International Journal of Latest Research in Humanities and Social Science (IJLRHSS)
Volume 06 - Issue 02, 2023
www.ijlrhss.com || PP. 196-206

Rousseau's Emile: Discussing the Convergence between Philosophy and Education

Wilson A. Paiva
ORCID ID https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5654-7193
PhD in Philosophy of Education
Professor at the Faculty of Education of UFG (Federal University of Goiás)
Brazil

Abstract: The article concerns the human dimension developed by the Rousseauian educational project. Although the objective is citizen education, Rousseau's pedagogical plan seeks to encompass the development of natural talents as typical of human nature. The basic source of this article is the book Emile: written by Rousseau. Also supported by other writings, the text seeks to bring back the importance of this theme for education, as well as the significance of Rousseau's thought to discuss the objectives of human formation, and the principles that permeate the training processes. The article enhances that the humanization project in Rousseau's work is of a political nature and, therefore, contributes to reconsider he educational process and the ways of insertion and participation of man in the current environment. However, both political and pedagogical action must be undertaken to reconsider man's natural potentialities so that human nature is not degenerated, ignored, or even objectified.

Keywords: Rousseau, Emile, Philosophy of Education, Education.

1. Introduction

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) is one of the thinkers who have influenced education at all times, so much so that several scholars consider his reflections as a landmark between the old and the new school, as does Gadotti (2000). Others, like Suchodolski (2000), place Rousseau as the key transition element from a "*pedagogy of essence*" to a "*pedagogy of existence*". His book *Emile: or On Education* caused intense controversy in his time, considering that it addressed not only innovative didactic-pedagogical aspects, but it also developed a very original childhood concept back then; along with exploring educational themes whose parameters would shape a new human being and, why not say, a new society. Since then, this book has been translated into almost all languages and has been the subject of academic discussions and research at almost every university in the world.

Although he wrote other books, such as *The Social Contract*, *Discourse on the Origin and the Foundations of Inequality Among Men* and *Julie, or the New Heloise*, the treatise on education is far more sophisticated in showing its criticism of the evils of culture to the detriment of nature's values. It is in his treatise that Rousseau thinks about the reconfiguration of man[1] through which the natural attributes can be restored and, by which, man's originality can be promoted. He thinks about improving society as a whole. This is the perspective that made the scholar Yves Vargas say that *Emile* is, in fact, the best treatise on natural politics ever seen.

Rousseau's path expands when, in order to examine the foundations of society, it becomes necessary to reach the zero point of man's sociability in which it is possible to prospect his originality, his first passions, and his true essence. Rousseau criticizes the philosophers who sought to speak about the natural man and, in fact, ended up describing the civilized man. In the book *Discourse on the Origin and the Foundations of Inequality Among Men* (p. 52), Rousseau criticizes Locke, Montesquieu, Grotius, Puffendorf, Burlamaqui, Hobbes, Grotio, and even Aristotle. It is worth repeating his words: "Every one of them, in short, constantly dwelling on wants, avidity, oppression, desires and pride, has transferred to the state of nature ideas which were acquired in society; so that, in speaking of the savage, they described the social man" (loc. cit.) That is to say, the man with social characteristics and not proper to a primitive state. Not even his fellow citizen and namesake Jean-Jacques Burlamaqui (1694–1748)[2] got rid of his criticisms, for the jurist established the existence of a set of laws in the primitive state that would be the basis of reason. Now, if for Rousseau law is a public and solemn declaration of the *General Will*, it can only arise from a pact between a group of people living in common and not from free men living in the wild. And, if this set of laws was imposed by the Creator, as the iusnaturalists defended, it cannot be a law, but a Decree, a sovereign Edict resulted from the particular will of the Author of life.

Given the impossibility of confirming his ideas empirically, Rousseau dismisses the facts and creates a historical hypothesis that breaks with the limits of the factual in the sense of creating his aphorism: the natural man as the supreme reference category. It is the Rousseauian search for the absolute in nature itself and man as a point of convergence of universality.

Considered the landmark of sociability, his *démarche* pulled men out of this initial and prototypical stage, shaped by the Creator, and promoted a sequence of stages that, as demonstrated by Rousseau in the second *Discourse* and discussed in the first part of this book, operated the degeneration of species.

This is why the great philosopher opens his education treaty reporting that "Everything is good as it leaves the hands of the Author of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man." (*Emile*, p. 37) When locating the origin of evil, what matters in Rousseau's theodicy is that it is not a fatality, because after all everything can be corrected and shaped by a well-intentioned project. *Emile* is this great training project aimed at correcting degradation and giving character to the human spirit. Because given the *status quo* and the need of recovering the natural state freedom that was lost, Emile was educated to achieve the condition of answering questions such as: what importance does it have for me? What can I do about it? (*Emile*, p. 458) But, for this, one must have an education basis from birth and childhood development to break the prejudices and aphorisms with which we were educated. Rousseau was well acquainted with the dogmatism of Jesuit pedagogy and also with the various educational treatises that did not abandon the old rhetoric: "I shall never repeat enough that we attribute too much power to words; with our babbling education, we produce only babblers." (Ibid., p. 180).

