In his *Emile* Rousseau proposes a new plan of education closely connected with his new plan of legislation. The goal of his *On Social Contract* is a universal overthrow of civil order; the goal of the *Emile* is to prepare souls by means of a total revolution in their modes of thinking. It seems likely that Rousseau's legislative ideas will remain simply ideas. His political paradoxes, more singular than all the reveries of the good Abbé de Saint-Pierre,¹ are better made for astonishing the world than for winning it over. But if we can make ourselves easy on this score, it seems there is reason to be alarmed at the consequences of a mode of thinking which, though it may not lead men to the goal that Rousseau would have wanted, it may nevertheless cause them to gradually estrange themselves from that end toward which one must tend for the good of humanity. Our philosopher will not succeed in totally overturning present society, but he will easily inspire that vexation with and aversion for religious and social institutions, which animates him and which breathes forth from all of his writings. He will not make savages, but he will make bad Christians and bad citizens.

It is especially in Books 1 and 2 of *Emile* that he devotes himself to developing those principles that serve as the foundation and connecting link for his system of politics and his theory of education. There he presents social institutions in the most odious light. He establishes the following maxims:

[1] The condition of man living in the state of nature is for him to be self-sufficient and to be happy.

[2] We were born to be men, but laws and society plunge us back into infancy.

¹
[3] The dependency upon other men that is the consequence of laws and society is repugnant to nature and the source of all the vices.

[4] It is impossible to educate a man for himself and for others.

[5] A father himself has no right to command his children in that which is not ordered to their good.

From these maxims, which serve as the foundation for the system of his social contract, he deduces in this volume the practical rules for the conduct of the first stage of life which determine the whole course of education.

It is to an examination of these principles and rules that the present book is dedicated. In challenging the paradoxes advanced by Rousseau we have tried to establish the theory and practice of education on principles that are more solid, more consisteint with the spirit of humankind, the peace of families, the tranquility of states, and the general advantage of all men. We do not attempt to refute everything that is reprehensible in the *Emile*. To criticize this book is not even our chief purpose. Rather, it provides us with an occasion to develop and publish certain ideas that may not be altogether useless for those who are occupied with the education of youth. Initially I had intended only to respond to a question proposed to me, namely, whether there was anything contained in the first volume of *Emile* contrary to religion and sound morality? But then on reviewing my reflections, I noted that they tended to be interconnected and were capable of being ordered. This is what gave rise to the composition of the present work, in which I try to suitably extend and unify the subject of the treatise as it is announced in the title. If it ever falls into the hands of Rousseau, we would ask him to read it. He will see his opinions attacked without animosity or bitterness, and perhaps upon recollection he will be able to recognize that, since he has not always been consistent with himself, he cannot always have been in the right.

I have only one word more to say to those who may attempt to vindicate Rousseau. It is not enough to show that he has asserted things contrary to what are imputed to him, since that would only
demonstrate that he frequently contradicts himself. But ignoring for the moment that natural inconstancy of some minds, there are still others that have good reason to be contradictory. And so it will be necessary to prove either that he has not said the things that are imputed to him or that what is imputed to him is properly said.