The invention of Emile as a conjecture: a methodological option of Rousseau's writing

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Abstract
This paper aims to reflect on the pedagogical thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In order to do this, our analysis focus the reading of *Emile*: *or On Education*, first published in 1762. We approach the text through analyses of some commentators, developing a bibliographical revision on this work. Our claim is that *Emile* is not only a work on Education. Rousseau highlights his concern about the search for a definitive characterization of the child's "being". This way, the philosopher aimed to look for, in childhood as a whole, traces of man in a state of nature. Doing this, he sets a periodization of life and learning. Denouncing the negligence on children of his time, Rousseau, a critic of the educational model then followed by religious schools, describes the condition of being a child as he creates an imaginary boy who should be educated according to nature's criteria. The education of the boy Emile may be understood as a lampoon on the severe treatment of real children – be it in the family bosom or at school. According to the philosopher, no one was able to "see" the child. So, proposing pedagogical prescriptions is not a purpose of *Emile*, since Rousseau creates a boy set aside of society. His aim was another one: the philosopher intended to identify in the child his own essence. The figure of Emile was, hence, a method for operating his thought.

Keywords
Education – Rousseau – Philosophy of Education – Illuminism.

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"Never show a child what he cannot see.
Since mankind is almost unknown to him,
and since you cannot make a man of him,
bring the man down to the level of the child."
(Rousseau, 1979, p. 197)*

Introduction

In one of his letters, Rousseau (2005b) said his main works are "the first discourse, that on inequality, and the treaty on Education, inseparable works which make a whole together" (p. 25).

How should we read *Emile*? This question has, through the centuries, challenged the interpreters. Is *Emile* a treaty on Education or Politics? For most of its commentators, it is a work enouncing the need to renew the parameters of teaching and pedagogy. For other ones, it is predominantly a political work. This way, Yves Vargas (1995) states:

> *Emile, or On Education* is a book on natural politics rather than Education. It does not have as its purpose educating a child in the bosom of society, but aims at constructing a new society based on the development of a man. (p. 28)

For Roque Spencer Maciel de Barros (1971), the aim of *Emile* is mainly moral. So, the ethics of Rousseau should have inspired his pedagogy and his political thought. The author claims:

> [...] The aim of *Emile* is, in fact, to instruct a wise man. [...] Knowledge is morality, self control, ability to "hear the voice of conscience in the silence of passions". (p. 71)

* Translator's note: all quotations of Rousseau (1979) in this translation of the present paper from Portuguese into English are transcriptions of the on-line English version of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile*, *or On Education* by Professor Grace Roosevelt (Institute for Learning Technologies/Columbia University).
According to her, the text translated from French into English "combines my own work with a translation by Barbara Foxley that was published as a part of the Everyman's Library collection by J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd. (London) and E. P. Dutton and Co. (New York) in 1911. (…) I have re-translated much of the text with the aim of making it more modern, more literal, and more readable. The resulting new translation is approximately 50% Foxley's language and 50% my own". It is freely available at http://projects.ilt.columbia.edu/pedagogies/rousseau/.
Our aim here is providing the reader with a source book similar to the Brazilian edition of Rousseau's *Emile* used by the author, since this paper as a whole is based on its reading. We acknowledge both Professor Grace Roosevelt and the Institute for Learning Technologies of Columbia University for the initiative of providing an on-line English version of this seminal philosophical work.

It is possible, however, to read *Emile* as an essay which mainly aims to search for the understanding of the child's "being" – his essence. The present work has as its purpose reflecting on Rousseau's pedagogical thought; *Emile, or On Education* was first published in 1762. Our claim here is that *Emile* is not only a work on Education. In *Emile*, Rousseau tries to understand the acception of child itself. This way, he intended to look for, in the childhood as a whole, traces of man in a state of nature. Doing this, he sets a periodization of life and learning. Denouncing the negligence on children of his time, Rousseau, a critic of the educational model then followed by religious schools, describes the condition of being a child as he conceives an imaginary boy who should be educated according to nature's criteria. The education of Emile may be understood as a lampoon on the severe treatment of real children – be it in the family bosom or at school. According to the philosopher, no one was able to "see" the child.

For Rousseau, there is something entirely specific of childhood – something different from the adult state. Maurice Cranston (1991) – dealing with the theme – demonstrates how Rousseau operates to divide the life of pupil Emile in distinct periods: "each one corresponding to the stages of human race evolution as he had drawn in *Discourse on Inequality*" (p. 176).

Revisiting the pedagogical ideas of Rousseau's *Emile* requires, under any hypothesis, reflecting on his conception of state of nature, as the constitution of the child is analogous to this concept. The features of the child are, for the author, those supposedly constitutive of man in the state of nature. Cranston (1991) considers that Rousseau intents to draw a parallel between the natural goodness of state of nature and the original purity of the child, although "there is no morality in his actions; the child is governed by self-love, which has not become self-esteem, yet" (p. 176).

As Maria das Graças de Souza (2001) illustrates in a nice manner, "the pact situates itself in a normative register, out of the historical time" (p. 91). According to the hypothesis here developed, the childhood and youth of Rousseau's invented student – along with his thesis on state of nature and also the supposition of social contract – is a conjuncture needed to understand the child being and, doing this, the reader will be able to look at the human condition in a different manner, too.

We should remember, for this, that state of nature is a logical construct which clearly operates in the field of Rousseau's conjectures. As Victor Goldschmidt (1983) states,

the theoretical production on natural law does not imply recalling history. The assumption of a nature law is a logical requirement, not a historical fact. It is also possible to note a “tendency by Rousseau to dissolve the limits of what we came to call reality and what we consider to be fiction” (Prado, 2007, p. 141). Cassirer (2003) claims Rousseau is not the only one to think this way:

> [...] Historical knowledge does not concern the theoretical minds of State-Contract. Their problem is analytical, not a historical one. They interpret the term “origin” in a logical sense, not a chronological one. What they are looking for is not the beginning, but the “principle” of State – its *raison d’être*. (p. 207)

The education of Emile may be read like that, too. It does not mean to defend a way to teach or a method for educating. It means to build a narrative to display the constitution of the “first principles” of childhood – “in order to understand something we should start from the definition of its nature and essence” (Cassirer, 2003, p. 207) –, coming through conjectures.