2. The Project of Jean-Jacques

The eighteenth century was the exact moment for the protest of the controversial Jean-Jacques, as there was an expectation around issues related to Pedagogy, and education tended to be more than an intellectual ornament to be displayed in the halls. Books such as the "*Treatise on education*", by Charles Rollin (1661-1741), rector of the University of Paris and professor at the Royal College, had already shown concern with the traditionalism of the Jesuits and sought to discuss methods and content, under the great influence of greatest educational work of the previous century: the *Didactica Magna* by Comenius, published in 1657. The Moravian pedagogue endeavored to defend education for all and spoke about intuitive learning processes, as well as the art of teaching everything to everyone through an innovative method, based on the principles of nature. He anticipated some issues present in *Emile* and his work can be considered as the first systematic treatise on pedagogy and didactics. But like the other treaties, the *Didactica Magna* was loaded with religious concepts and a kind of traditional concept of education. This, in the view of Suchodolski (2000), was limited to the *pedagogy of essence*. The 16th and 17th centuries lacked the expectation that produced the Rousseauian work, because, although the Renaissance engendered humanist realism and it substantially influenced education, the process was summed up in a formal routine of preparation for the aristocrat or the passionate devotee. After all, the ultimate aim was "to instill in their minds the true knowledge of God, of themselves and various things, so that they may get used to seeing the light in the light of God, and to love and worship the Father of all lights above all things." (Comenius, 2002, p. 30)

In this perspective, Rousseauian thought can be considered the dividing line between the old and the new school. And if for Foucault (1999) the modern is born from the exhaustion of the *Cogito*, Rousseau can be considered his precursor in the field of education. Although real changes in the pedagogical-educational process will only be noticeable from the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th with the various movements for a "new school", the proud citizen of Geneva sows the seeds that germinated cognitivism, playfulness, corporeality, and other pedagogical dimensions that still develop in the school environment today.

Even though it was a period of exhaustion of the *Cogito*, the 18th century owes much to Descartes for the break with the scholastic yoke and the pleasure of rational exercise, stimulated by methodical doubt. It would have been the triumphal century of Cartesianism if the historical spirit of the humanities and the experimental spirit of the sciences of nature had not manifested, or if Rousseauian naturalism had not emerged as a dissonant voice. In the Enlightenment context, the *I think, therefore I am* goes on the contrary and depends on the observation of facts and experience, thus generating an enlightenment cogito that could be explained by the construction: *I am, therefore I think*. Rousseau, the "odd one" of the *philosophes*, introduces elements that considerably distance him from the Cartesian *cogito* as well as from the Enlightenment. For him, the sentence that would best translate his thought would be: *I feel, therefore I am*. For, taking his own words: "To exist, for us, is to sense; our sensitivity is incontestably anterior to our intelligence, and we had sentiments before ideas." (*Emile*, p. 290) Man is a sensitive being and in *Émile* what we have is, in fact, a treatise on how to develop one's sensibility, as he says: Rousseau,

> Let us transform our sensations into ideas but not leap all of a sudden jump from objects of sense to intellectual objects. It is by the way of the former that we ought to get to the latter. In the first operations of the mind let the senses always be its guides. No book other than the world, no instruction other than the facts. (*Emile*, p. 168)

Rousseauian empiricism is present when it takes the past as a hypothetical analysis and the future as a possibility. However, it is a philosophy whose abstraction starts from the observation of the immediate reality.

Its empiricism takes place from the observation of the children developing their senses, passions, and reason. As Suchodolski (2000, p. 32) says: "The reality that interests Rousseau and absorbs him is the concrete, daily and true life of man".

A superficial reading of *Emile* can lead us to the idea that the work aims specifically at a domestic and not a social education. Nonetheless, the objective that permeates the educational task, even in an individual and private way, is the training of men to live with their equals. The main objective of the Rousseauian pedagogical project synthesizes two ideals by merging them into a single principle: recreating the natural man within society. And education is the most conducive instrument for this recreation and personal transformation that, invariably, can bring changes in society. Although civic education is only clearly expressed in the *Considerations on the Government of Poland*, and the project for the political organization of society in *The Social Contract*, as emphasized by Salinas Fortes (1989, p. 79), the two perspectives are articulated and complemented.

Thus, we can affirm that education for Rousseau is not a task that is limited to the school environment, programs, or specific institutions, but a global action for the development of man in all his needs. This is evident at the beginning of his work:

> We are born weak, we need strength; we are born totally unprovided, we need aid; we are born stupid, we need judgment. Everything we do not have at our birth and which we need when we are grown is given us by education. (*Emile*, p. 38)

Life itself is an educational construction that takes place in the intense and constant interaction of man with his environment. And in the same way that Rousseau develops his concept of man on an existential tripod (man/nature/society), his thought also develops an educational tripod on which the work of human formation is established. It is about the existence of three types of masters: nature, men, and things, which transform human existence itself into a broad project of human development aiming at the full realization of existence itself. As Gadotti (2004, p. 19) says, it is not a mechanical evolution, but a dialectical and phenomenal one that also involves casual elements:

> The internal development of our faculties and organs is the education of nature; the way we are taught to use this development is the education of men; the gain of our own experience on the objects that affect us is the education of things.
> Therefore, each of us is made up of three kinds of masters. The student who contradicts several lessons from these masters is not well educated and will never agree with himself; the one who aims at the same points and tends towards the same ends achieves his goal by himself and lives in consequence. Only this one is well educated. (Idem, p. 10-1)

Thus, Rousseau's educational project is the harmonious combination of these three masters with a single purpose: the formation of the total and authentic man, denatured and well prepared to live with his fellow men in a level of virtue that prepares him for the true exercise of citizenship: fulfilling their duties, respecting others, seeking to please God and developing their potential for the benefit of society.

In this respect, it is necessary to agree with Francisco's statement (1998) that one should not take it too seriously, or at least make a literal interpretation of Rousseau's statement about his intention to form the man and not the citizen. Given the indissociability of moral and political theory, it is essential to understand that in the Rousseauian formation theory a project for the development of a new political society is implicit. It is not for nothing that the summary of *The Social Contract* is found in *Emile* and is part of the lessons that young Émile must receive to be able to judge governments, to participate, and to be useful to the community.

