should obtain from the continual deprivations imposed by good laws.¹⁷

Though the Lawgiver would seem "to be unable to use reasoning," and so – perhaps – would not explicitly utilize the Vicar's ladder; I believe that he does employ an oblique pedagogy which results in the settlement of opinions as "the unshakable keystone" of a system of well-formed laws,¹⁸ and consequently that this pedagogy is, or at least could be, significantly informed by the Vicar's teaching. Moreover, I believe that Rousseau's admonitions to *Émile*, which reflect that teaching, apply to the establishment of a well-formed community, as well as to the realization of personal happiness. But in order to show this, I would need to consider in some detail what Rousseau has to say about the constraints on economic growth and the desirability of a relatively simple and austere communal life, what he means by the claim that "the constant will of all the members of the State is the general will, which makes them citizens and free,"¹⁹ and also why he insists that the Lawgiver, in "founding a people," encourages them to believe that they are "subject to the laws of

17. Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *On the Social Contract*, ed. by Roger D. Masters and transl. by Judith R. Masters. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), p. 68-69.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 110

the State as to those of nature”²⁰ – for these are the political applications of Rousseau’s admonitions to *Émile*. But once again, I must defer the task of sorting out the various implications of the Vicar’s epistemic ladder for Rousseau’s political theory, which teaches “the most necessary art for a citizen, which is knowing how to live in community with his fellow citizens.”

Howard R. Cell
Glassboro State College

20. *Ibid.*, p. 69.