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A Portrait of the Teacher as Friend and Artist: The example of Jean-Jacques Rousseau

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Abstract

The following is a reflection on the possibility of teaching by example, and especially as the idea of teaching by example is developed in the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. My thesis is that Rousseau created a literary version of himself in his writings as an embodiment of his philosophy, rather in the same way and with the same purpose that Plato created a version of Socrates. This figure of Rousseau—a sort of philosophical portrait of the man of nature—is represented as an example for us to follow. This would appear to have been dangerous and destabilizing work, given the mental distress that it caused Rousseau in striving to live up to his fictional self. Rousseau's own ideas on the nature of teaching by example are presented in a discussion of the section in 'Emile' which Rousseau takes from an incident in his own life—the story of his meeting with a young Savoyard priest who befriended him and influenced him through the power of his example.

Keywords: philosophical portraiture, Rousseau, teaching

1. Introduction

Jean-Jacques Rousseau is one of a select group of philosophers who, in addition to giving us a philosophy, present us with a portrait of a person who is the embodiment of that philosophy—the person in whom the principles and values of the philosophy are made to come to life. It is the figure of Rousseau himself in whom Rousseau makes his philosophy manifest; or to be more exact, a representation of Rousseau—a hypothetical Jean-Jacques who is tutor to the imaginary Emile. 'I have hence chosen', proclaims Rousseau in Book I of *Emile*,[1] 'to give myself an imaginary pupil, to hypothesize that I have the age, health, kinds of knowledge, and all the talent suitable for working at his education' (E. 50). Rousseau is one of the most autobiographical of philosophers, and the figure of Jean-Jacques is prominent in many of his other writings such as *The Confessions*, the *Dialogues*, and *Reveries of a Solitary Walker*. Rousseau's idealization of himself as an incarnation of the man of nature—an image that he, somewhat naively, hoped to project of himself—was one that his published works and letters often sought desperately to defend. In *Emile*, he offers a description of this version of himself as

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'neither a scholar, nor a philosopher, but a simple man, a friend of truth, without party, without system; a solitary who living little among men, has less occasion to contract their prejudices and more time to reflect on what strikes him when he has commerce with them' (E. 110). Rousseau aimed to establish a reputation as a person uniquely suited to be 'humanity's teacher' (Grimsley, 1969, p. 260)—that by striving to follow nature in his own life, he could project himself as a model, as a man who was 'certified' to teach others without the debasing effects that would normally attend an education at the hands of man.

In creating a portrait of Jean-Jacques as the embodiment of his philosophy, Rousseau is following a tradition of philosophical portraiture that has its origins in Plato's portrayal of Socrates as the exemplary practitioner of Platonic idealism, particularly as it is represented in the middle dialogues, which deal with the theory of forms, recollection, and the immortality of the soul (Vlastos, 1991). George Steiner (2003) refers to the figure of Socrates in these dialogues as a 'poetic-philosophic construct', and Plato as a poet-dramatist (p. 22). Like Plato's Socrates, Rousseau's Jean-Jacques can also be viewed as a 'poetic-philosophic construct'—a figure designed to teach us how to lead our lives with reference to one representative and heroic example. They are 'practitioners of the art of living', to use Alexander Nehamas' (1998) apt phrase. And though their philosophies present quite different, almost opposing conceptions of the relationship of human beings to the world, Plato and Rousseau are kindred spirits in seeking to teach us through the forceful example of one, exemplary, life. But, as I hope to show, these portraits offer more than mere examples of how to live; they also teach us something about how to teach. Thus, to adapt Nehamas' phrase, Socrates and Jean-Jacques can also be understood as 'practitioners of the art of teaching.'

2. What Does It Mean to Teach by Example?

Can we teach by example? We undoubtedly learn from the example of others, but this is not the same thing as teaching by example, unless we consider teaching by example in the achievement sense in which it is attributed retrospectively to someone's actions in spite of their intentions (Ryle, 1949, p. 149). Learning from example is a pervasive phenomenon—a fact of our social world. This is the sense that Locke (1989) gives to the power of example in his advice to parents: 'Having under consideration how great the influence of company is, and how prone we are all, especially children, to imitation ... you must do nothing before him, which you would not have him imitate' (p. 133). Good and bad examples—of people, actions, and behaviour—abound. But what we learn from these examples is not simply a matter of mimicry but a complex drama that engages the learner and exemplar in interactive processes of thought, action, and relationship.

