



Pedagogy as the foundation of political theory in Rousseau: an outline of the enlightenment in education

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Abstract

This article seeks – through a critical and explanatory analysis, based on bibliography studies of Rousseau's works, focusing mainly on Discourses and Emile – to show how the concept of nature, in the perspective of the developed political and social theory by Rousseau, is consistent with that expressed in his pedagogical work. We intend to analyze the concept of nature when he thinks about the state of nature, the natural man and early childhood - the child Emile – and then the civil state, the social man and the moral individual – the citizen – in order to rethink the purpose of educational action within a political project of society. By carefully exploring the political-social dimension with the pedagogical dimension in the reference works, it is possible to conclude that the pedagogical project, in Rousseau, is, at the same time, an alternative and complement to the politics agenda, and is therefore necessarily inscribed on the agenda of life in society.

Keywords: Rousseau. Emile. Enlightenment. Philosophy of education.

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A pedagogia como alicerce da teoria política em Rousseau: um traçado do Iluminismo na educação

Resumo

O presente artigo procura – através de uma análise crítica e explicativa, baseada em estudos de bibliografia das obras de Rousseau, centrando-se principalmente nos Discursos e em Emílio – evidenciar de que maneira o conceito de natureza, na perspectiva da teoria política e social desenvolvida por Rousseau, se coaduna com aquele expresso em sua obra pedagógica. Pretendemos analisar o conceito de natureza quando ele pensa o estado de natureza, o homem natural e a primeira infância - a criança Emílio – e depois o estado civil, o homem social e o indivíduo moral - o cidadão - tendo em vista repensar a finalidade da ação educacional dentro de um projeto político de sociedade. Explorando detidamente a dimensão político-social com a dimensão pedagógica nas obras de referência, é possível concluir que o projeto pedagógico, em Rousseau, é, a um só tempo, alternativa e complemento da pauta da política, estando, portanto, necessariamente inscrito na agenda da vida em sociedade.

Palavras-chave: Rousseau. Emílio. Iluminismo. Filosofia da educação.



La pedagogía como fundamento de la teoría política en Rousseau: un esbozo de la Ilustración en la educación

Resumen

Este artículo busca, a través de un análisis crítico y explicativo, basado en estudios bibliográficos de las obras de Rousseau, centrándose principalmente en Discursos y Emílio, mostrar cómo el concepto de naturaleza, en la perspectiva de la teoría política y social desarrollada por Rousseau, es consistente con lo expresado en su trabajo pedagógico. Tenemos la intención de analizar el concepto de naturaleza cuando piensa en el estado de la naturaleza, el hombre natural y la primera infancia, el niño Emílio, y luego el estado civil, el hombre social y el individuo moral, el ciudadano, para repensar el propósito de acción educativa dentro de un proyecto político de la sociedad. Al explorar cuidadosamente la dimensión político-social con la dimensión pedagógica en los trabajos de referencia, es posible concluir que el proyecto pedagógico, en Rousseau, es, al mismo tiempo, una alternativa y un complemento de la agenda política, y por lo tanto está necesariamente inscrito en la agenda de la vida en sociedad.

Palabras clave: Rousseau. Emile. La iluminación. Filosofía de la educación.

Introduction

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This work aims to revisit a vastly relevant topic regarding Rousseau's conceptualization and paramount for the Philosophy of Education. Seeking to cast a new light on the interpretation of Rousseau's theories, deeply exploring its political-social dimension along with its pedagogical dimension, for the sake of rethinking the purpose of educational action within a political project of society. Rousseau is a preeminent author for the Philosophy of Education; and knowing his theoretical-methodological postulations is essential for educators, considering that his ideas resonate with concepts of the educational field even nowadays.

The purpose of this article is – through a critical and explanatory analysis, based on bibliographic studies of Rousseau's works, focusing mainly on his *Discourses* and *Emile* – to emphasize the structures in which the concept of nature, from the perspective of the political and social theory developed by Rousseau, is consistent with that expressed in his pedagogical work. First and foremost an overview is in order, as an outline of the historical period in which Rousseau lived, the eighteenth century, in an attempt to better understand what instigated the philosopher's reasoning, with whom he discussed and what debates exerted such an influence on him that led him to think about the tensions of modern life and the human issues, later achieving his idea of nature. Then, to



analyze the concept of nature from the perspective of the philosopher's political-social reasoning in order to explore it from the pedagogical perspective, seeking to contemplate the growth of the child Emile from the perspective of the transformation from natural self to social self.

Therefore, we intend to analyze the concept of nature in connection with the philosopher's thoughts regarding the state of nature, the natural self and the early childhood – the child Emile – and subsequently, the civil state, the social man and the moral self - the citizen – with the intention of studying how these aspects relate to each other. Finally, this article seeks to grasp a conceivable cohesion in Rousseau's reasoning, in order to develop a theory on the foundations of law and society, as well as a pedagogical project, to establish the people's will and sovereignty in a society that, according to the philosopher, is moving towards moral decay.