This way, *Emile* would betray its title: it would be a treaty on childhood – rather than “Education”. Rousseau showed another face of the child – that which, according to him, his time did not know how to see. Inventing his Emile, he created another of his operative categories.

The philosopher intents to give a universal status to the representation of the infantile shape. The child, according to the Rousseaunian narrative, is a being constituted by an only and invariable internal structure which is his nature and his definition. There’s no historical or geographical context which can change this perspective. The child described by Rousseau is understood as immanent data which may be interpreted beforehand as if they were an essence. Taking the child out of history was also, for the creator of Emile, a strategic means to understand the features of the man of nature (Barros, 1971) – who is also an essence.

Like man in state of nature, the Rousseaunian childhood – described through stages of life interpreted under hypothetic characteristics – is a conjecture. That is: the “boy Emile” is part of a logical narrative which explains the development of people in the beginning of their lives. Childhood has stages, connected one to the other, each one with particular features: “after a pre-rational age, an age of sensitive reason and, finally, the age of intellectual reason” (p. 38). This way, it seems fundamental to

Rousseau understanding the forms of being a child in each of these constitutive stages of life. His aim is not to "teach the child many things, but to let only ideas that are right and clear enter his mind; I do not care if he knows nothing provided he is not mistaken" (Rousseau, 1979, p. 179). The telling of Emile's route goes through the different stages of child development on purpose. The educator tries to understand the moves of Emile's soul: "time was long during early childhood; we only tried to pass our time for fear of using it badly. Now it is the other way; we do not have time enough for everything that would be useful" (p. 180). The basis of Emile's education is, hence, the persistent process of offering the boy not the foundations of sciences, but "a grand idea of all these sciences and a great desire to learn them" (p. 180). Emile is not allowed to be in contact with the bias which mark social life, because "reason and judgment come slowly, prejudices flock to us in crowds, and from them he must be preserved" (p. 180).

Maria Constança Pissarra (2005) identifies Emile as "a character of fiction which represents the individual (or the individuals) who succeed in maintaining himself more or less at the margin of wicked society" (p. 57). As the state of nature is a point of reference which works only through dialogue with civil state, childhood constitutes a needed condition to apprehend man. That is why educating has as a premise the observation on infantile nature, regarding the stages of its development.

Childhood is, for Rousseau, a category meticulously chosen for operating his thought on the human condition. This way, *Emile* will be read here as a descriptive treaty on the Rousseaunian interpretation about the phases of infantile and juvenile development. All the debate around Emile's educative procedures is subordinate, under this perspective, to a clear hypothesis on the process of human maturation, structured in stages, which need to be understood. Without them, education, in its limit, will not be feasible for Rousseau. *Emile*, more than a compendium on pedagogy, may be read as a text on the ages of life.

Emile as a typical narrative of the modern acception of childhood

Emile was first published in 1762, the same year when *The social contract* was issued. The theme leading to the creation of Emile is the condition of childhood: it's the idea's strength of the Rousseaunian thought.

The boy Emile is a methodological model for the author in order to describe infantile features. Rousseau's text denounces in an open manner the negligence of his time on childhood. *Emile* is born, therefore, as a work dedicated to decode a symbolic silence which disturbed the philosopher: the child. It emerges as one of the main founding reports on educative modernity: "the narrative is carried out by the preceptor in the first person singular, as a work of fiction" (Streck, 2004, p. 38). So, Rousseau (1979) says he gave himself an "imaginary student". For him, the invention of Emile was a "useful method" (p. 27). Chateau (s/d) remarks the narrative of *Emile* – although Rousseau does not make it as clear as he does in *The social contract*; he opts to set *a priori* principles – anchors the presuppositions of his report in "imaginary situations" (p. 197). As it is well known, the parallel between *Emile* and *The social contract*, works published in the same year, is persistently recalled by Rousseau's commentators. Bréhier (2000), for instance, notes both works are intertwined, dealing with diverse scenes of the same theoretical issue:

> Emile, Rousseau's student, should live in society; however, he must found an educative system which preserves all his innocence and the virtues of state of nature, all the inner goodness of man. The same way, men must associate themselves; but they need to find an associative form which maintains the equality and freedom that individuals had in nature. (p. 421)

Jolibert (1987) recalls Rousseau describes childhood as the age of dependence. Hence, there was a need to prepare the child step by step, in order to introduce him to the world slowly. This implies to work modes of sociability and criteria of moralization. Because of this – Jolibert also points out – there is a political dimension in the so called "educative novel *Emile*" (p. 75). The theme of freedom was at stake, but in the public sense – rather than "a simple quarrel of pedagogical method or educative processes" (p. 75). If the child is mainly defined for his dependence, there is a route which leads to his autonomy. The five books of *Emile* concern it.