Obviously, teaching by example is a much less commonplace phenomenon than learning from example. But just as obviously there are cases in which a person makes a deliberate effort to teach by example. Many instances exist in practice: the officer who wants to set an example of courage to the soldiers in his command, the boss who wants her employees to adopt her good work practices, the teacher who wants to model inquiry to her students. How can this be done properly rather than poorly? Proclaiming oneself

as an example to be followed, or requiring others to 'do as I do', is unlikely to be a convincing tactic. A better approach would be to make a deliberate effort to enhance the conditions and contexts that promote learning from example by establishing, say, an appropriate connection with the student.

What do we exemplify when we teach by example? Sometimes we offer examples of how to perform some kind of action—operating a lathe, pronouncing a word correctly, or swinging a golf club. At other times we set examples that involve more than just showing someone how to do something. Namely, we offer our whole selves as the example. In this second case, teaching by example embraces aspects of character, skill, manner, and style—of showing someone how to be a certain kind of person (Moran, 1997). This can be made clearer by distinguishing between teaching by using examples drawn from one's own practice and teaching by setting an example. A difference of scale is apparent between example giving and example setting. In the former sense, human actions are taken singly, as models to be imitated or reproduced; in the latter sense, as representations of a type of life.

Teaching someone to be something is the paradigm case of teaching by example. It is devoted to the large gesture, the business of showing others how to be a good practitioner or a good person. Teaching by using examples from our own practice, however, may be a part of teaching by example, though the reverse is not the case. We may teach others by our example to be a good employee, a skilful painter, or a certain kind of philosopher or person. Example setting requires that we possess essential virtues, dispositions, and attitudes, as well as particular skills, and that others are inclined to follow the model we set, though they need not follow our example exactly in order to learn from our example.

What is the relationship between these two forms of example setting? Let's suppose that I am an exemplary plumber. In what does this consist? Surely, it lies in more than the sum of my plumbing skills, but in certain dispositions of work—my high standards of professionalism, my willingness to work long hours, my honesty, and so on. An apprentice can learn how to perform individual skills by imitating my example, but the total package is something that involves more than can be merely copied. There are matters here of style as well a substance, of manner as well as matter. Fenstermacher (1999) suggests a difference in the ways that we learn from manner as opposed to matter. Manner is not subject to method—it is caught rather than taught. It is learned by imitation and not by the application of any conscious pedagogy.

> The manner of one who possesses these traits of character is learned by modeling, by being around persons who are like this, and by being encouraged to imitate these persons and adapt your actions to the demands of these traits. (p. 47)

I want to argue that there is a good deal more to teaching by setting an example and learning from that example than Fenstermacher suggests. First, I wish to challenge the idea that we learn from example by simple imitation. Secondly, I wish to show that teaching by example involves a degree of pedagogic artifice. And finally, I wish to show that this process is deeply connected with the development of a special bond or relationship between the teacher and pupil.

More than Mere Imitation

Teaching by setting an example is concerned with the moral aspects of teaching, with passing on what is good and bad in the conduct of life or a way of life. Of course, setting oneself or someone else up as an example is not a guaranteed method of achieving ones ends, and to take an extreme case, we often learn from someone's example exactly the opposite of what they intended to teach. The relationship between teaching and learning by example and learning from example is a contingent one. Take the case of the punctual father who wishes to teach his children the virtue of being on time. Unfortunately, his attention to the details of his own timekeeping become so oppressive to his children that they learn to hate punctuality and associate it with obsessive behaviour and rigidity of mind. No matter how eager a student is to imitate the teacher, a possibility always exists that what they learn from the teacher's example is quite different from what the teacher intended. Student teachers often observe that they have learned how not to teach from the bad example that a teacher has set. And even when we strive to learn from someone's example, we are not required to follow it in every respect. Gandhi's example is not one that we are all inclined to follow exactly. Nevertheless, his moral example is one that has had an immense impact on how we think about how to live in peace with each other.