The century of lights

The eighteenth century was a period of intense political, social and economic changes that had been taking place since the dawn of the Modern Age. It was also a time marked by great intellectual production and tensions between the former absolutist regime and the emerging bourgeoisie. It is known as the century of lights for a reason, as it was guided by the power of human rationality as its universal principle. From universality, according to Todorov (2008), stems the demand for equality and universal human rights. Accompanying the concept of autonomy comes the thesis of emancipation, as parts of the same process of freedom from all that is unnatural and imposed on man, in other words, all that is supernatural - that which brings about the disenchantment to the world -, for reason acknowledges only those truths that are natural. Thus, it was towards religion that many of the criticisms of the Enlightenment thinkers turned, being one of the most visible forms of guardianship known to men, leaving both society and the individual in a submissive condition. For this reason, religion should be separated from the government and the State should be secular to lead men to the future, no longer based on revelations or miracles, but on natural truths and logic, grounded on a natural religion that "[...] was the source of enlightenment, the guarantee of reason" (HAZARD, 1974, p. 153).



There is, consequently, a tendency to the secularization of knowledge since the Renaissance, which is reinforced in the Enlightenment. The individual self wants not only to know in order to contemplate, but to know in order to transform, to master nature, desecrating it and detaching it from religion. The search for redemption is thus replaced by that which stands as the purpose of human actions: the search for happiness and well-being. Immediate happiness became the subject of many essays and speeches of Enlightenment philosophers. Some, the naiver ones, even suggested methods for reaching such happiness; it was the new Grail of philosophy, viewed as a new human right and duty.

Knowledge should be secular and widely disseminated – according to encyclopedists, represented by Diderot and D'alembert. Schools should also become secular, free, universal and compulsory, seeking new paths for learning, burdened by the great responsibility of spreading lights and knowledge. Like so, they favored “[...] education in all its forms, from the school to the academies, and the dissemination of knowledge, by specialized publications or by encyclopedias addressed to the general public” (TODOROV, 2008, p. 17). Therefore, knowledge soon gained its autonomy, based on experience and reason. The latter, for most intellectuals, reigned supreme, as it was “[...] in charge of revealing the truth, of exposing the error” (HAZARD, 1974, p. 45). Everyone believed in the unity, universality and certainty of reason, which, from the observation of phenomena, analysis and comparison, was supposed to unravel the truths and natural laws.

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Rousseau and the Enlightenment

Jean Jacques Rousseau was born in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1712. Son of a watchmaker, he lost his mother at birth. He came from a middle-class family and went through many difficulties in his childhood, both financial and emotional. Rousseau was abandoned by his father, who died later on, and was fostered by an uncle, a Protestant pastor. When he turned 16 years old, he left to Savoy. For some time, he made a living as a music teacher and as preceptor of two aristocratic boys in 1740, having already been an apprentice watchmaker, pastor and registrar. Tired of life in the city, he went to the countryside to live in contact with nature and to work on his intellectual projects.



In 1742, he moved to Paris, where he met philosophers such as Diderot, D'alembert and the encyclopedists, maturing his political and philosophical conceptions. In 1749, he published the *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences*, awarded with a gold medal by the Academy of Dijon, and in 1755, the *Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men*, where the cornerstone of the trigger for social and moral inequalities between men becomes evident and sets off the discussion on the social contract, merging two viewpoints - the man in the natural state and that of man in the civil state. The work *The Social Contract* investigates the foundation of legitimate authority as to "[...] establish the principles of political rights between men [...]" (DALBOSCO, 2011b, p. 27), with the ideal of a just and democratic society governed by the will of the majority. To do so, he will try to devise a State conceived as an entity of reason, a moral entity, as he thought that for this social order to be possible the political-legal structure should be based on the moral capacity of each citizen to govern themselves and abide by the laws. And such morality in actions and self-government will, in turn, be the fruit of a specific education also devised by Rousseau, to which he attributed great importance and is interconnected with his political project.

Rousseau, despite presenting the innovation of Enlightenment thought in its political perspective, as an anti-absolutist, will oppose to this conception of knowledge, going against the common opinion of his time when he presents his criticism of knowledge in the *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences*. In that Century of Lights, the enlightened public opinion believed in the progress of reason. The general consensus believed that knowledge emancipated the self. For most, the establishment of sciences and arts would have contributed to the improvement of customs and the improvement of humankind, since knowledge made man more human-forming a cultured, erudite and politer spirit. But rather than the primacy of rationality as the human condition, such as advocated by the Illuminists, Rousseau "[...] depicts the sound conscience as a guide more trustworthy than reason, and morality as the true natural order" (ROUSSEAU, 1973a, p. 359).

The matter of meaning, emotions and feelings would be much more important for Rousseau than rationalization, as well as prior to it. Therefore, he criticized institutions and a certain model of society that bet all stakes on reason, as did the schools and the education of his time. The civilizing process would have, in fact, contributed to the deterioration of the customs and society, overshadowing the natural dispositions of men and leading them to moral depravity.