Just in the preface of *Emile* Rousseau denounces: the importance of the chosen theme was due to the lack of knowledge his time presented on the human figure of child. The first approach to the object happens, so, as a trying to recognize this unfriendly territory. Without identifying the small child's modes of acting, feeling, and thinking Rousseau's contemporary men saw childhood as if adult people were

experiencing it. Education, because of this, should not succeed. Rousseau (1979) warns:

> [...] We are never able to put ourselves in the child's place, we fail to enter into his thoughts, we invest him with our own ideas, and while we are following our own chain of reasoning, we merely fill his head with errors and absurdities. (p. 178)

For dealing with child formation, Rousseau takes the place of his own development: he invents Emile as a mode for operating his thought, trying to delineate, from a theoretical perspective, the essence of “being” a child. The philosopher, in his report, follows the boy he created – Emile – from his birth until he is 25 years old. Rousseau remarks that his character is not an “ordinary child” (p. 27) because of the continuous work of the preceptor in his education along with the special conditions which wrap his development. Emile is, in fact, an “imaginary student” (Marques, 2005a, p. 12) really made up to be a pupil. This way, Rousseau (1979) invents

> [...] the age, the health, the knowledge, and all convenient talents to work out in his education, in order to conduct it from his birth until he is a fully grown man who needs no guide but himself. (p. 27)

Rousseau (1979) deals with the acception of childhood employing some postulates:

1) As he tries to clarify the effects of lacking knowledge on the theme, Rousseau demonstrates that adult people, looking at the child without being able to note his constitutive features, do not know children. Ignoring such features, adult people just see in the child an adult who is not there, yet. So, childhood is not even “noticed”. Having false ideas due to misunderstanding, we deviate from an object we just couldn’t look at – Rousseau claims.
2) “The man who has lived the most is not he who has counted the most years but he who has most felt life” (p. 16). There’s a need, therefore, to find a way to act on children which is not painful for them.
3) One needs to study carefully the signs and languages with which the child expresses himself. It is important, this way, to differentiate what infantile manifestations are derived from nature and what are already a product of opinion – and society.

4) Moreover, the study on childhood is part of a premise the philosopher cares a lot: pure nature and wicked society. What remains natural in man is, then, the logic of temporal development, of life cycles: “we are born weak, we need strength; we are born lacking everything, we need aid; we are born stupid, we need judgment” (p. 10) and, for this, educating means giving. However, it is essential that educating does not imply disfiguring the original face of human nature, since education – from a Rousseaunian point of view – is a dynamics of triple faced origin: nature, things, and men.
5) One lives imprisoned by social limitations: “at his birth the infant is bound up in swaddling clothes; at his death he is nailed down in his coffin. As long as he keeps a human form he is enchained by our institutions”. The repression of bodies limits the soul, and the child is bound to make useless and early civilizing efforts which can only delay his development: “the inaction, the constraint to which the child's limbs are subjected, can only hinder the circulation of the blood and bodily fluids; it can only limit the child's growth in size and strength and injure its constitution” (p. 17).
6) “True education consists less in precept than in practice“ (p. 16). It is so because living is acting and, in action, we should – before anything – “make use of our organs, our senses, our faculties, of all the parts of ourselves which give us the sentiment of our existence” (p. 16). This means it is necessary to study what nature allows us to be. Studying the child is, also, this way, investigating human nature.
7) There is a constitutive mobility of “human things”, according to Rousseau. Human being is not born attached to the soil of one country. Education shall prepare the student to make contact to a world which goes beyond “his bedroom”, a world bigger than his city or country. That’s the only way for him to – as an adult – “bear the blows of fate, to brave wealth and poverty, to live if necessary among the snows of Iceland or on the scorching rocks of Malta” (p. 16). Natural education prepares Emile for any situation, circumstance, and human condition.

The way the education of European elites was held in the middle of the 18th century may be translated as a distinctive culture which remarked the importance of people

according to the social and professional role they played. Rousseau (1979) states that “vocation is the state of man” (p. 15). Something simple like that. The future profession does not matter, as well as parents’ will – “life is the trade I want to teach him; leaving my hands I grant you he will be neither a magistrate, a soldier, nor a priest; he will be first of all a man” (p. 15). It is important to note that – as José Oscar de Almeida Marques (2005b) remarks – the education of Emile is not taken out of context: “Emile is educated in a way which is not the best one ‘*per se*’, but according to the circumstances“ (p. 263). The work demonstrates the need for an interaction between education and nature data[1], considering that, under any circumstances, in varied degrees, one must allow nature to take part in child’s development. Rousseau (1979) sets different stages of infantile maturation, identifying what should be regarded as particular of any one of them. So, he interprets the child’s growing up, delimiting its phases. The philosopher warns his contemporary people about the inadequate ways of teaching employed in his time:

> Our didactic and pedantic mania is always to teach children what they could learn better by themselves and to neglect what we alone can teach them. Can anything be stupider than the trouble taken to teach them to walk, as if any child has been seen who, from the negligence of its caretaker, has not learned how to walk by the time he grew up? Yet how many, on the contrary, we see walking badly all their life because they were ill taught! Emile will have no padded bonnets, no go-carts, no leading-strings; or at least as soon as he can put one foot before another he will be supported only along pavements, and those will be crossed very quickly. Instead of keeping him cooped up in a stuffy room, take him out into a meadow every day. There let him run, let him frisk about. If he falls a hundred times, so much the better. He will learn all the sooner how to pick himself up. (p. 59-60)

It is important to recall that, then, from 7 years old people were not considered children anymore. From 7 to 12 or 13 years old people experienced childishness, a

1. “If we may point out a distinction between animals and men it concerns the fact the latter are free and can perfect themselves. That is, man can interrupt automatism and improve his sensorial equipment, developing, through exercise and effective use, new faculties: imagination, memory, reason. Between sensations and reason, in fact, there is no solution of continuity. Isn’t it just the ‘good use’ of the other senses which ‘results’ in this ‘sixth sense’ also called Reason, as Emile teach us? Perfectly ‘*empiricist*’ concerning the issue, Rousseau conceives the ideas as a result of the increasing complexity of sensations [...]. In the primitive state this *ability* to perfect intellectual faculties, the ‘perfectibility’, is not active, and these faculties, due to the lack of opportunity to emerge, remain in a purely virtual state. How is it possible to change this primitive constitution from and as a consequence of introducing individuals into its new orbit?” (Salinas Fortes, 1997, p. 63).

stage which was not regarded as a second phase of childhood. Those who had achieved 7 years of age were not called children anymore. This age indicated the end of infantile period. The term *infans* itself – a Latin one – designated someone who was unable to talk. At seven years of age the speech is fluent concerning articulation and repertoire. The supposition that childhood lasts only the first seven years of life may be explained this way (Postman, 1999; Ariès, 1981). Childhood, extended beyond seven years of age after Rousseau, became a logical construct. The repercussion *Emile* had in his time, as well as posterior appropriations of Rousseau's ideas, helped in a decisive manner to modify the ways of realizing and dealing with the infantile figure. Childhood, as a stage of human development, has been extended in part because of the reception of the Rousseaunian ideas.