Intention and Teaching by Example

Teaching by example can be a very powerful way to teach. But what is involved in teaching by example? What does it demand of the teacher and from the learner? Gabriel Moran (1997) views teaching by example as confuting the idea promoted by many analytic philosophers that teaching can be defined as the intention to bring about learning. He calls it a great paradox of human life that 'not only is intention not the essence of teaching, but some of the most important teaching can only occur when it is not intended' (p. 51). Moran's point is that by claiming we have been taught by example is really another way of saying that we have learned from someone's example, whether it was intended by the teacher or not. Most role models don't think about being role models, they just get on with their jobs. Nor do they give much thought to what we might call pedagogic technique. If they are taken as someone's model, then so be it. In Moran's words: 'The wise, talented, disciplined, accomplished person is aware that others will be inspired by his or her life. What any individual on any occasion may be inspired to do is not up to the teacher to determine' (p. 51).

This observation is, I think, correct; but only up to a point. We often deplore the huge, disproportionately negative influence that rock stars, movie stars, and other celebrities have on young people; many of whom, though not all, are noticeably indifferent to the impact they do have. There's usually not much pedagogy in the business of being a role model. It appears one is chosen for the task by one's admirers rather than by appointing oneself to the role. However, the idea of teaching by example has a more extensive range and history than Moran suggests. Some people do make a deliberate effort to teach by example. In addition, literary portraits are often created as examples with a definite didactic intent. Novels, plays, biographies, and movies are full of examples of model teachers. Perhaps the most exalted examples are the great originators of the world's religions Buddha, Confucius, Mohammed, and Jesus—those 'paradigmatic individuals',

as Karl Jaspers (1962) refers to them, whose lives are models of their influential teachings. What teaching by example achieves in such special cases is more than just a message, but that the lives of these individuals, too, are to be taken as illustrative of how to lead one's life. Thus, they set an example of living life heroically in ways that are consistent with the principles they teach.

Model teachers need not be perfect. Literature offers many glorious instances in which a life is presented to us as exemplary, yet made more human by the addition of a few flaws and human failings. Why else do we read autobiographies, biographies, memoirs, histories, profiles, confessions, diaries, and other life stories? Not just to learn from others' example but to learn more about the human condition. 'I would prefer to begin the study of the human heart with the reading of the lives of individuals', says Rousseau, who, like Montaigne, chooses Plutarch's *Lives* for the lessons its examples teach and for the insights they offer into what makes us and moves us. The universe of teaching by example is laden with celebrated models of the powerful, good, wise, decent, and true. On the opposite scale examples of the good are balanced by many examples to be avoided. The latter often make more gripping reading, and in their way offer lessons that are just as edifying. A pupil 'must use what he can get, take what a man has to sell and see that nothing goes wasted: even other people's stupidity and weakness serve to instruct him', observes Montaigne (1987). 'By noting each man's endowments and habits, there will be engendered in him a desire for the good ones and a contempt for the bad' (p. 175). Somewhere in between the two extremes of good and bad models, we find the example of ordinary people, flawed, perhaps, but dealing honestly with their weaknesses and openly with their errors. As Herbert Kohl (1967) writes: 'It is the teacher's struggle to be moral that excites his pupils; it is his honesty, not rightness, that moves children' (p. 26).

Teaching by example and learning from example occur within the context of specific communities—as Aristotle discusses in the *Ethics*, we learn to be virtuous by growing up in a virtuous community (1953, p. 56). If so, what are the community processes that come into play when someone teaches by setting an example and someone else learns from that example? Surely it involves a bit more than hoping that something will rub off? How one learns one's moral lessons and what one learns may depend largely on the nature of the particular community in which one grows to maturity. In some traditional communities, the kinds of examples that one can set may be strictly limited, and powerful social forces will come into play that make it difficult to rebel and encourage conformity to norms of conduct. But whatever the community the idea of teaching by example acts as a powerful tool of socialization.