As a model of thought founded on paradox, the Rousseauian educational project works with two distinct categories: man and citizen, a synthesis that embodies the figure of Emile. He is, according to Jimack[3], a true prodigy because if he is neither *homme* nor *citoyen*, Emile is the overcoming of the paradox and " homme in a wider sense, clearly transcending both the homme de la nature and the citoyen."[4] In this way, it is not a dichotomous relationship, but a dialectical one that makes it possible to visualize a creature resulting from the competition of the three masters and a new one, authentic, as well as appropriate for a new reality that unfolds under the name of the modern world.

Even defending general principles, Rousseau's educational project is full of moral lessons that prepare the disciple for coexistence and civil life. Francisco (1998) illustrates his text with the "episode of the fava beans"[5], which seems to contain, quite simply, the discussion on private property[6]. But, much more than that, it provides an overview of the human formation process based on the methodological tripod of the three masters. In the *Discourse on Political Economy* (p. 43) Rousseau defends property when he says that "if goods do not belong to people, there is nothing easier than evading their duties and having fun with the laws." But we must consider that the concept of property in the eighteenth century, and more precisely in Rousseauian thought, does

not have the current capitalist meaning. It is closer to Locke's interpretation expressed in the *Second treatise on government*, that is, everything that belongs to an individual by right, starting with himself.

The episode is: eager to plant something, little Emile is led by his tutor to a field where he sows some broad beans. However, as the land already belonged to someone, who had already sown melon seeds from Malta, one day the child encounters his plantation devastated and with a warning from Roberto, owner of the lot: "No one touches the neighbor's garden. Each respects the labor of others so that his own will be secure." (*Emile*, p. 99). We do not have the unrestricted defense of private property here, although it is also a lesson about the origin of the property, much to Locke's taste, that is, for work. But we have a moral lesson of coexistence, mutual respect, and legal rights, as well as good dialogue and diplomacy. It is worth remembering that in the end, after the intervention of the preceptor, the child acquires a "small land" of the garden to plant his broad beans, as a result of an agreement signed between the interested parties.

The education of nature, which is the first master, provides young Emile's self-training through the development of his internal faculties as he apprehends reality. The second master, who is the education of men, is the set of the preceptor, the mint, and all the social rules that imply a heteroformation and the preparation for social interaction. And, finally, the education that comes from things, the third master, needs objects that can affect the student's sensitivity through this empirical experience. If we take the episode as a lesson in the strict sense of the term, the methodological resources used by the pedagogue and the didactics used to introduce and develop all this content cause a rupture in the history of pedagogical ideas, serving as a basis for the reflections of countless thinkers of the educational phenomenon. It is sufficient to mention the studies of Adolphe Ferrière (1879-1960), Maria Montessori (1870-1952) and so many others that we can call "new educators" in a broad classification. The action of the three masters contributes, so to speak, to the genesis of the *pedagogy of existence*.

This is why there is no chapter on education in *The Social Contract*. The subject is too complex to fit in a few pages of a political work. In fact, it is the political proposal that is included in the pedagogic[7], as part of Emile's education. That is to say, a lesson in politics, sociability, and, consequently, citizenship. Therefore, for Rousseau, education is a global action of human formation. It can be developed at home, at school, or anywhere else; it does not matter if it is public or domestic; what matters is that it develops the potential of man in all his human dimensions. Therefore, in Rousseau, there is a pedagogy of politics and a politics of pedagogy. Although the former is included in the latter, the ultimate aim of the educational aspect is to achieve the complete fulfillment of the political aspect. For, between the anthropological dimension and the political dimension present in *Emile*, politics prevails because it implies the recovery of the authentic man through his denaturation.

> Good social institutions are those that best know how to denature man, to take his absolute existence from him in order to give him a relative one and transport the I into the commom unity, with the result that each individual believes himself no longer one but a part of the unity and no longer feels except within the whole. (*Emile*, p. 40)

The institution closest to nature and that best initiates the denaturation process is the family. It is the convention that most considers the human person's interest in its fullness and does everything to preserve it while determining its relations with others. Domestic education becomes political action as, as a moral entity, it prepares the child's spirit for facing social problems. This is why Yves Vargas (1995) defines Emile as a treatise on natural politics.

This *collection of reflections and observations*, as noted in the preface, is the result of twenty years of meditation and three years of intense work[8]. It can be seen as Rousseau's dialogue with himself, against the background of the years he worked as a tutor to noble children, among them the little Sainte-Marie and Condillac, sons of Mr. de Mably, mayor of Lyon, in 1740. From that experience, he wrote the *Projet pour l'education by M. de Sainte-Marie* in which he already outlined a critique of the methods used by his time and also outlined what he would develop in *Emile*, that is, the principle of educating the heart and the spirit. His educational reflections went through some re-elaborations and expansions between 1757 and 1760, being made public in the first version at the end of 1759, and the final version in May 1762. As stated by Pissarra (2002, p. 26), the work caused a great impact because it appeared:

> Alerting to a minor issue at the time, the act of observing and respecting the child's development, reflecting on significant moments of their education, such as the discovery of the senses, emotions, conscience, thinking, moral, among others.