And in his *First Discourse* he already stated that the “[...] foolish education that adorns our spirit and corrupts our judgment [...]” (ROUSSEAU, 1973A, p. 355) which sustained the vices of society, teaching what should be forgotten and not duties of men; as well as the overvaluation of talents along with the weakening of virtues, was a source of inequality.

From cultural criticism to social criticism

In Rousseau's thought, the sciences and the arts as well as morals would have arisen from our vices - from human pride. Before, men would be innocent and virtuous; but as property was established, alongside moral and political inequality, vices and amenities multiplied. Luxury and idleness constitute themselves in this moment, “[...] generating hypocrisy, the corruption of customs and the refusal to seem what, in fact, one is” (PISSARRA, 2002, p. 41). From inequality emerges wealth, which engender luxury and idleness, which in turn originate fine arts and science.

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That being so, there is in the *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences*, a negative view regarding progress, which would accompany the moral depravity of man, multiplying his vices. A critique of knowledge and the simulacrum of an unjust society, since knowledge, the science, is not considered by Rousseau as an evil in itself, it is not the source of vices, however, “[...] these who lead us to those by a false [...]” (BARROS, 1963, p. 14) and warped path. And only talented and virtuous men - true sages - would be able to make good use of knowledge by directing its potentiality, uniting science and virtue.

Man – who was good, happy and free – becomes alienated, evil, unhappy and enslaved, at the same time that he becomes civilized and resorts to appearances and to the art of pleasing as a new moral, concerned only with God's will and with the opinion of others, since in society, [...] happiness is not within the man, but in the restlessness that always seeks more and more the recognition from the other” (PISSARRA, 2002, p. 43).

Rousseau then begins – as Pissarra (2002) declares – by criticizing culture, describing corrupt civil societies, so that he can then establish his critique of society. And ensuing that, in the *Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men*, he seeks the origin of corruption and inequality in history itself, as well as in its outskirts, through a hypothetical and conditional reasoning that, by



setting apart all facts, forms “[...] conjectures drawn solely from the nature of Man and of the beings that surround him, about what would have transformed the human race if it had abandoned itself” (ROUSSEAU, 1973b, p. 242).

The Concept of Nature

It is in his *Second Discourse* that Rousseau - based on his critique of societies and to answer the Academy of Dijon whether inequality would be allowed by the natural law - will seek the foundation of the generating process of moral and political inequalities between men, noting “[...] the moment when, succeeding the right to violence, nature was subjected to the law” (ROUSSEAU, 1973b, p. 241). To find the foundation of the power and formation of society and to solve the problem of natural law, he resorts to the science of Man - the most useful of all -, separating from his soul that which was desired by nature, by providence, from that which was produced by man, and thus, contrasting the natural state with the civil state.

To reflect on nature, Rousseau uses as a methodological resource observation, imagination, introspection and abstract analysis, distancing himself from all facts, given that the state of nature, according to the Genevan, would be found on the outskirts of history, being a hypothetical state “[...] that no longer exists, that, perhaps, never existed, that probably never will exist” (ROUSSEAU, 1973b, p. 234).

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State of nature and the natural man

Rousseau begins the reflection on the state of nature by characterizing man in his physical, metaphysical and moral dimensions. From the physical point of view, Man is a robust and strong animal, which walks on two feet. It has no instinct of its own, but it is able to appropriate all instincts, and just like the animals, it is an "ingenious machine" endowed with senses and acting by the laws of mechanics. The only instrument it has is the body with which it satisfies all of its needs, sufficing to itself.

Although similar, there are differences between men and animals. Both are endowed with senses and instincts, through which they perceive and feel the

world, but only man is endowed with freedom. The animal "chooses and rejects by instinct" while the man does so "by an act of freedom" (ROUSSEAU, 1973b, p. 248). Moreover, only man is endowed with perfectibility, which is the ability to perfect himself – to learn and adapt –, but also, to degenerate.

It is perfectibility that removes man from his original condition, promoting, along with the aid of the circumstances, the development of his higher faculties, and then, initiating the process of denaturation, "[...] blossoming the lights and errors, vices and virtues" (ROUSSEAU, 1973b, p. 249). Being free ensures the ability to choose his actions, resisting instincts and creating "in man an opposition with nature from which his consciousness develops and which demonstrates the spirituality of his soul" (MONTEAGUDO, 2006, p. 27), also bestowing man with imagination by being endowed with perfectibility, the human being is able to develop reason, which is awakened by circumstances and needs. In this way, man can choose his actions and react differently to them, in order to meet his needs and desires, overcoming himself, but also moving away from his original condition.

8 Man in the state of nature has only physical needs and the only concern is with himself, with his self-preservation and with the present; different from the social man, who has artificial needs and cares about the future. The feeling that guides the wills of the natural man is amour de soi (a type of self-love), directly related to natural needs – a preference for oneself – but without moral character, for there is no relation with sociability, morality or common duties. The amour de soi is moderated by another natural virtue, compassion, which is the recognition of oneself in the other. A feeling from which all social qualities derive - such as humanity, generosity, mercy – and that "[...] in the state of nature, occupies the place of laws, customs and virtue, with the advantage that no one feels tempted to disobey its sweet calling" (ROUSSEAU, 1973b, p. 260).