Thus, teaching by example and learning from example operate routinely in a variety of social contexts and cultural settings. By being brought up in a certain culture, by being guided in our actions by informed adults and older peers, by learning to do what they do by doing as they do, we become acculturated or socialized in the ways of the group. However, we would be missing an important aspect of learning from example if we were to associate it exclusively with processes of acculturation. Those who teach by example often challenge the accepted standards of their culture or social group. Perhaps we should distinguish teaching by example as a form of habituation in which conformity to the standards of the group are emphasized versus teaching by example as a form of dissent, as teaching that challenges the status quo. Socrates, for example, is a notable

instance of the dissident sophist—the philosopher whose example is one of defiance in the face of the established order. He teaches us, by his example, to question assumptions, challenge ordinary thinking, and seek a better understanding of ourselves.

How, then, does one consciously teach by example? One thing a teacher can do is to put students in the right frame of mind to learn from example. In other words, they can make the situation more encouraging, motivating, and open to the promotion of learning from the example of the teacher. St. Augustine reminds us that preaching is insufficient to create belief. To bring new converts into the fold, they must first want to become converts or at least, want to learn more. They must, he insists, be willing to 'knock at the door' (2002, p. 87). But the teacher need not be idle in the matter. Teaching by example is not exclusively a waiting game. There are things that can be done by the teacher to draw students in, to bring them closer to the door so that they are more inclined to knock. This in effect is what St. Augustine's *Confessions* is designed to do by relating the story of his own conversion in a way that reveals his struggles with periods of doubt, his temptations, his final leap of faith. The progressive steps that Augustine reveals in making his own journey from paganism to Christian belief are a kind of map of the journey set out in detail for others to follow. He is our guide and shows us the way and lures us with the rewards. By presenting his life as a kind of ascent—a journey from pagan to Christian belief—Augustine is making what rhetoricians refer to as an ethical appeal—an appeal based on the admirable qualities of the speaker or writer.

Rousseau is another thinker who wishes to set an example to his readers. He, too, is the author of a work of the same title, *The Confessions*, as wells as several other autobiographical writings that present his life in terms that may be taken as paradigmatic of someone who is seeking to avoid the corrupting influence of society in favor of leading a life more closely attuned to nature. He writes in the *Dialogues* (1990):

> Where could the painter and apologist of nature, so disfigured and calumnied now, have found his model save from his own heart? He described it as he himself felt ... In short, a man had to portray himself to show us primitive man like this. (p. 214).

Ernst Cassirer (1963) explicitly rejects the claim that Rousseau intended to be a model: 'Rousseau categorically denies the educational power of example' (p. 124). But this comment is in need of interpretation. Rousseau is undoubtedly critical of the power of social convention in shaping behaviour, values, and perspectives. He writes that 'everything is good when it comes forth from God's hands, everything degenerates in man's hands'. It is the kind of example setting that we refer to as 'socialization' that Rousseau abhors. The presence of others, usually of higher rank, arouses our *amour propre* and creates in us demands that continually outstrip our capacity to satisfy them. To the extent that these examples are frequently used to shape our conduct through the power of *amour propre*, they are to be avoided. But Rousseau sees his own example, as somehow exempt from this process, because he has learned to control his desires and match them to his needs. This is the persistent message of his autobiographical writings: *The Confessions*, *Letters to Malesherbes*, *Dialogues*, and *Reveries*. What he sets out to achieve in these works and in his own life is the presentation of a distinct persona—the man of nature who has discovered the means to resist the temptations of a corrupt society and seek his renewal

in a return to nature. In effect, Rousseau projects himself as a man of nature as an example of how to overcome the forces of socialization—our tendency to allow *amour propre*, our regard for the regard of others, to take hold of our lives—a role that Rousseau considered himself uniquely qualified to fulfil.

What, then, are the processes involved in teaching by example? I'd like to explore this question by looking at an example of teaching by setting an example taken from Rousseau's *Emile*—the section in Book IV in which he introduces the reader to a young priest, a Savoyard vicar.

3. The Example of the Savoyard Vicar

In Book IV of *Emile*, Rousseau inserts his famous *Profession of Faith of a Savoyard Vicar*—a work that many commentators have found difficulty in reconciling with the rest of *Emile*. Structurally, it appears to stand apart from the rest of the book, and has been frequently published as a separate work. We learn early on that it deals with an event from Rousseau's own past and as such does not deal with the education of Emile at all. However, as I shall argue, it is very far from a digression, and its introduction cleverly illustrates how it is possible to teach by example. As such it can be viewed in itself as an example of how to teach by example, and corresponds to Jean-Jacques' own aspiration to be a friend and example to Emile—just as Rousseau sought to be to be a friend and example to his readers (Reisert, 2003, p. 177).