Until then, the child was considered a small adult, without their own specificity and, therefore, without the need for special care. The concept of childhood did not exist, that is to say, that in the popular imagination, childhood did not exist. Despite the notoriety of his new book *Julie, or the New Heloise*, *Emile* did not have the same repercussion and was condemned by the French Parliament and the Archbishop of Paris. Unfortunately,

even his hometown joined the censored and condemned his work. François Grasset (1723-1789), a bookseller from the Swiss city of Lausanne, wrote him a letter to give news of the repercussion of his treatise:

> Do not smile, my dear countryman, when I tell you that I saw your Emile burn in Madrid, on quarto size, in the main church of the Dominicans, on a Sunday, at the end of the sung mass and in the presence of a large number of fools and *Ex cathedra*! Which led several Spanish gentlemen and all ambassadors of foreign courts to buy it at any price, or to send it by post service. (Quoted by HAZARD, 1996, p. 134)

Thus, cheered by some and condemned by others, his education treaty spread across Europe and was at the center of discussions in the intellectual field. The *Emile* and *Julie, or the New Heloise*, literature anticipated the romantic movement that took over the 19th century and exalted human feelings in such a way that it ended up provoking a passionate reading that made Rousseau the "master of sensitive souls, the prophet of a moral and of a religion of feeling", as Starobinski said, in the preface to Ernst Cassirrer's *Le problème Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (1987).

3. What is Emile

Focusing on Emile, the educational proposal of this novel is the formation of a man quite different from the models and standards existing in the world of aristocrats and bourgeois. His model is far from being a revolutionary project, however, it is still "dangerous" because it submits the world and things to the infinite lines of feeling. Besides, Rousseau cultivates the benefits of nature and discusses the origins of society and its inequalities in a clear movement of human catharsis and the purification of degenerate passions, with a view to a better reorganization of social structures. The philosopher makes it clear that the educational task comprises an inner change and permeates an entire political project that aims to change society. The expression of human existence and its affirmation in the world do not depend on the primacy of a pure reason, established over previous concepts, but on an intense and reflexive relationship between man towards himself, the things, and other human beings. The tutor's introductory action (which inspires the family's action) develops in three dimensions: First, he prepares man for himself. Then, for living with their peers and, if necessary, for the performance of citizenship.

Rousseau brings back the sensitivity denied for men over the centuries by rationalism and religious dogmatism. He opens a new path in political and pedagogical thinking, inserting feeling as a key to understanding and taking actions. After all, man is a sensitive being, and "the man who has lived the most is not he who has counted the most years but he who has most felt life." (*Emile*, p. 42)

At this point, it is necessary to understand that there are two types of sensitivity: a physical and a moral one. Physical sensitivity is the organic and natural ability to apprehend things through the neuro and corporal senses. It is, therefore, an innate, passive, and instinctive sensitivity. It is important for the conservation of the species, and it was essential for primitive man to develop the consciousness of existence. Moral sensitivity is active and links our affections, our relative feelings and develops the conscience, becoming, in the words of the *Savoyard vicar*, the true guide of man:

> After having thus deduced the principal truths that it mattered for me to know from the impression of sensible objects and from the inner sentiment that leads me to judge of causes according to my natural lights, I still must investigate what manner of conduct I ought to draw from these truths and what rules I ought to prescribe for myself in order to fulfill my destiny on earth according to the intention of Him who put me there. In continuing to follow my method, I do not draw these rules from the principles of a high philosophy, but find them written by nature with ineffaceable characters in the depth of my heart. I have only to consult myself about what I want to do. Everything I sense to be good is good; everything I sense to be bad is bad. The best of all casuists is the conscience; and it is only when one haggles with it that one has recourse to the subtleties of reasoning. (*Emile*, p. 286)

Working on emotions in the educational field is a double and triple task at the same time. Double because it comprises the development of passive sensibility or innate dispositions through a set of empirical and quite diversified activities that brings the student in permanent contact with nature. And, on the other hand, the development of active sensibility or the moral instincts that prepare man for living with his fellow men. In the transition from passive to active sensibility, it is possible to prospect an expansion movement linked to the pedagogical performance of the three masters appointed by Rousseau at the beginning of Émile, thus revealing the third part of the task. Natural education provides the movement of the expansion of the self, the individual, and their self-location in the system of themselves (psychological); the education that comes from things provides the expansion of man according to the universe and has to do with his self-location in the system of

physical nature; and, finally, the education of men provides the movement for the expansion of man towards his equals, because it involves his location in the social system. The feeling must permeate the whole process in the triple task of coordinating man's interaction with himself, with others, and with things, as well as in the movement of expansion and improvement of reason. According to his words: "Finally, we were able to combine the use of members with the use of their faculties; we made an active being; to complete man, we can only make him a loving and sensitive being, that is, perfect his reason for the feeling." (*Emile*, p. 222 – my emphasis)

Thus, both physical and moral sensibilities depend on an educational project that destroys the antithesis between reason and feeling. After all, the feeling comes before rationality, as Rousseau comments according to his own experience: "I felt before I thought: it is the common fate of humanity," (*O.C.*, T. I, p. 8)

In *Emile*, we do not have an extreme and inconsistent sentimentality, as it was developed by the romantic poets in the following century. What we have, however, is a condition of rationality and a redimensioning of human formation. Unfortunately,

> Most readers read *Emile* as if Rousseau was inviting them to imitate the child's sensitive spontaneity and not the rational reflection of the tutor who directs his student's spontaneity. Therefore, we do not see the exhibition of a pedagogical science and a reflected technique, but a devotion to the thoughtless feeling. (Starobinski, 1991, p. 223)

Another mistake is to read *Emile* as a mere treatise on domestic and private education, thinking, as does Rang (1964, p. 253), that Rousseau has created two completely different education systems: a public and a private one. Especially because the dichotomy of public and private is a discussion that takes shape only with the French Revolution and in the later period, mainly in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Such anachronism makes Rousseau an advocate of a private, individual, and selfish education. Rousseau did not create two systems. As a matter of fact, he did not create any systems. But he conceived two complementary and interdependent dimensions, therefore not dichotomous, of one reality. Once again, we must not forget that Rousseau's poetic enthusiasm occasionally leads him to exalted expressions and emphatic examples, such as his praise for Spartan education and Plato's *Republic*, as educational models.