There is no morality in nature, for man has no knowledge of what is good or bad and "[...] it is neither the development of the lights, nor the bridle of the law, but the tranquility of passions and ignorance of addiction that prevent them from doing evil" (ROUSSEAU, 1973b, p. 258). He knows only the elementary passions, which come from the impulse of nature – the desire to nourish, reproduce, rest, and the evils of pain and hunger.

Nor is there misery and slavery, for "[...] the bonds of servitude are formed by the mutual dependence of men and the reciprocal needs that unite



them" (ROUSSEAU, 1973B, p.264). The natural man lives independently, since he does not need the help of another to conserve itself, since nature has provided the necessary to suffice to himself, its instinct and the strength of his body being sufficient.

Thus, unlike what other philosophers have stated, man would not naturally tend to sociability, for this will would only develop when, due to circumstances, man is no longer able to suffice to himself. There was no need for coexistence and social relations between men, language was also not essential, there was only an elementary form of communication, the primal scream.

Early progress

In the state of nature, man was – according to Rousseau – robust and sensitive, free and endowed with perfectibility, naturally good and morally neutral, while his desires were directed by self-love (*amour de soi*) and compassion. Love, as well as the differences, was only physical in order to carry on with reproduction. There was no sociability, no affective bonds, no languages. There was also no form of cultural hoarding, with Man always starting from the same point.

While Locke claimed that property was a natural right, for Rousseau (1973b) it would be an artifact, built by man, and that, in fact, consisted in the last term of the state of nature, a creation formed from previous ideas, numerous lights and successive progress, instituting the first moral inequality between men – the separation between the rich and the poor. This evidently multiplied exponentially the inequality between men, which, in nature, was almost non-existent.

Such progress was triggered by the surge of difficulties brought about by nature, such as "[...] the scourges of floods, droughts, earthquakes [...]" (PISSARRA, 2002, p. 52) or competition with animals. At the moment when his instinct and the forces of his body are no longer enough to be protected and soon, the natural man, endowed with perfectibility, overcomes himself, exercising his body to dominate nature so as to survive. Discovers tools and weapons, fishing and hunting, often struggling with other men for his subsistence or "[...] compensating for what had to be yielded to the strongest" (ROUSSEAU, 1973b, p. 266).

Man's first feeling was of his existence, concerned with his preservation, since the "[...] first look man took on itself [...]" that "[...] gave rise to the first movement of pride within [...]" (ROUSSEAU, 1973b, p. 267) and the first individual was born. From the first progress, the spirit of man naturally began to observe certain relations and to make comparisons, as stated by Rousseau (1973b), epitomized by the words big and small, fast and slow, for example, and which produced in man a certain reflection – or a "mechanical prudence" – in view of his safety. Discovers that his fellow men also acted and thought the same way and that, then, the "[...] only maneuverable of human actions [...]" (ROUSSEAU, 1973b, p. 267) is well-being. Love of well-being, as a common interest to men, leads to the recognition of the advantages of mutual commitment and union with other men, apparent with the fact that they withdraw from nature their sustenance. This first form of sociability gives rise to the first developments of languages.

Further progress soon ensued. Men began to live in a dwelling, an idea prior to property, thus constituting the first form of society, families, and enabling the progress of feelings, giving rise to conjugal love and paternal love, feelings of preference and jealousy. "As ideas and feelings succeed each other, as the spirit and heart unfolds, the human race continues to domesticate itself, developing connections and tightening bonds" (ROUSSEAU, 1973b, p. 269).

The desire for esteem emerges, to be considered and appreciated mutually, and thus, the first duties of civility and moral obligations. Man no longer in himself, compassion is affected, identification with his fellow men is increased and his self-love soon gradually turns from amour de soi into amour-propre, a feeling related to artificial needs and that concerns the search for overcoming at the expense of others - a feeling with a moral character and characteristic of the social man, who transforms his condition into a perverse society.

Morality is introduced into actions, and man is already capable of being perverse. Offenses increase, and the fear of revenge takes the place of the bridle of laws. In Rousseau's theory, there would then be two stages of the state of nature and two natural men. The noble Savage, who lives in a simple and solitary way in the original state and the bad Savage, in which the germs of society are already present, but without the advantages of civilization to appease his passions. Until the establishment of property and its legitimizing laws, when the first moral inequality has its origin – determining the rich and the poor – and the civil status is instituted. At the first stage, the harmonious



description of the state of nature would match Locke's perspective. In the second stage, however, there would be a tendency towards the state of war would, as Hobbes pointed out.

While the *Second Discourse* explains what enabled human sociability and the alienation of natural man from his original condition progressing into moral decay, the *Social Contract*, a work he wrote years later, resumes these issues through a less pessimistic point of view. It seeks to institute political rights among men, as to think of a model of society in which the political-legal structure was based on a moral order, being governed by the majority's will and by a sovereign and free people. Rousseau wrote his *Social Contract* at the same time as his *Emile, or On Education* where he sought to think how it would be possible to form a sovereign people and establish the majority's will in a corrupt society through an education that would nurture free, independent and moral men and citizens. In fact, it is as if *Emile* wanted to shape the *Contract's* Legislator.