Rousseau's motive in including the Profession of Faith is quite clearly stated: 'I have transcribed this writing not as a rule for the sentiments 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' (E. 313). In other words, Rousseau is using a memorable event in his own life to demonstrate how the example of one person can make a significant change in the life of another.

When we first encounter the narrative of the Savoyard vicar, Emile has reached an important turning point in his education and one that Rousseau understands must be treated with great delicacy. Emile is now old enough to reason. This is also the point at which Rousseau must undertake Emile's moral education. This means that Rousseau must choose new methods for the instruction of his pupil: 'It is important here to take a route opposed to the one we have followed until now and to instruct the young man by *others' experiences rather than his own*' (E. 236, my emphasis). But this is a perilous stage because it is now that Emile becomes aware of and sensitive to the opinion of other people. 'Since my Emile has until now looked only at himself, the first glance he casts on his fellows leads him to compare himself with them' (E. 235). Rousseau must guard his young pupil from the dangers of becoming bewitched by the temptations of new desires aroused by his awakening *amour propre*—in comparing himself with others he might be lured from the path of nature and learn to adopt the opinions and vices of society—a route that Rousseau has sought to protect him from.

Rousseau is now ready to begin Emile's religious and moral education. But how can this be accomplished without sacrificing the natural self that Rousseau has so carefully cultivated to the overpowering influence of society? Normally, a child learns religion and morality from parental authority: 'a child has to be raised in his father's religion' (E. 260).

One's religious beliefs and the moral values that are attached to them are determined by the accident of birth. We are born into a given society, and the values, norms and opinions that attach to that society gradually become the ones we adopt as personal beliefs. Learning by example, plays an important role in the process of socialization. This occurs because of the authoritative influence of our parents, our priests, our teachers—what Rousseau calls 'the education of citizens' (E. 39). In traditional communities, this process is unavoidable and undemocratic, and it affords the child no choice in the matter.

But how can a religious and moral education be conducted without exposing Emile to the harsh orthodoxy and suffocating weight of external authority? 'We who pretend to shake off the yoke of opinion in everything, we who want to grant nothing to authority, we who want to teach nothing to our Emile which he could not learn by himself in every country, in what religion shall we raise him?' (E. 260). Emile should not be persuaded by the weight of opinion nor by the imposition of external authority; he should be 'placed in a position to choose the one to which the best use of his reason ought to lead him' (E. 260). First, Emile must be brought to a point at which he is open to reason. He is to be persuaded not simply by the plausibility of the accounts but also by his admiration for the person who offers the account. Thus parental authority is replaced with a new relationship—one that is more accommodating to reason and fairness. Rousseau views friendship or at least a friendship of a certain kind as the appropriate substitute. In effect, the Savoyard vicar establishes an educative relationship with Jean-Jacques, not by the imposition of rank or seniority, but by creating a respectful and equal relationship between the two. Rousseau wishes to replace the authority of rank with the authority of reason (E. 246). This is a very different way to teach than the traditional method, which Rousseau mocks as stupid and ineffective—'If I had to depict sorry stupidity, I would depict a pedant teaching the catechism to children. If I wanted to make the child go mad, I would oblige him to explain what he says in saying his catechism' (E. 257). However, Rousseau seems not to have considered the possibility that even this more equal and friendly relationship might introduce other impediments to free rational choice in his student. Peer pressure, for example, which is now recognized as exerting a powerful influence on conformity to group norms, or the subconscious processes of 'transference' that often occur between a therapist and patient.