From the moment the philosopher affirms in *Emile* that two forms of contrary institutions arise from the two categories of analysis - man and citizen; and that the public institution no longer exists, the concrete and historical plan emerges, and also the European reality and its purest social, political and educational context. It is more a report and a lament in the face of the reality in which he lived both in the educational sense and in the political sense as a whole. We can see the emphasis on his statement:

> Public instruction no longer exists and can no longer exist, because where there is no longer a fatherland, there can no longer be no citizens. These two words, *fatherland* and c*itizen*, should be effaced from modern languages. (...) I do not envisage as a public education those laughable establishments called *colleges*. (*Emile*, p. 40-41)

Therefore, in the face of this chaos, Rousseau immediately takes his reflection to domestic education and finds that there is a somewhat useless individuality in it: "But what will a man raised uniquely for himself become for others?". In this way, the solution is the synthesis of the two dimensions: "If perchance the double object we se for ourselves could be joined in a single one by removing the contradictions of man, a great obstacle to his happiness would be removed." (*Emile*, p. 41). And that is exactly the intention of his treaty. Another example taken from the Rousseauian lines and which leads to the idea of synthesis is the case of the moral conflict that Émile faced in his adolescence between passion and reason. As for the conflict between nature and culture, the impasse is solved through the lessons of the preceptor that prepare the student for their overcoming. In *Emile*, as in all of Rousseau's works, there is the same dialectic and the constant play of opposing terms whose final moment is, according to Starobinski (1991, p. 42), similar: "the reconciliation of nature and culture in a society that rediscovers nature and overcomes the injustices of civilization".

His education treatise, or as he prefers to call it (in the preface), *a visionary's dreams about education*, was compiled in five books full of reflections, maxims, dialogues, walks, catechism, games, tricks, confessions, pieces of advice, all in one great speech undermined by great ideas. However, there is a well-done plot and a clear and simple plan organized as follows:

Book I begins by making it clear that man is the degeneration factor of nature and himself. It is up to education, as art and habit, to rescue them from their birth using its three masters: nature, men, and things. The option for home education is a protest against the bad conditions of the few public education institutions of his time. The book outlines the first stage of human formation talking about the first two years of the child's life and the care that mothers should have for good physical and mental development.

Called the age of nature, this period seeks to develop the senses through a gradual adaptation of the child (*infans*) with all the things that surround them. Therefore, it is necessary to leave the child as free as

possible, in contact with nature, following its paths: "Observe nature and follow the path it maps out for you. It exercises children constantly; It hardens their temperament by tests of all sorts; it teaches them early what effort and pain are. (*Emile*, p. 47)

In general, this book talks about the importance and objectives of early childhood education while emphasizing that the task goes on throughout life. In fact, the first attitude towards the child must have a teleological character that projects a man without deteriorating vices and passions in the future. This is why it must be a negative education, focused on the effort to avoid the bad influences of the environment and with a view to the formation of virtue. In this respect, the conductor role of this process is of extraordinary relevance because it is not restricted to the mere transmission of knowledge, but in the role of educator, in the Greek sense of the term, enabling the self-development of the student: "He ought to give no precepts at all; he ought to make them be discovered." (*Emile*, p. 52) There is no better method than the nature and general needs of everyday life, as there is no better place than the countryside.

Finally, the first book traces in a few lines the main elements of Rousseau's educational philosophy and the foundations of modern education. Because it deconstructs the concept of the "little adult" accepted until then and introduces the concept of childhood; speaks of the importance of affectivity; comments on sensations as the first material of knowledge, denying inactivity; and other issues that are part of today's discussions, such as reciprocity in the educational activity. Speaking about the natural language, Rousseau comments: "Let us study children, and we shall soon relearn it with them." (*Emile*, p. 65)

In **book II**, the second stage of the age of nature, we have the formation of the child (*puer*) from two to twelve years, when they develop language and all the senses, such as sight, hearing, etc., and builds their world of meanings. Therefore, a period of well educating both physical and moral sensibility. The first must be the education of sensitivity, because the child feels before thinking, through a series of physical exercises appropriate for their age. It's the philosopher's advice: "Treat your pupil according to his age." (*Emile*, p. 91) Because "childhood has its ways of seeing, thinking, feeling which are proper to it." (Idem, p. 90)

Against the conception of man's original evil, Rousseau offers the second book with one of his greatest aphorisms: "Let us set down as an incontestable maxim that the first movements of nature are always right. There is no original perversity in the human heart." (Idem, p. 92) And this is precisely because: "Thus, the first education ought to be purely negative. It consists not at all in teaching virtue or truth but in securing the heart from vice and the mind from error." (Idem, p. 93) In this perspective, education of moral sensibility must be gradually conducted along with its physical and intellectual development in a practical way and full of examples, and not in a kind of verbal pedantry and empty rhetoric. The child's freedom must be restricted only to the dependence on things because it is in this dependence that the concrete experience reveals its helplessness The child's freedom must be restricted only to the dependence on things because it is in this dependence that the concrete experience reveals its helplessness.