Education as a partner to politics

Jean-Jacques Rousseau published *Emile, or On Education* in 1762 and he considers it to be his most important work. In it, he elaborates a project of education that seeks to establish the characteristics of a sovereign man, who is in agreement with himself, being good, both for himself and for others. However -as Maria de Fatima Francisco (2011) argues – there are many readings of this work that are biased, with its interpretation only regarding the definition of education in itself. In fact, it is a treatise on education that clearly has a philosophical and theoretical dimension, where Rousseau's political and social maxims are expressed.

Moreover, for Francisco (2011), it is difficult to deny the pedagogical aspect of the book, not only for the defense of adopting new practices evidenced by the pedagogical scenes depicted, but also due to the search to form a new educator, as well as for the severe criticism of the practices and education of his time – unaccommodating and intellectualist. For Rousseau, education in schools and charitable schools was one “[...] barbaric education that sacrifices the present for an uncertain future [...]” (ROUSSEAU, 1999, p. 68); which takes away the freedom of the child by making it miserable and enslaved; which embarrasses and corrupts the spirit of the child by putting it in contact with



society's vices and hypocrisy; and which favors the encouragement of the difference between the spirits, thus increasing inequalities. Thus the current education would produce in man a contradiction – “[...] a two-faced man [...]” – forcing the self to divide among several impulses – of nature and civility – that does not lead man to any of his goals and does not allow him to enter into agreement with himself. But “[...] if perhaps the double end we set ourselves could be amalgamated into one, suppressing the contradictions of man, we would remove a great obstacle to happiness” (ROUSSEAU, 1999, p. 13).

It is through the exposition of the principles and the purpose Education serves that Rousseau begins his book. What would be the purpose, then, of Education? To shape the self or to shape the citizen? As we have seen, the dual purpose, as observed in the school institutions of his time, would not be feasible, since it generates a contradiction that, according to the author, is irreconcilable. Thus, the purposes of the Education as proposed by Rousseau will differ from the current conceptions of formation for the customs and the civility, or in other words, for life in society or for God in the schools and charity schools of his time. To try to overcome the contradictions of modern man he comes up with an integral formation, of both body and spirit, to learn to live following the course of nature, of its natural dispositions, “[...] educating man for itself, guided by the natural man and leaving aside the pretension to shape the social Man” (FRANCISCO, 2008, p. 58).

What many interpretations of the work suggest – as Francisco (2008) recalls – is that Rousseau, when thinking about education centered on a particular individual, Emile, in the private sphere, in the countryside and by hiring a preceptor, is only concerned with domestic education – the natural education. In fact, the first books will deal with Emile's natural education, having nature as master and conductor of the educational process, and not men acting in society. But that is not all. We will see that the project of education of the child Emile involves two successive stages of Education: a natural education and another moral one, and the latter is only possible if the first is successful. Unlike the dual purpose, Rousseau aims to reach one end and then the other in order to reconcile the contradictions of the self. For this it would be necessary to first know the natural man and this is Rousseau's intentions regarding his reflections and research, which constitute the experimental character of his treatise on education.



Emile: the child and the childhood

The book *Emile, or On Education* is divided into five parts that correspond to the five stages of the child's development from birth to adulthood. In books I and II, Rousseau focus on early childhood (0 to 2 years) and second childhood (2 to 12 years), respectively. Book III deals with a period between childhood and youth, the age of strength (12-15 years), while books IV and V, the period of youth (15-20 years) and adulthood (20-25 years), respectively.

For Rousseau (1999), the way society was configured led man to a corrupt way of life. Man was educated for a certain role, to achieve social prestige, being guided by the opinion of others – living in a dependent and unhappy way – being neither man nor citizen. Therefore, to shape him as a man, Rousseau wants to educate Emile by preserving his natural dispositions and according to nature. The criticism of culture made in his *First Discourse*, and furthermore the criticism and diagnosis of the social configuration of a corrupted society in his *Second Discourse*, which is then resumed in his *Social Contract*, Rousseau elaborates in *Emilie, or On Education* a project of natural and social education, thinking first and foremost on an education that “[...] must be negative, protecting the heart and spirit from error [...]” (ROUSSEAU, 1999, p. 104) and then on a positive education (social or moral).

The negative, or natural, education starts from birth and extends to the end of the second childhood, when Emile turns 12 years old. It consists in letting nature act on the child's development by emphasizing the process of “[...] strengthening of the body and refinement of the senses [...]” (DALBOSCO, 2011a, p. 32) and accustoming the child to relate to nature and its ruler - the preceptor responsible for Emile's upbringing. However, the child, according to Rousseau (1999), to be well shepherd, must follow one guide only, which must be nature, whose calling does not suffer any external influence and which will be responsible for the internal development of the faculties, organs and body of Emile, preserving his natural dispositions. And the positive education is consolidated when he enters an adult social life, a phase of intense sociability. The moral education, “[...] based on the proper use of reason, the rational determination of will and the moral mastery of oneself [...]” (DALBOSCO, 2011b, p. 32), is only possible if the natural education has been carried out well.