Rousseau begins his narrative by describing the state of destitution in which he found himself as a young man shortly after his youthful departure from Switzerland. Having escaped the tyranny of an apprenticeship in Calvinist Geneva into Catholic Savoy, he found it necessary to 'change religion in order to have bread' (E. 260). But this hardly improved his condition. He became the victim of new tyrants and subject to fresh abuses. Rousseau depicts himself at this stage as a deeply conflicted and angry young man—a troubled teenager who is disillusioned with life and rebellious in spirit. 'He would have been lost if it were not for a decent ecclesiastic who came to the almshouse on some business and whom he found the means to consult in secret' (E. 262). This man helps him to escape; but, left to his own devices, Rousseau finds himself alone and unaided once more and falls back into his earlier, indigent state. In desperation, he returns to his benefactor. Rousseau draws a picture that reveals the essential interdependence between beneficiary and benefactor. It is a natural and humane connection, without any mercenary motivation on the part of the vicar. Rousseau needs help and the vicar responds out

of the goodness of his heart. In their second meeting, the vicar is reminded of the good deed done at the first meeting—'the soul always rejoices in such a memory' (E. 262).

The vicar makes an assessment of his young charge and finds him to be someone that he can help, though 'incredulity and poverty, stifling his nature little by little, were leading him rapidly to his destruction and heading him toward the morals of a tramp and the morality of an atheist' (E. 263). He discovers that the young man has had some education, though his imagination is deadened from abuse. 'The ecclesiastic saw the danger and the resources' (E. 263). He recognizes Rousseau as someone that he has the power to save, and he proceeds to make long-range plans to do so. What motivates the vicar to do this work? He is moved by a genuine desire to do good deeds. How does he proceed? By avoiding the posture of authority—the traditional method of instruction in social rules and habits—'by not selling him benedictions, by not pestering him, by not preaching to him, by always putting himself within his reach, by making himself small in order to be his proselyte's equal' (E. 263). The vicar is not aloof. He speaks the language of the young boy. He endeavours to create a more equal relationship—more like that of a friend than a confessor or a teacher. He listens closely, without being judgmental, to the boy's confidences: 'never did a tactless censure come to stop the boy's chatter and contract his heart' (E. 263). After closely observing the boy and learning what he can of his past and of his present condition, he begins to take more positive steps in his reform 'by awakening his *amour propre* and self esteem. He showed him a happier future in the good employment of his talents' (E. 264). Next, he introduces the boy to stories of the noble deeds of others and awakens his desire to perform like deeds. He does all this without appearing ever to be instructing the boy. 'In living with him in the greatest intimacy I learned to respect him more every day; and as so much goodness had entirely won my heart, I was waiting with agitated curiosity for the moment when I would learn the principle on which he founded the uniformity of so singular a life' (E. 265).

If we interpret this narrative as representative of how to teach by example, we can see that there is some art to it. It's not simply a matter of putting your example out there and hoping that some student will chance by and commit to learn from it. Teaching by example requires a more subtle approach. The teacher who teaches by example practices the exacting art of the angler, luring the fish to the bait. It's much more than simply dropping a line at random in the water and hoping for a bite. Or, to use another analogy, it is a form of seduction with the teacher in the role of lover—a slow wooing of the pupil to win trust, and, eventually, make friends. Thus, teaching by example requires a studied approach that involves choosing the time and place based on an understanding of the pupil, who should be lured with the right bait or won over rather than dominated. This is a matter of carefully setting up the appropriate social context and encouraging the appropriate forms of attachment so that the pupil is put in the right frame of mind to learn from the teacher's example. Rousseau observes that there is considerable art in lifting his 'young disciple's heart above baseness without appearing to think of instruction' (E. 264).

How does the Savoyard vicar win over the young Rousseau? First, the character and natural qualities of the teacher are attractive to the pupil. 'This man was naturally humane and compassionate.' He approaches Rousseau's ideal of the man of nature in not being the kind of person who will readily succumb to the temptations of material society.

'He preferred poverty to dependence.' Thus, his motivation in helping the young Rousseau is pure and not sullied by carnality or selfishness. He acts neither out of vanity nor for any profit, nor out of a desire to have power over his pupil. He is inclined by his natural feelings to help Rousseau.

Secondly, the priest studies Rousseau closely to find out the reasons for his sorry condition. He finds him the victim of other men's injustices and the poverty that has resulted from these misfortunes. He is able to see the good in the boy and that his true nature had been stifled by the abuses to which he had been subjected. 'The priest saw clearly that although he was not ignorant for his age, he had forgotten everything it was important for him to know' (E. 264). As a result of this close observation, the young priest is able to make an assessment of Rousseau's conditions and to conceive a plan for his reform.