The child's intellectual training depends entirely on empirical reality. Any learning of abstract nature, exclusively through books, will be ineffective. It is through these practical experiences that the student will be able to build a set of moral rules and learn the difference between good and evil until reaching the point of the so-called "masterpiece of a good education [which] is to make a reasonable man." (Idem, p. 89) According to Rousseau, that is "to begin with the end", (id. ibid.) for reasoning should happen only at a later level, after having understood the general aphorisms, as well as the concepts of truth, property, charity; and after having obtained the intellectual condition to criticize the words, the history, and the examples of life that are presented to them.

However, since the moral world is a double-edged sword, or in Rousseau's words, an "here the door on vices opens," (Idem, p. 101) to lies and deceit, it is necessary to develop the child's sociability and critical formation to social conventions. For this, the preceptor uses the *Episode of broad beans* and one of the fables of La Fontaine as examples to be approached in the education of his child, with a view to a gradual and constructive moral formation, full of examples and didactic reflections. Everything must be done with the maximum appreciation of the student, without, however, falling into a non-directive or spontaneous way: "Let him always believe he is the master, and let it always be you who are." (Idem, p. 120) And if this is an activity that demands time, Rousseau gives us his advice, which serves as a maxim for any educator: "I did not give up, nor did I hurry; the education of children is a vocation in which one must know how to lose time in order to gain it." (Idem, p. 141)

In conclusion, the second book contains many words, expressions, and ideas that summarize Rousseau's philosophy and his educational ideal of childhood. It also brings the Rousseauian semiology of the construction of knowledge through sensibility, both physical and moral.

Book III deals with education from twelve to fifteen years. In this period, human being leaves the age of nature and engenders what the author calls the *age of strength*, as physical, intellectual and moral forces, develop in this age group.

The greatest example is the experience of the castaway Robinson Crusoé, who was lonely on a desert island and managed to direct his forces towards the satisfaction of his needs within the limits of utility. In other words, he built his world from the natural resources at his fingertips and purged useless and superfluous desires to act objectively to provide what was necessary for his survival. It is, therefore, the appropriate period to educate passions, directing them to what is useful: "The surest means of raising oneself above prejudices and ordering one's judgments about the true relations of things is to put oneself in the place of an isolated man and to judge everything as this man himself ought to judge of it with respect to his own utility." (*Emile*, p. 185)

From this pragmatic point of view, education should have two main characteristics: practicality and usefulness. Every educational act must be developed through concrete, contextualized, and practical experiences, and not through abstract speeches and reflections. To achieve the condition of man, the student must undergo manual training through an agricultural or artisan craft. Through this type of craft, it is possible to develop mechanical art and the real applicability of human knowledge, without, however, giving up the theoretical reflections that this whole experience can increase. Almost at the end of the book, Rousseau summarizes:

> Now we have returned to ourselves. Now our child, ready to stop being a child, has become aware of himself as an individual. Now he senses more than ever the necessity which attaches him to things. After having begun by exercising his body and his senses, we have exercised his mind and his judgement. (Idem, p. 203)

Rousseau subtly addresses social issues, showing that inequality is one of the prejudices to be combated in the educational project. For those who live in society, there is nothing more useful than the development of equality, because "conventional equality among men, very different from natural equality, makes positive right - that, government and laws - necessary." (Idem, p. 189) It is one of the themes of Emílio's training because, despite being educated in the countryside, his preparation is focused on life in society.

Book IV deals with education from the age of fifteen to twenty years. Known as the *age of reason and passions*, this period is quite fertile in terms of the individual's moral and spiritual formation. It is, so to speak, the time of greatest expansion of sensitivity (physical and moral).

After a long period of contemplation of nature, wanderings, and children's games, the student enters the stage of maturation, both physically and intellectually, facing a depraved world full of passions and illusions. If passions are the instruments for the conservation of species, it is not a question of annihilating them, but of knowing how to educate them and take advantage of natural passions, such as self-love, compassion, and others that build a good relationship. Given this, here is Rousseau's thesis that reminds us of the concept of a *negative education*:

> It is true that since they are not able always to live alone, it will be difficulty for them always to be good. This same difficulty increase with their relations; and this, above all, is why the dangers of society make art and care all the more indispensable for us to forestall in the human heart the depravity born of their new needs. (Idem, p. 234)

Thus, harmful passions created by the social man must be avoided. Hate, strife, envy, lies and so many others that the imagination is capable of generating for the decline of sensibility and the degeneration of the species itself, must be combated for the love of humanity. Rousseau's project is not to train the smart man, but the sensitive who can understand human miseries, and wise enough to make his contribution to the reconstruction of the social world.

The student's method of preparation is the *catharsis* through real scenes of everyday life and also tragic spectacles. Because by provoking pity and horror, according to Freitas (2003, p. 40) "the dramatic action would provide an imaginary discharge of a cleansing psychological effect." After having acquired the capacity for compassion, the young will be able to understand abstract words, such as *justice* and *kindness*. And, thus entering the moral order itself, the student must be able to understand how to be moral and to undertake the task of studying men to understand human relations and the fundamentals of social life in depth.

Another method is that of historical analysis, mainly from historians who present the facts without the author's personal judgment. In order to properly judge the historical process and understand the foundations of the social state of his time, Émile is already capable of making the necessary relations between things and men without being obliterated by vices and passions. Even because:

> To live in the world, one must know how to deal with men, one must know the instruments which give one a hold over them. One must know to calculate the action and the reaction of particular interests in civil society and to foresee events so accurately that one is rarely mistaken in one's undertakings, or at least has chosen the best means for succeeding (*Emile*, p. 249)

Criticizing the Church's doctrinal dogmas and despotic authority, as all 18th century Enlightenment thinkers did, Rousseau does not advocate atheism, but a proper way to relate to the divine and that could be understood as a kind of natural religion, which should only be introduced from the age of fifteen. His conception of spiritual education and general reflections on religion are well exposed in the great speech of the Savoyard vicar. The text *Profession of Faith of a Savoyard Vicar* brings significant influences from Calvinism, mixed with Catholic ideals and the substratum of his own ideas about Nature and God. The long lecture translates what we can call *Rousseauian metaphysics*, whose theses about natural religion and other theological aspects may have been emanated from the dialogues established with two priests in the Savoy region: Father Gaime and Father Gâtier.