Acting, infantile nature changes little by little, almost unnoticed. Through education, the adult interfere directly. It is necessary to develop the moral individual. This way, shaping the plasticity of child's soul is a premise one might not escape. Perfectible, human being is soft and can be educated. In the education of Emile there is a new feeling of childhood (Ariès, 1981) along with a new way of understanding the idea of nature. It is – according to Cassirer (1999) – a new ethical ideal:

> Rousseau has become a waker of moral conscience before becoming the stimulator of a new feeling of nature; the renewal he generated has been mainly understood as an inner transformation, a reform of mentality. (p. 91)

Rousseau stresses the need for establishing an interaction between the acception of *infans* and the notion of *puer* as if it suggested an infantile behavior, considering, thus, childishness as a second phase of childhood – which should be extended. Such period encompasses, also, the child state. In this stage, there might not be a sense of evil. Since there is no discrimination – that is, the ability to tell good from evil –, children should not have feelings of shame or modesty. Deep down, the child is a remainder of natural man. This, as Lourival Gomes Machado (1968) remarks,

> [...] delineates himself as the deep man, present in all stages of evolution, or even better, in all social situations, pure and simple in his particular essence, always reacting according to inner thoughts. (p. 113)

If the adult presents to the child references he can not apprehend – because his developmental status does not allow it –, this adult anticipates his student's contact with vice and evil. Rousseau (1979) warns his contemporary people:

> Modesty only begins with the knowledge of evil; and how should children who do not and should not have this knowledge have the sentiment which results from it? To give them lessons in modesty and good conduct is to teach them that there are things shameful and bad, and to give them a secret desire to know what these things are. Sooner or later they will find out, and the first spark which touches the imagination will certainly hasten the kindling of the senses. Anyone who blushes is already guilty; true innocence is ashamed of nothing. (p. 238)

Each age has its own logic, a semantics – according to Rousseau (1979) – which needs to be decoded. Rousseau (1979) states that "to begin with, children have, so to say, a grammar of their age whose syntax has more general rules than ours" (p. 53). In fact – warns the philosopher[2]:

> [...] The words *infans* and *puer* are not synonymous. The latter includes the former, which means literally "one who cannot speak;" [...] But I shall continue to use the word child [French *enfant*] according to the custom of our language until an age for which there is another term. (p. 58)

Rousseau extends the concept of childhood of his time, and, doing this, he changes it. Each stage of life has its own rhythm; so, an early development of speak or even an early comprehensive knowledge of the world is harmful. This anticipation faces nature and leads to an effect opposite to the intended one. That's why, concerning verbal mistakes, Rousseau (1979) states:

> [...] It is an intolerable piece of pedantry and most superfluous attention to detail to make a point of correcting all children's little sins against the customary expression, for they always cure themselves with time. (p. 53)

Anchored in the metaphor of nature as an instrumental resource for enlightening the child state, Rousseau (1979) claims the role of the educative act:

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2. "In an oral world there is not an accurate concept of adult, and, thus, even less of child. That's the reason why in every source one finds out that in Middle Ages childhood finished at seven years of age. But why at seven? Because that's the age when children can master their words. They can say and understand everything the adults say. They can know every secrets of language, which are the only secrets they really need to know" (Postman, 1999, p. 28).

> Plants are fashioned by cultivation, man by education. [...] We lament the helplessness of infancy; we fail to perceive that the human race would have perished had not man begun by being a child. We are born weak, we need strength; we are born lacking everything, we need aid; we are born stupid, we need judgment. All that we lack at birth and that we need when we are grown is given by education. (p. 10)

There we find a justification (to deal with moral and intellectual formation) for what Rousseau (1979) calls negative education:

> The first education ought thus to be purely negative. It consists not at all in teaching virtue or truth, but in preserving the heart from vice and the mind from error. If you could do nothing and let nothing be done, if you could bring your pupil healthy and robust to the age of twelve without knowing how to distinguish his right hand from his left, the eyes of his understanding would be open to reason as soon as you began to teach him. Without prejudice and without habits, there would be nothing in him to counteract the effects of your labors. In your hands he would soon become the wisest of men; by doing nothing to begin with, you would end with a prodigy of education. (p. 80)

Man has received from nature organs and faculties whose use depends, however, on what education can do for them. Recalling premises presented in the second *Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men*, the philosopher talks about the unsociability of the man of nature, insufficient love of himself, life in freedom, and the power of perfectibility. Thinking of childhood state, on purpose Rousseau nears features of the child to those of man in state of nature.

Emile could not, thus, become virtuous through the course of his education (Barros, 1971). He should mature and educate himself. He has, however, the gift of piety, a feature of natural man: the ability of recognizing himself in the other.

The first education of the child is based on the work with language, so that verbalization substitute in a progressive manner languages marked by perceptions and senses as a whole. Rousseau (1979) claims one should observe the rhythm of learning; the stages of life in which the individual is able to acquire this or that kind of knowledge; and finally a concern about the modes of action in teaching, be them in relation to content or the ways of teaching. Rousseau expresses, also, his denial to the habit of pampering children, usual concerning the small ones – something which prevented children of experiencing life.