According to Rousseau (1999), the real study is that of the human condition and the first duty of the man is to be human in a dignified way. He innovates



pedagogical thinking by reversing the centralization of interests and drawing up a new representation about the child and the childhood. Rousseau points out a specificity of childhood, where the child has its own ways of seeing, feeling and thinking. Therefore, is necessary to treat them as children and not as adults in miniatures, since "[...] nature wants children to be children before being men [...]" (ROUSSEAU, 1999, p. 75), it is indispensable to treat the child according to their age and conditions. One must love childhood and consider it in one's world, favoring its instincts. Disrupting this order by imposing reason too soon can produce 'prematurely developed fruits' susceptible to corruption.

The concept of childhood in modernity gains a new formulation with Rousseau and is fundamental to his thinking, considering that he gauges the childhood as the key to understanding man and society, observing its own phases of development and specific characteristics. In order for an autonomous education to be possible, then, the preceptor must first know it, observe it, and learn from nature. In addition to their own ways of seeing, feeling and thinking, there is a retroactivity of the child in regards to the adult, because before thinking and making use of reason, like the adult, the child feels, because they have not yet developed their higher faculties. Ergo, the "[...] childhood is the sleep of reason [...]" (ROUSSEAU, 1999, p. 98) and the child "[...] can only reach the proper use of their cognitive ability by a good education of their senses [...]" (DALBOSCO, 2011b, p. 29) that would only be possible to be achieved through a natural education.

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Education according to nature

"Education begins with life, at birth the child is already a disciple, not of the preceptor, but of nature" (ROUSSEAU, 1999, p. 41). Rousseau thinks of Emile's natural education in the countryside, distanced from the vices of society, the "abyss of the human species", because according to him, men were not made to live huddled and "[...] the more they gather, the more they corrupt themselves [...]" by the various associations that would result on the sickness of the body and addictions of the soul.

The countryside, unlike the cities, would foster a renewal to the human species "[...] where the pleasures combined with the duties of nature would soon rid their taste for those who do not relate to it [...]" (ROUSSEAU, 1999, p.



41). Emile would then be able to develop – from his own experience and his relationship with nature as well as with the things that surround him – an internal and natural growth of his forces, by means of an education of the body through exercises and through his senses, that is, through touch, smell, taste, vision and hearing.

According to Rousseau (1999) the first childhood developments occur almost simultaneously, and the first feeling is pain and suffering due to the difficulty of moving. As soon as they are born, the child, rather than being kept immobilized, needs to stretch and move their limbs to relieve them from numbness, since for Rousseau, the inaction in which the baby is kept would prevent the child from becoming strong. Also, as Pissarra (2002) states, the physical development and freedom of movement of the limbs is fundamental for the child to be able to come into contact with the world through the senses and hence gradually discover the differences and oppositions inherent to it.

The first needs of the child are all natural, for self-preservation, such as feeding and sleeping. Given that the child is fragile, weak and defenseless, they depend on the adult to satisfy their needs and protect them. Their first language is crying, which at first is only to make requests, but soon it turns into demands and as such, "[...] from this weakness, from which the feeling of dependence initially comes, the idea of the empire and of domination is born" (ROUSSEAU, 1999, p. 52). Therefore, the first ideas of the child are of domination and servitude and are conceived in Emile's state of dependence, and that represents a problem to those who wish to be good educators. According to Pissarra (2002) it is imperative to know how to meet the needs of children without being enslaved or enslaving them, thus preparing them for autonomy.

Thus, to be a good preceptor, in addition to respecting children in their own world and knowing the natural laws, guiding them to the appropriate interventions, it is necessary to keep them only under the dependence of things, and not of people, because this leads to the feeling of domination. If such feeling remains, it can awaken and favor the amour de soi, according to Rousseau (1999), and as such, trigger the detachment from nature. To remain healthy and follow the course of nature, Emile must find resistance only in objects and not in wills, so that he may gradually develop the ability to recognize the limits of his own strengths, for limiting his desires in view of his capacity will afflict him with less suffering related to deprivation, resulting on more freedom and less control.

Throughout the development of the child in childhood, the physical body and soul would tend to come into balance. In the second childhood, the language of crying is replaced by speech. Emile must exercise more and more his body to strengthen himself, he must run, have fun, fall and hurt himself, since "[...] the well-being of freedom compensates for many injuries [...]" (ROUSSEAU, 1999, p. 67) and to multiply the discomfort in his childhood means to spare him in the age of reason. With the progress of his strength, Emile starts to need less help from others; and, for Rousseau, with such progress, the knowledge that will grant him the power to be in charge of his strengths is also developed.