With these reflections, Rousseau reveals himself to be a deist and presents a way to express his religiosity, that is, to deal with the things of the spirit that does not abandon its maximum referential: nature. Rousseau is a naturalist in pedagogy and also in religion because, after all, religion is still an institution that helps in the denaturation of man and their preparation of social life, therefore an educational institution. It develops our "inner light" (*Emile*, p. 269) and points to the heart as a guide for man's actions and thoughts. Such an attitude does not contradict itself with the use of reason, but it complements and resizes it on a more human and existential plane.

His first dogma and article of faith is that "a will moves the universe and animates nature." (Idem, p. 273) In this way, the will is the driving force of human actions that, acting according to certain laws, reveals intelligence and a harmonious ordering in the universe. In their will and freedom, the man places himself outside the system of Providence and, unfortunately, degrades their nature. But, being an intelligent man, one can rescue the order in search of happiness, by sharing good to the fellow man with the aid of conscience as a guide to human reason.

Testifying against the precepts of revealed religions that tyrannize the truth and monopolize the way of worshiping the Creator, Rousseau confesses: "you see in my exposition only natural religion." (Idem, p. 295) Proper, therefore, for Emile.

Book V deals with the age from twenty to twenty-five years, called *the age of wisdom and marriage* and deals with the marriage bond of Emile and Sophie. To this end, Rousseau describes how the preceptor and his disciple undertake a journey through the region until they are hosted in a peasant house where they meet a fifteen-year-old girl with whom Émile falls in love and gets married.

Since it is not good for a man to be alone, as he stated at the beginning of the book, revealing a strong Christian influence, the preceptor decides to guide Émile's choice of a partner: a sensitive, beautiful, delicate, well-mannered, hospitable woman, in other words, a virtuous woman. From the first meeting to the first kiss and the wedding preparations, the master provides his student with a series of actions and reflections that lead him to a wise and prudent behavior. Before the engagement, the young man is led to remember everything he had learned and is also taken on a journey through Europe to judge governments, nations, and to complete his political training. In this matter, Rousseau inserts a summary of *The Social Contract*,[9] reflects with his disciple and delivers him to beloved Sophie.

The novel ends with a meeting between the master and the disciple when it is announced that Emílio will be a father and intends to educate his son under the guidance of Rousseau.

4. Final considerations

The prodigal son of an aristocracy era, *Emile* goes against an ideal of an intellectualized and formalized society. Along with him, Rousseau stood against the absolutism of the Sun King, the Church, and religious movements such as Jansenism, the Discretionary and Voltair rationalist movement, Jesuit education; and against a whole social order based on ostentation, luxury, artificialism, customs immorality, and the Parisian skepticism. In fact, Rousseau stood against Jean-Jacques himself because his words testify against his examples: the philosopher did not educate or raise the children he had with his faithful wife Thérèse Levasseur. Rousseau sent them to the *Hospice des Enfants-Trouvés* (Orphanage for Abandoned Children) to be adopted. Even though it was a common practice in his days, Rousseau's decision did not have the approval of his wife and was widely criticized by Voltaire and other enemies.

In the preface to *Émile ou de l'éducation*, in the French edition of Garnier-Flammarion, Michel Launay raises a question: "how to take seriously a book on education by a man who abandoned his five children?" Rousseau comes to his defense with a statement that transitions between sincerity and naivety. It is the account in the seventh book *Les Confessions* (*O.C.*, T. I, p. 344) where he states that during his life in Paris and the meetings, he had at the house of a lady of La Selle with people from Parisian society, he found that whoever contributed most to the orphanage, would always be the most applauded. He adds: "It won me over; I formed my thinking as I saw charitable people and, deep down, very honest people; and said to myself, "Since this is the custom of the land, when you live on it you must follow it."

And further on, (Idem, p. 358) states that considering what was going on and the changing circumstances of his life, he had chosen the best for his children. "I wish, and I would still like it today, to have been educated and supported as they were."[1] Evidently, in these comments, the great philosopher, who has always criticized dissimulation, ends up putting on a mask and hiding in the literary complexity of rhetoric. Or, perhaps, he has shown himself to be as he always was: a noble, childish and naive soul.

> If I have made any progress in the knowledge of the human heart, it was my pleasure in seeing and observing the children that provided me with this knowledge. (...) In my writings, I reported the proof that I had developed this study carefully not to have done it with pleasure, and it would certainly be the most incredible thing in the world that Hèloïse and Émile were the results of a man that didn't love children. (*Les Rêveries*, *Neuvième Promenade*, p. 1.087-1.088 – free translation)

With or without a mask, what we see is the tragic life experience of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who left Geneva to be a cosmopolitan. He moved away from society to study it, to understand it in all its foundations, and, in this way, to conceive its utopia. He gave up living among men to search them out in all their feelings and passions; and stopped loving his children to love all the children in the world.

Emile is the declaration of love for man and the faith in the ability to transform man into a good and useful being for humanity. In the construction of this colorful mosaic, as well as of all his work, the Genevan thinker enters a world of profound reflections that only a long solitary reverie could provide. Like the Arcadian poets who entered the fields, swamps, and forests to understand the intricacies of the human soul, Rousseau penetrated so much that he lost himself. He happily left an invaluable legacy and an inexhaustible source for a better understanding of man, of the citizen, and of the best means of developing them with a view to the common good of the whole community, as the master from Stagira valued.