Knowing pain – learning how to suffer – is something important to be worked out in the process of human formation. However, one should look for some kind of refinement of chosen procedures, so that the education and learning of men do not harm nature's pedagogical action:

> The only man who follows his own will is he who has no need to put another man's arms at the end of his own. From this it follows that the greatest good is not authority but freedom. The truly free man wants only what he can do and does what he pleases. This is my fundamental maxim. Apply it to childhood, and all the rules of education spring from it. Society has weakened man not only by depriving him of the right to his own strength, but above all by making his strength insufficient for his needs. This is why his desires are multiplied with his weakness; and this is why the child is weaker than the man. If a man is strong and a child is weak it is not because the strength of the one is absolutely greater than the strength of the other, but because the one can naturally provide for himself and the other cannot. Thus the man will have more wishes and the child more whims, a word which I take to mean desires which are not true needs, desires which can only be satisfied with the help of others. (p. 67)

The above excerpt presents in a clear manner the notion of autonomy of moral will as a distinct element of the human condition. It is also the mark which highlights the similitude between the Rousseaunian view on moral and Kantian ethical perspective. This way, both for Kant (1995) and Rousseau (1979) freedom means the ability for

> [...] acting as one should do. Freedom just makes sense if we obey the law, but a law freely agreed to because we recognize its rationality (Cassirer, 1999, p. 25).

Freedom, both for Rousseau and Kant, implies what Rousseau (1983a) qualifies as "power of willing": the possibility of "deviating from the prescribed norm" (p. 243)[3]; the ability to choose between "agreeing and resisting" (p. 243); and the conscience of being able to do that. Kant (1995) expresses that, afterwards, in the famous saying of his categorical imperative: "act as if the maxim of your action should become, for your own will, nature's universal law" (p. 58).

Durkheim (2008) considers that, according to the political lines of the Rousseaunian work, in order to have justice in civil life, it is necessary to have something exterior to

3. Kant (1995) states: "we need to *have the power to will* that a maxim of our action turns into universal law: this is the canon through which we judge it as a whole" (p. 62).

the individuals. That corresponds – according to the author – to social being: "who acts as a referee and delimits the rights" (p. 108). That's why – the author goes on – there is a transcendence of morality over the facts:

> [...] Morality does not come from the facts in an analytical manner. For the relations to become moral, they should be consecrated to an authority which does not take part in facts. Moral order must be synthetically combined to them. (p. 108)

Well, the child Emile may not present this moral faculty, a feature of adult society. However, there's a need to form it, having also in mind Emile becomes an individual fit to moral autonomy. Cassirer (1999) notes, from certain point of view, education is not a place for freedom. He states that:

> [...] The role of natural education is avoiding the creation of a small tyrant or a small slave. We should allow the child to find by himself the limits of his own abilities; we should argue with him only when he is sufficiently grown up to reason – that's the only way of creating natural man. Rousseau's political theory – the theory of natural society – insists on this theme. Men, as they are nowadays, are not fit to freedom. They must become fit for it, they should create for themselves a State which turn them fit to freedom. (p. 25)

Rousseau (1983a) gives a very particular acception to the term freedom. It is like there were two kinds of freedom: one to the adult man and another to the child; the latter is similar to the field of desires, reduced to that "want or don't want" (p. 244) existent in the first stage of man in state of nature. If the child's freedom is only desire, one may say that the adult man's freedom is choice; responsible choice. As Maurice Cranston (1991) points very well:

> Although he puts Emile entirely in the hands of his tutor, Rousseau insists the tutor must respect his pupil's freedom [...]. This does not mean that Emile is allowed to do what he pleases. Emile shall not know he is ruled by his tutor. In fact he is; but the tutor does not do that openly, since his art consists in guiding the pupil without letting him notice how it happens. Dissimulation and tortuous strategies have a significant place in Rousseau's pedagogical method. (p. 178)

Inventing Emile, Rousseau (1979) challenges – through conjecture – all the current teaching models: from schools to home preceptory. Emile shall not be educated in the family bosom – also because he is an orphan boy – neither shall him experience

the oppressive model of collective education performed in the schools. As we may observe in the idea of “state of nature”, with which Rousseau operates his political thought, the philosopher does not turn Emile into a historical being: he is a methodological concept or, according to his creator, “a model to be proposed” (p. 28) – a regulating ideal. This ideal isn’t, however, conceived in the symbolic universe of aristocracy. Emile is an ordinary boy, a child of humble people…

> There is only one science to teach children: it is that of the duties of man. [...] Besides, I prefer to call the man who has this knowledge tutor rather than teacher, since for him it is less a question of instruction than of guidance. He must not give precepts, he must let them be found. If the tutor is to be so carefully chosen, so may he be allowed to choose his pupil, especially when it is a question of proposing a model. This choice cannot depend on the child's genius or character, since I adopt him before he is born, and those things are only known when the task is finished. If I had my choice I would take a child of ordinary mind, such as I assume in my pupil. It is ordinary people who have to be educated, and their education alone can serve as a pattern for the education of their fellows. (p. 28-29)

The preceptor – named *governor* in a suggestive way – shall conduct the life of Emile through criteria different from the pedagogical models of his time. The preceptor presents himself to the pupil as an educator and role model. This way – as Arlei de Espíndola (2007) points out –, Emile, “whose existence is only symbolic, shall be under the tutelage of his master [...] since the master’s duty is conducting his pupil rather than giving theoretical lessons” (p. 70). Above all, one may observe that, for Rousseau, the ethical formation is more important than the intellectual formation. It concerns forming the man having in mind he shall perform well his role in society when fully grown up.