Thirdly, he puts Rousseau at his ease and makes him feel that he is not being judged—'by making himself small in order to be his proselyte's equal' (E. 263). This helps to establish a relationship of parity between the two rather than one of domination and subordination. 'It was a rather touching spectacle to see a grave man become a rascal's comrade' (E. 263). Thus, the vicar builds Rousseau's trust, which enables him to unburden his feelings.

Fourthly, the priest builds the boy's self esteem. 'He showed him a happier future in the good employment of his talents' (E. 264). Thus, by gradual degrees, Rousseau comes to respect the older man and this in turn opens his mind to the teachings of the vicar and to the lessons that he can learn from him. There is no hint here of the vicar telling him what to do. He does not preach.

The Savoyard vicar practices an art of subtle enticement, a form of seduction in which he gently woos Rousseau into a state in which he is more open to reason. He does not beseech him to change his ways, nor censure him for his sins. But he does aim to produce a change in Rousseau by following a number of steps that prepare the boy for the lessons that will restore him to a healthy and a more productive life. It is the Savoyard vicar's essential goodness that wins over Rousseau: 'I learned to respect him more every day; and as so much goodness had entirely won my heart, I was waiting with agitated curiosity for the moment when I would learn the principle on which he founded the uniformity of so singular a life' (E. 265).

In sum, the young priest teaches Rousseau by befriending him and bringing him to a state of mind in which he is willing to learn from his teacher's example. Thus, the portrait of the Savoy vicar presents a studied contrast to the type of teacher who is concerned with financial gain and who demands respect as a consequence of rank.

4. The Most Sacred of All Contracts

Rousseau calls friendship 'the most sacred of all contracts' (E. 233n), but what justifies him in viewing the relationship between teaching and learning in this way? In Rousseau's view, although friendship is the 'first sentiment of which a carefully raised young man is capable' (E. 220), it arises only when Emile has reached an age at which his reasoning powers are sufficiently developed. Thus, the relationship between teacher and learner is not always characterized by friendship, but only when the student has

reached the age at which he is capable of reasoning. It is at this critical stage in Emile's education that Rousseau must change his manner and try out new strategies to educate his pupil. He can no longer win him over with ruses and trickery, but must develop other methods—by reasoning with him, by showing him friendship, and by playing on his sense of gratitude for all that his teacher has done for him. 'He is still your disciple, but he is no longer your pupil. He is your friend; he is a man. From now on treat him as such' (E. 316).

What is difficult in Rousseau's account of the relationship is to actually reconcile this account of friendship with the degree of control that Rousseau still maintains over Emile. Indeed, it is possible to draw the conclusion that Rousseau's appeals to friendship are nothing more than a masquerade, another form of trickery, a rhetorical stratagem designed to maintain control over Emile. Rousseau refers on several occasions to the 'voice of friendship' as the means of his hold over Emile. Rousseau observes that Emile is 'subject to the laws of wisdom, and submissive to the voice of friendship' (E. 419). But the voice of friendship is more than just a rhetorical device, it is indicative of a deeper sentiment of affiliation, because a friend 'never speaks to us of anything other than our own interests' (E. 234).

It is not immediately obvious why we should follow Rousseau in comparing the relationship between teacher and student with friendship. Indeed, it almost appears counterintuitive to think of teaching in this way; and in support of this intuition there is a long tradition of practical advice to teachers never to befriend students. Even Rousseau's definition of friendship makes it difficult to reconcile with any conception of the relationship between teacher and their students. 'The word *friend*', he declares, 'has no correlative other than itself' (E. 233n). It is not easy to think of *teacher* and *learner* as correlative terms.