I believe it is sufficient to answer Michel Launay's question. Regardless of what the great masters Aristotle, Rousseau, some romantic poet, or Launay himself may have been in their private lives, what counts most is their work and thought. If we know how to make that difference, to separate gold and gravel, we will find priceless treasures for our reflections.

Notes:

[1] As argued in the thesis defended at USP. Available in: http://www.teses.usp.br/teses/disponiveis/48/48134/tde-30072010-141045/pt-br.php
[2] Genevan jurist. His main works are: *Principes du droit naturel* (1747) and *Principes du droit politique* (1751).
[3] JIMACK, Peter. *Homme and citoyen in Rousseau's Émile*, p. 187.
[4] Ibidem. Free translation of the excerpt: "*homme in a wider sense, clearly transcending both the homme de la nature and the citoyen."*
[5] Known as the "broad bean episode", it is part of Book 2 of *Émile*, reported on pages 85 to 87 of the Brazilian version, by Sérgio Milliet.
[6] Although Rousseau does it in the *Discourse on Political Economy* (p. 43) when he says that "if goods do not belong to people, there is nothing easier than evading their duties and delighting with the laws." But we must not forget that the concept of property in the eighteenth century, much less in Rousseauian thought, does not have the capitalist meaning of nowadays. In Rousseau there is the sense of property defended by Locke, that is, everything that belongs to an individual by right, starting with the person itself. (Cf. LOCKE, J. *Segundo tratado sobre o governo*)
[7] The summary of the *Social Contract* can be found in book 5, by *Émile*. In the DIFEL version, pp. 541-552.
[8] *Confessions*, volume 2, p. 175.
[9] In the DIFEL version, pp. 541-552.

[1] Translated from the original French: "J'aurois voulu, je voudrois encore avoir été élevé et nourri comme ils l'ont été" (*O.C.*, T. I, p. 358).

References:

[1]. Cassirer, E. (1987). *Le probléme Jean-Jacques Rousseau*. Preface de Jean Starobnski. Paris: Hachette.
[2]. Comenius (2002). *Didática Magna*. Aparelho crítico: Marta Fattori; tradução Ivone Castilho Benedetti. (2ª. ed.) São Paulo: Martins Fontes, (Paidéia).
[3]. Francisco, M. F. S. (1998). A filosofia da educação de Rousseau – uma proposta de releitura do Emílio. In: *Cadernos de História e Filosofia da Educação*, v. II, n. 4, p. 35-42. São Paulo: Editora da Faculdade de Educação da USP.
[4]. Gadotti, M. (2000). *História das ideias pedagógicas*. São Paulo: Ática.
[5]. Harzard, P. (1978). *O pensamento europeu no século XVIII* (de Montesquieu a Lessing). Tradução Carlos Grifo Babo. Portugal: Editorial Presença; Brasil: Martins Fontes, (Coleção Síntese).
[6]. Paiva, W. A. (2007). *O Emílio de Rousseau e a formação do cidadão do mundo moderno*. Trindade: CEODO.
[7]. Rang, M. (1964). L'éducation publique et la formation des citoyens chez J.-J. Rousseau. In: *Études sur le "Contrat Social" de J.-J. Rousseau*. Actes de Journées d'études tenues à Dijon – mai, 1962. Paris : Sociétés les belles lettres.
[8]. Rousseau, J.-J. (1959). .*As confissões* (2 vol.). Tradução de Rachel de Queiroz. 2ª. ed. São Paulo: Atena Editora.
[9]. _____ (1964). *Oeuvres complètes*. Paris: Gallimard, 4 volumes (Bibliothéque de la Plêiade).
[10]. _____(1966). *Émile ou de l'éducation*. Paris: GF Flammarion.
[11]. _____(1973) *Emílio ou da educação*. 2ª ed. São Paulo: Difusão Européia do Livro.
[12]. _____(1979) *Emile or on education*. Introduction, translation and Notes by Allan Bloom. USA: Basic Books.
[13]. _____(1999). *Discurso sobre as ciências e as artes*. Tradução de Lourdes Santos Machado. Introduções e notas de Paul Arbousse-Bastide e Lourival Gomes Machado. S. Paulo: Nova Cultural, (Coleção Os Pensadores; volume II).
[14]. _____(1999). *Discurso sobre a origem e os fundamentos da desigualdade entre os homens*. Tradução de Lourdes Santos Machado. Introduções e notas de Paul Arbousse-Bastide e Lourival Gomes Machado. S. Paulo: Nova Cultural, (Coleção Os Pensadores; volume II).
[15]. _____(1991). *Os devaneios do caminhante solitário*. Org. e tradução de Fúlvia Maria Luíza Moretto. Brasília: Editora Universidade de Brasília.
[16]. Salinas Fortes, L. R. (1989). *Rousseau: o bom selvagem*. São Paulo: FTD, (Prazer em conhecer).
[17]. Starobinsky, J. (1991). *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: a transparência e o obstáculo*. Seguido de sete ensaios sobre Rousseau. Tradução Maria Lúcia Machado. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.
[18]. Suchodolski, B. (2000). *A pedagogia e as grandes correntes filosóficas: A pedagogia da essência e a pedagogia da existência*. 5ª. ed. Tradução Liliana Rombert Soeiro. Lisboa: Livros Horizonte.
[19]. Vargas, Y. (1995). *Introduction à l'Emile de Rousseau*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France – PUF.