However, before the age of reason, the preceptor must be careful with the use of words, because Emile must not yet come into contact with ideas of morality or sociability, his lessons being grounded more on experience than on verbal lessons. "The only moral lesson that is suitable to childhood and the most important one for men at any age is to do no harm to anyone" (ROUSSEAU, 1999, p. 94). Nor should the child be educated by reason, as this would mean "to start at the end" and reason is, according to Rousseau's theory, a faculty comprising all of the others with a harder and later development. The reason, moreover, is the bridle of strength, and as such, has no place in the natural education.

Nor should the preceptor punish the child with physical punishments or sermons, for they would make no sense to Emile since, "[...] before the age of reason, we do good and evil without knowing it, and there is no morality in our actions" (ROUSSEAU, 1999, p. 53). It is only through reason that we are able to know good and evil. Therefore, the first moral notions must surface as a consequence of the child's own experience.

From natural virtues to sociability

The "true youth of the world", according to Pissarra (2002), where the freedom and equality that corresponded to the manufacture of objects by solely one person, due to the difficulties prompted by nature as well as the need to organize production, is replaced by a new stage where men have come to depend on each other, giving rise not only to property but also to inequality, slavery and misery. When the state of war becomes inevitable, endangering



the preservation of the species, it is when the first laws and conventions will be established, leading to societies.

Then, the passage from the state of nature to the civil state, the development of technique, passions and higher faculties; the transformation of the noble savage into the cruel man who lives in society took place with successive advances, triggered by circumstances, by chance, having as consequence the establishment of the sciences and the arts that accompanied the moral depravity of man. From a political point of view, the passage from one state to another happens to Rousseau through a pact in defense of society and property, a pact of submission that enslaved man, and from a metaphysical point of view, by the transformation of natural goodness into rational egoism, from a self-love characterized as *amour de soi* - which is amoral - into the *amour-propre* type of self-love - the latter, indeed, with a moral character.

The *amour de soi*, similarly to compassion, is essential to man and works as the cornerstone of the natural right, while the feelings of the social man – which should guide his will – is self-love (*amour-propre*). As for the compassion, according to Monteagudo (2006), in conjunction with freedom, it is where lies the potential sociability that is prompted by the circumstances and the need for preservation, and consequently that enables morality, but also moderates and appeases the *amour de soi*, being a “natural compensation” for the evil effects of sociability and competing “[...] for the mutual preservation of the whole species” (ROUSSEAU, 1973B, p. 260). However, compassion is affected by the self-love's gradual transformation of *amour de soi* into *amour-propre*, which becomes increasingly intense allowing negative aspects of human passions such as shame, envy, contempt, vanity, pride to be “[...]channeled, rationally, by *amour de soi* [...]” (DALBOSCO, 2011b, p. 38) weakening the natural feeling of compassion.

Rousseau's hypothetical return to the state of original nature – as a methodological resource for thinking about the natural man devoid of society's artificial determinations – is not only a search for the origin of inequality, but an attempt to solve the problem of morality, which further developed in *Emile, or On Education*. In *Emile*, Rousseau designs a model of primary education according to nature, based on the concept of childhood as a phase of the individual's life with specific characteristics, different from the adult. According to Barros (1963), for Rousseau, the man is not just one self, there is a dualism in the conception of man who is both capable of being free and of being a slave for



passions, who can love good and do evil; there is a struggle of the soul against the body, of the sensitive and the intelligible, and in this way, man lives morality as a problem capable of subjecting himself or not to the domination of passions.

In addition to compassion and amour de soi, both natural virtues, man is naturally endowed with freedom – will - and perfectibility – the ability to learn, adapt and perfect himself. But the freedom that distinguishes men from animals, according to Barros (1963), is in fact a potential characteristic in natural man, stimulated by the social life that transforms man into a moral being. It depends on certain circumstances and events to awaken in the man, and above all, relies on the discovery of the other. For it is from the relationship with the fellow man that the self is able to attain the moral categories that freedom entails and become a man by exercising it. More than that, “[...] in the possession of his freedom and responsibility, the man faces human destiny, a moral problem. He can either overcome his animal condition or succumb under it” (BARROS, 1963, p. 26).

Rousseau describes the state of nature as conducive to peace, and the original man, endowed with senses and instincts, with potential freedom and perfectibility. Unlike the social man, the natural man has only natural needs, associated to self-preservation; guided by compassion and amour de soi, which is amoral. On the other hand, the social man, subject to passions and guided by reason, has artificial needs that his body, weakened by the establishment of the sciences and the arts – and also by the ornamentation of his spirit, learning to “say well” rather than “do well”, through an education that acts as a reproduction of vices – can no longer satisfy. And this distance between his desires and his strength's ability is what will make the condition of man in society unhappy and miserable.

The reason is not necessary in nature, because men live in perfect harmony with animals, their needs do not exceed their strength and neither do they need each other, being sociability, in fact, the source of the evils that man inflicts upon themselves. Faced with the difficulties imposed on men by nature for their survival, and in view of the fact that they are endowed with freedom and perfectibility, they soon begin to denature themselves, moving away from their original condition. Their needs are intensified to the point that they cannot be satisfied solely with their instinct and the strength of their bodies, which leads to their improvement regarding the progress of the passions and the continuous



development of their higher faculties – reflection and reason – abandoning the purity of the natural state, to then advance towards civility.