So, how do we make sense of Rousseau's claim that teachers should become friends to their students? I think that we can make sense of it if we understand that Rousseau's idea of friendship is closely tied to his idea of the virtuous person—the man of nature uncontaminated by the vices of society. 'Remember', he counsels, 'that before daring to undertake the formation of a man, one must have made oneself a man. One must find within oneself the example the pupil ought to take for his own' (E. 95). In this view the authority of the teacher is not based on rank or seniority or superior learning but on a mutual esteem for virtue—precisely the same kind of esteem upon which, in his view, a friendship must be based. Rousseau's account of friendship is similar to the view of higher friendship given by Aristotle—friendship based on the pursuit of virtue—in contrast to the lower forms of friendship based on pleasure and utility.

In consequence, if the teacher must be virtuous in order to teach the virtuous student, the outcome of a successful education will inevitably result in the kind of sacred compact that Rousseau sees friendship to be. Reisert (2003) observes that Rousseau styled himself a 'friend of virtue', and it is exactly in this sense that teachers and students, like Rousseau and Emile, can be regarded as friends because they are both 'friends of virtue.'

5. Conclusion

Why is it useful to examine the processes involved in teaching by example?

I'd like to conclude with a few comments on how it is possible to teach by example and on Rousseau's role in developing our understanding of this concept. Not much appears to have been written on the topic. Generally, the assumption is that there is not much pedagogy in it and that it is something that some people do well and others do not. But I think that Rousseau's narrative highlights its importance as a means of character education—one that depends on the character of the teacher and the ability to nurture a special bond between teacher and student. This can be supported by appeal to the testimony of my student teachers when I have asked them about teachers who have been influential in their own lives. Their answers almost always refer to a special relationship or connection with one influential teacher—one that is spelled out in terms that convey a special rapport, common interests, and acquaintanceship. My sense is that the relationship of friendship advocated by Rousseau is somewhat similar to the one that counsellors strive to create in establishing a relationship of trust with their clients—one that is based on confidentiality and trust.

The second reason is that the example of the Savoyard vicar illustrates the importance, or pivotal role, that Rousseau has in the development of our conception of teaching. Allan Bloom writes: '*Emile* is a truly great book, one that lays out for the first time and with the greatest clarity and vitality the modern way of posing the problems of psychology' (p. 4). I believe that it is also an important turning point in the development of the modern conception of teaching—one that offers the idea of a more democratic conception of teaching in which the relationship of teacher and pupil is redefined in terms of friendship rather than authority. *Emile* may be read as a work that does for education what Rousseau's political writings did for our ideas of government—to effect a revolution in which the relationship between teacher and student, as that between ruler and ruled, is constructed on more egalitarian terms. In *Emile*, for example, he offers the following observation on how teachers should relate to their students:

> I cannot prevent myself from mentioning the false dignity of governors who, in order stupidly to play wise men, run down their pupils, affect always to treat them as children, and always distinguish themselves from their pupils in everything they make them do. Far from thus disheartening your pupils' youthful courage, spare nothing to lift up their souls; make them your equals in order that they may become your equals; and if they cannot yet raise themselves up to you, descend to their level without shame, without scruple. (E. 246)

Finally, I'd like to point to the portrait of Jean-Jacques in Rousseau's *Emile* as a part of a tradition of philosophical portraiture—a distinctive genre in the work of philosophers who, like Rousseau, aim to show us through the power of a literary example how to lead our lives. Not all exemplary teachers need be real people—though several of these fictions are based on real people. I mentioned Plato's Socrates as the prototype of this kind of fictional teacher, but there are other prominent examples of such philosophical fictions. Augustine's self-portrait in the *Confessions* is a chronicle of the evolution of his thought up to and beyond his conversion to Christianity. But it also provides a picture of his life as a teacher from his early days as a schoolteacher in Tagaste, to his work as a teacher of rhetoric in Milan, and, finally, to his role as Bishop of Hippo as a teacher of

Christianity. Nietzsche also provides a philosophical portrait of a teacher in the figure of Zarathustra—a particularly anti-Socratic example, especially in his teachings, but less so in his desire to influence his disciples and the 'friends' who will come after him. Perhaps there are other examples that fit the bill—religious figures like Jesus, Confucius, Mohammed, and Buddha—though my interests are directed to the philosophical literature and the use of philosophical portraiture as a method of teaching by example.

Note

1. All references to *Emile* are to the translation by Allan Bloom (Rousseau, 1979). Quotes from *Emile* are identified in parentheses by page number as in the following—(E. 2).

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