There is a fundamental inequality between the master and his pupil, a constitutive asymmetry of the pedagogical relation. Such inequality is the reason why “the ruler assumes all his rights over Emile until the intended goal is achieved” (p. 70). Maria de Fátima Simões Francisco (1999) remarks, on the relation between master and pupil described in *Emile*, the formation of a pedagogical contract anchored in the difference between the contracting parties. The author states:

> The pedagogical contract is based on a simple difference between the two contracting parties. One of them, the master, is superior in strength, knowledge, and life experience, and the other one, the student (a child or adolescent) is inferior to its master in these aspects. This contract is also based in the fact that the student, in different degrees according to his age, needs to be conducted by the master during his developing process, that is, in the acquisition of strength, knowledge, and life experience. The first and main clause of this contract is that in the pedagogical relation one must conduct, that is, order, and the other must be conducted, that is, obey. (p. 105)

This is “an agreement made beforehand” (Rousseau, 1979, p. 30), through which, someway, the educator is in charge of education as if he imposed on himself “a duty not imposed upon him by nature” (p. 30). Emile’s educator has as his aim forming an adult man conscious of his relation to nature, to himself, and to the other ones. However, the pedagogical relation between master and pupil comes to effect not only through rationality.

There is affection along the educational course of the boy/child, since, as Cranston (1991) recalls, “Emile should not know he is ruled by his tutor” (p. 178). The child shall not choose anything. However, he believes he actually can do that. It doesn’t mean that Emile’s tutor is dishonest to him. The child just isn’t prepared to know all the facets of his education. There is a need to delude him with the idea of freedom, “play” freedom. As Emile believes to be free, he is willing to follow his tutor’s orientation. He is open to learn. A learning experience which “seems” to be “build” by himself is much more attractive. And his educator uses this resource.

Education should – according to Rousseau (1979) – transit through the frontier between children’ strength progress, taking an increasing part in their development as their dependence decreases. The philosopher criticizes the fact the educational parameters of his time were almost exclusively concerned with preparing the child to his adult life, as if his current life just do not exist – this attitude corresponds to deny childhood as a kind of life itself.

Against, thus, excessive protection and severity which constrained the education of his time, Rousseau (1979) does not limit himself to put in doubt the issue of child’s freedom: he mainly denounces that the first years of life are not so happy as we suppose they might be. This claim is certainly great from a historical perspective because of the reception *Emile* experienced in Europe since it was first published.

For the philosopher, “the man must be treated as a man and the child as a child” (p. 62).

The development of the boy Emile is not separated from the rhythms of nature: be it the external or internal nature of the child himself. Emile shall be created in the fields.

> Make your child attentive to the phenomena of nature; soon you will make him curious. But to nurture his curiosity, never hasten to satisfy it [...].You wish to teach this child geography and you provide him with globes, spheres, and maps. What a lot of machines! Why all these symbols? Why not begin by showing him the object itself so that he may at least know what you are talking about? (p. 175)

The second stage of childhood corresponds to the child’s emerging consciousness about himself, especially in relation to his desires and possibilities. The educational path implies the contribution to “decrease the excess of desires over faculties and putting power and will into a perfect equilibrium” (p. 62). Cassirer (1999) ponders the main motivation of Emile is – for Rousseau – marking the territory of learning in the formation of will and personality and, this way, the educator “shall not leave him from suffering, effort, or privation” (p. 61), when these things are surely necessary pedagogical resources.

Human happiness is not – according to Rousseau (1979) – a matter of satisfying desires, but the ability to delay satisfaction. The weak man is controlled by his instincts and desires. Strength means surpassing such manifestations of nature. The philosopher states the best way to turn some boy into a damned one is to “let him have everything he wants; for as his wants increase in proportion to the ease with which they are satisfied, you will be compelled, sooner or later, to refuse his demands” (p. 71). In fact, the denial, in such situation, mainly because it is not usual, “will hurt him more than the lack of what he wants” (p. 71).

Rousseau’s pedagogical treaty brings back, as we could see, the theme of will and the need for conducting the child until he can control by himself this will. Stating that nature wants children to be children does not mean we should satisfy all of their desires. This implies disrespecting the natural order: the weak may not tell the strong what to do. Or, according to Rousseau (1979):

> Let us come back to the first rule. Nature has made children to be loved and helped, but did it make them to be obeyed and feared? Has nature given them an imposing manner, a stern eye, a loud and threatening voice with which to make people wary of them? I understand how the roaring of the lion frightens the other beasts, so that they tremble when they behold his terrible mane, but of all unseemly, hateful, and ridiculous sights, was there ever anything like a group of statesmen, with their leader in front of them in his ceremonial robes, bowing down before a swaddled babe, addressing him in pompous phrases, while he cries and drools in reply. (p. 72)

Ethical formation is the final aim in the development of the boy Emile. The student is treated according to his age. There is an age when reasoning about things is neither necessary nor useful. However, even when the student does not understand things, he feels and recognizes the authority and ascendance his master has over the issues he studies, as well as over moral values. That is educative. It is part of the learning of *no*:

> [...] Let your refusal be irrevocable so that no entreaties move you. Let your "No," once uttered, be a wall of bronze against which the child may have to exhaust his strength five or six times in order not to be tempted again to overthrow it. (p. 77)

Rousseau (1979) interprets the pedagogical project employed in his time. He creates, with Emile, the figure of an invented pupil, whose education he shall provide as a preceptor. The idea – as we have already seen – is providing a whole education to the imaginary boy during his first 25 years of age: “when they consider they must always live together, they must love one another, and in this way they will become dear to one another” (p. 30).

The education of Emile considers the possibility of individual interiorization of a sense of justice. Emile should become, at the end of his pedagogical process, a moral man and a civil subject.