Sociability and the way it developed in the social man was the reason for their depravity. That being so, it would be necessary to better understand the progress of man in society in order to find the solution of the problem of morality. Perhaps just as virtue and science, which have no pure origin, can be directed by the wise man to the common good, men can also be guided in their development in a corrupted society in order to recover the natural goodness, being, then, necessary to “[...] change the form of sociability that led him to such corruption [...]” (PISSARRA, 2002, p. 55), given that the establishment of the sciences, the arts and the moral depravity are not inevitable, but caused by chance and by the successive development of ideas.

On that account, just as education can reproduce vices, corrupting our judgment through the ornamentation of the spirit, it could also be the solution to its moral deadlock. To do so, it would be required to guide children not down a false path, but, as stated by Barros (1963), towards virtue and the wise ignorance that leads men to turn on themselves, towards self-knowledge, becoming able to recognize the limit of their strengths. For it is the mismatch between body and soul, between the strength of the body and its passions, which constitutes the origin of all the evils of society.

Final Considerations

If, for Rousseau (1999), misery derives from the incongruity between our desires and our capacities, from the need we feel for things, then, to be happy one must balance desires and faculties. The human wisdom thus consists in perfectly balancing will and power, since in a society corrupted by a pact of submission, our desires are intensified and our capacities limited by the distancing from the natural condition, bringing misery and unhappiness to the self. That is why the education project suggested by him in *Emile* is precisely a formation for the child to become one “[...] entirely free man who only wants what he can and does what he pleases. This is my fundamental maxim” (ROUSSEAU, 1999, p. 67). This way, Rousseau postulates that human dignity is achievable through a liberating education.

He does so by building his theory guided by a conception of nature and by a similar way of operating such thought process. As seen in his *Second Discourse*, in which he uses imagination to consider, through conjectures, the dual state of nature, the civil status, the natural and the social man, also in *Emile, or On Education* "Rousseau resorts to imagination as an auxiliary method of experience" (PISSARRA, 2002, p. 60). Similarly, to man in the state of nature, childhood is like a conjecture. Rousseau elaborates the character Emile and his childhood to then ponder over how a natural and moral education in a corrupt society would be feasible, reckoning the formation of free, autonomous individuals who exists on the margins of society. Childhood is therefore a fundamental concept in *Emile*, a category meticulously chosen to maneuver thoughts regarding the human condition.

In addition to a "treatise on education", *Emile* is a work on the process of maturity and development of the self from childhood to adulthood, which for Rousseau is structured in stages, which have to be understood in their specificities. Successive stages – childhood, youth and adulthood – which in turn correspond to the stages of development of the human species – the state of pure nature, the state of nature in which there is already a certain degree of sociability ("the true youth of the world") and the civil status, respectively. Moreover, *Emile* is not only a book about education, but about the child's self, that is, about the essence and understanding of the child and childhood, searching for hints of the natural man. The attributes of the child would be, according to Rousseau, analogous to those that man possesses in the state of nature.

It is clear that there is in Rousseau's reasoning, at the same time political-social and pedagogical, the same anthropological basis that connects his education project and the stages of the individual's life to his theory about the origin of the human race and the sociability as presented in the *Second Discourse*. It correlates the concepts of natural man and state of nature characterized to the feeling of amour de soi; the social man and the civil status to the idea of amour-propre, while in *Emile*, Rousseau revisits such feelings and the notion of natural and social man in order to explain childhood and adulthood. Thus, during childhood, the child would have the same emotions and instincts of the natural man, their wills being guided by the amour de soi – the natural and amoral goodness –, while adulthood is associated by Rousseau to the civil status, and the social man guided by amour-propre - "[...] directly linked to their artificial needs, which



they seek to satisfy through the internal game that constitutes the representation” (DALBOSCO, 2011b, p. 38).

Then, on the one hand, we have the transition from the natural state to the civil state engendered by the gradual transformation of self-love from amour de soi into amour-propre, triggered by the expansion of compassion, which makes the identification with the other more and more intense, to the point of allowing, through the reflexive faculty awakened in the social man, to place oneself in the shoes of others, as to dominate them. On the other hand, when we think of the child Emile and his maturity process, that is, in the life of individuals, the transition from the amour de soi to the amour-propre would also be the transition from childhood to adulthood, thus instituting, as declared by Dalbosco (2011b), subjectivity as a reference.

Accordingly, the moral problem that is presented to Rousseau stems from the fact that this subjectivity was developed in a selfish way in its origin, corroborating the idea that sociability would inevitably lead to moral perversion. However, contrary to some interpretations of Rousseau's theories, although sociability has corrupted man, he can still become a social and moral being through the reflective capacity of the spirit made possible by virtue of perfectibility. The pedagogical project, in Rousseau, is, at the same time, an alternative and complement to the agenda of politics, thus being necessarily inscribed on the agenda of life in society. To think of Rousseau is therefore to establish the intersection between nature and culture, between politics and pedagogy, between man and citizen.

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