Maria de Fátima Simões Francisco (2009) talks about the two faces of *Emile* – it educates the man of nature and the subject of citizenship. Establishing a dialogue with this perspective the author – from my point of view – remarks an acception of history which may be found in *Emile*:

> The great questions raised by the treaty are: shall we be guided by nature opting to begin from the education of natural man and then following its march until we can educate the citizen? Does nature want man to be a social being? Was it prescribed? Does nature contain in itself the solution for the contradiction man-society or at least the required conditions to solve this problem? If things are like that, we can hope to build a history different from that presented by discourse, a history where man may be a social being without alienating himself and putting aside the advantages of the state of nature – equality, freedom, and individuality. (p. 61)

According to the same author:

> More than anything, the intention is solving the contradiction of man, that is, not to turn him into natural man *or* citizen, but natural man *and* citizen. *Emile* aims to be both a treaty on home education and public education. The approach to these two spheres of the individual and, above all, his pacific and democratic sociability – like the Republic this future citizen will inhabit – is the main purpose of *Emile.* (p. 61)

One may not require moral commitment from a small boy: “deprived of all morality in his actions, he can do nothing that is morally wrong, and he deserves neither punishment nor reprimand” (Rousseau, 1979, p. 78). If he did something bad, it was not on purpose; he has not realized his own mistake or he has been poorly educated: “a child wants to overturn everything he sees – he breaks and smashes everything he can reach; he seizes a bird as he seizes a stone, and strangles it without knowing what he is doing” (p. 48). From Rousseau’s point of view, the child doesn’t have the virtue of the adult man nor the clue of his vice. As the man of nature, the child just loves himself – “the only passion natural to man” (p. 78). That’s why the child is not submitted to the moves of civil man: “there is no original perversity in the human heart; there is not a single vice about which one cannot say how and whence it came” (p. 78).

In this first stage of life there is no malice. It does not imply the child is virtuous. When one expects from the child an openly generous attitude – for instance – he will invariably feel frustrated. Exactly as men in state of nature, children are spontaneously generous in only two situations: “giving what is of no use to them, or what they expect to get back again” (p. 93).

The dominant civilizing practices in the time of Rousseau were indicators of hypocrisy, and “once started the process of civilization, the decadence of manners, the corruption of the institutions, and the weaken of the nation are more or less

irreversible" (Souza, 2001, p. 72). Mainly denouncing what he believes to be the educative practice of rich families, Rousseau (1979) claims that children are prepared to be "tenderly dominant":

> When we are in no hurry to teach there is no hurry to demand, and we can take our time so as to demand nothing except under fitting conditions. Then the child is training himself, in so far as he is not being spoiled. But when a fool of a tutor, who does not know how to set about his business, is always making his pupil promise first this and then that, without discrimination, choice, or proportion, the child is puzzled and overburdened with all these promises, and he neglects, forgets or even scorns them. Considering them as so many empty phrases he makes a game of making and breaking promises. If you wish to have him keep his promise faithfully, be moderate in your claims upon him. (p. 90)

One should avoid both too much duties and rights. Rousseau (1979) expresses his concern about excessive offerings, particularly those from parents, who can become enslaved by their children' will. The boy must not get everything he wants, or "first he'll want the cane that you are holding, soon he'll want your watch, then the bird that flies, or the star that shines above him. He will want everything that he sees" (p. 71). Lies usually don't work: "a smile, a wink, a careless gesture tell him all we sought to hide; it is enough to let him know that there is something we want to hide from him" (p. 238).

Ill mannered to always get what he wants, the child's desires multiplicate and he will come to believe that he is

> [...] the owner of the universe; he regards all men as his slaves: and finally when one is forced to refuse him something, he, believing anything is possible when he asks for it, takes the refusal as an act of rebellion. (p. 71)

Moreover, the child who usually thinks like that becomes increasingly hateful and resentful every time he is displeased. The idea of children' freedom in the Rousseaunian work should be carefully regarded. Emile is not free to make significant choices, even when his preceptor leads him to believe he can do that. There is a step by step learning of how to make choices. The tutor denies to the child every superfluous thing in order to demonstrate him that nothing will happen just like he wants:

> Weakness combined with domination produces nothing but folly and misery. One spoiled child beats the table and another one whips the sea. They may beat and whip in vain before they find contentment. If these ideas of empire and tyranny make them miserable during childhood, what about when they grow up, when their relations with their fellow-men begin to expand and multiply? They are used to finding everything give way to them; what a painful surprise to enter society and meet with opposition on every side, to be crushed beneath the weight of a universe which they expected to move at will! Their insolent manners, their childish vanity, only draw down upon them mortification, scorn, and mockery; they swallow insults like water. Sharp experience soon teaches them that they have realized neither their position nor their strength. Being unable to do everything, they think they can do nothing. They are daunted by unexpected obstacles, degraded by the scorn of men. They become base, cowardly, and deceitful, and fall as far below their true level as they formerly soared above it. Let us come back to the first rule. Nature has made children to be loved and helped, but did it make them to be obeyed and feared? (p. 72)

The preceptor is – in Rousseau's scheme – the main actor in Emile's education; as we stated, he is seen as the one who rules the boy's education and development. Against the emulation practices predominantly observed in the schools of his time, Rousseau believes that, through an interaction based on confidence, the child accepts the guiding role of his preceptor over him. Thus, he follows what his educator points out as if he was in fact following his own will. More than that, Rousseau thinks it is essential to the student to believe the guidance he is receiving comes from nature itself. The excerpt below explicitly indicates that Emile's education goes against the emulation and rivalry practices which dominated the methods and principles of Jesuit schools of Rousseau's time (Snyders, 1965). It just makes sense – claims Rousseau (1979) – teaching the child what he believes to make sense. That's why:

> While you are thinking of what will be useful to him at another age, speak to him only of things whose usefulness he can see in the present. Moreover, as soon as he begins to reason let there be no comparison with other children, no rivalry, no competition, not even in running races. I would far rather he did not learn anything than that he learn it through jealousy or self-conceit. However, each year I will mark the progress he has made; I will compare the results with those of the following year. I will say to him: You have grown so many inches; there is the ditch you jumped, the weight you carried, the distance you flung a pebble, the race

> you ran without stopping to take breath, etc. Let us see what you can do now. Thus I stimulate him without making him jealous of anyone. He wants to surpass himself; he ought to. I see no reason why he should not emulate himself. (p. 197)

Regarding from the point of view of habit formation, telling the truth is more advisable than giving an invented excuse just in order to keep student's desire unsatisfied: "a child never rebels against 'there is none left' unless he thinks the reply is false" (p. 77). The child should feel his teacher's decisions are fair, as if they were freely shared between them:

> Do not let him even imagine that you claim to have any authority over him. He must know only that he is weak and you are strong, that his condition and yours put him at your mercy. Let him know this, let him learn it, let him feel it. At an early age let his haughty head feel the heavy yoke which nature imposes upon man, the heavy yoke of necessity under which every finite being must bow. Let him see this necessity in things, not in the whims of man. Let the curb that restrains him be force, not authority. (p. 76-77)

Rousseau (2005a) sets as the main interval in human life the stage from zero to twelve years of age. He – as we stated before – extended childhood in a conceptual manner. In this period from zero to twelve years, the child acts according to the stimulation of his sensibility. According to the perceptions which trigger his life experience, the child interprets the world through his senses. That's why this is the period when Emile shall be guided by "negative education". In his *Letter to Christophe de Beaumont*, Rousseau (2005a) provides a precise description of this concept:

> I call positive education that intended to educate the spirit before the time to act comes and to provide the child with knowledge about the duties of man. I call negative education that intended to perfect the organs, the tools of our knowledge, before providing such knowledge and to prepare people to reason through their senses. Negative education is not vain at all. It does not produce virtues, but avoids vices; it does not teach the truth, but protects from mistakes. It prepares children for everything which may guide them to the truth, when they are able to understand it, and it prepares them to good, when they are able to love it. (p. 57)

According to the logics of such educative system, there should be no verbal lessons. It is worth remembering again that Rousseau's (1979) interlocutor concerning this

issue are religious schools (particularly the Jesuit schools), with all their verbalism[4]. There – people used to say:

> [...] The pupil will regard his tutor as the sign and plague of childhood, the tutor will regard his scholar as a heavy burden which he longs to be rid of. (p. 30)

Under such pedagogical model refused by Rousseau there is no affection between teachers and students, scholars and pupils: “both dream of getting rid of one another” (p. 30). *Emile*, this way, acquires meaning from history and its own context along with a close analysis of its discourse. From the point of view of what we may describe as history of pedagogical ideas, the logical understanding of this Rousseaunian text is enriched by historical references about usual educative practices in the 18th century European schools.

Rousseau (1979) remarks that, before reaching the age of reason, the child does not apprehend ideas but only images. Such images can come along by themselves, but the ideas are always connected to something: “when one imagines one merely sees; when one reasons one compares” (p. 98). Infantile reasoning is not generated in the brain, it comes from the working of the senses. Even this way – Rousseau claims –, the education of his time almost scorned the working of the senses, invoking reason in a sudden manner.

> In any study whatsoever, without the idea of the things represented the representing signs are nothing. Yet one always limits the child to these signs without ever being able to make him understand any of the things that they represent. In thinking to make him understand the description of the earth, you only teach him to be acquainted with maps: he is taught the names of towns, countries, rivers, which have no existence for him except on the paper before him. I remember seeing a geography somewhere which began with: "what is the world?" – "a sphere of cardboard." That is precisely the child's geography. I maintain that after two years' work with the globe and cosmography, there is not a single ten-year-old child who could find his way from Paris to Saint-Denis by the help of the rules he has learnt. I maintain that not one of these children could find his way by the map around the paths on his father's estate without getting lost. [...] You tell me the child must be employed on studies which only need eyes. That

4. “Do not give your pupil any kind of verbal lessons; he should receive them only through experience. Do not inflict on him any kind of punishment, for he does not know what it is to do wrong. Never make him beg your pardon, for he does not know how to offend you” (Rousseau, 1979, p. 78).

> may be; but if there are any such studies, they are unknown to me. (p. 100-101)

The issue of education has been moved on by Rousseau's discourse under the light of new references, through which he tries to decode the constitutive nature of child's body and soul. Realizing how the child is the analyst becomes able to understand how he learns. This way, *Emile* approaches pedagogy just because it investigates the modes of being a child.

The adult state bends itself in order to reach the level where the child stands:

> Humanity has its place in the order of things; childhood has its place in the order of human life. The man must be treated as a man and the child as a child. Assign each one to his place, and fix him there. Order human passions according to the constitution of man; that is all we can do for his well-being. The rest depends on external causes which are not in our power. (p. 62)

Final remarks

In *Emile*, Rousseau intents to be the protagonist of the narrative of an imaginary student – of whom he (in the role of tutor) is the only master. This student, created according to Rousseau's connected thoughts on childhood, is guided by the same educator/preceptor over more than two decades. Among men, then, he has one master. Step by step, the boy is taken out of his naturalness. Rousseau indicates in *Emile* that growing up may be something which does not imply so much pain. For this, it is fundamental that the educator knows how to decode traces expressed through the different languages with which children communicate. From crying to gestures; from whispering to talking; from the omnipresence of early childhood to the unquiet behavior of adolescence; from friendship to love – all of it constitutes an inner grammar of the developing individual. It is required to know how to interpret. Paying attention to the forms of child's acting and expressing become an indispensable move to educate him in a nice manner through the different stages of childhood.

Talking about an invented child, Rousseau also denounces what he sees as vices of the adult society. In a way, the great deed of his pedagogical work was double faced: recognizing the condition of child, investigating it in order to decode it. By the other side, Rousseau worked on the theme of childhood as a starting point for revisiting man in state of nature (Barros, 1971). Child is the diagram which, little by little, will

constitute the features of the adult individual: of a rational subject, but mainly of an ethical subject – who is, under this condition, able to improve human face.

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