

Freedom by Force: A Study of *Émile*

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Abstract: <p>This thesis discusses <i>Jean-Jacques Rousseau's</i> thoughts about education. Rousseau related his educational thoughts to what 'human nature' is and what it means to live in accordance with what is 'natural', but he also reflected on what it means to be a social creature living a civilized life. While Rousseau valued freedom highly, he struggled with an obvious contradiction that we still have not resolved, namely, how humans can solve their double roles as both free individuals and as citizens with common obligations. Furthermore, Rousseau's concern was how to educate for autonomy while, at the same time, encouraging good citizenship. In <i>Émile, or on Education</i>, Rousseau draws a hypothetical picture of human education, an education he called <i>negative</i>, because it is more about holding back bad impulses than normatively encouraging good ones. In the <i>Social Contract</i>, Rousseau argues that because of the common good, those who do not want to be free, have to be forced to freedom. The education of the fictive pupil <i>Émile</i> deals with the problem of forcing for freedom, and this thesis focuses on the paradoxical challenge of promoting freedom by force.</p> <p>The structure for the present resolution (or rather discussion) of this question follows the main motifs I have distinguished in Rousseau's <i>Émile</i>. Obviously driven by many purposes, Rousseau's educational endeavor is a complicated story intimately connected with the profound philosophical themes he presents in his other books. Rousseau's purposes with <i>Émile</i>, as I understand them in this thesis, are as follows: He purposefully wanted to generate a transformation of the reader's thinking; he eagerly participated in the educational discourse of his time; he wanted to contrast a more ideal type of education with the existing one; he made the importance of childhood more visible, he demonstrated social contradictions and injustices, advancing a vision of a better society; and finally, he worked out his picture of human nature in greater detail.</p> <p>The outcome of this study is that we have to read Rousseau's educational proposals, as exposed in <i>Émile</i>, and expanding on the main ideas in his other works, as an endless thought triggering exploration. We have to be ready to place ourselves into his imaginary landscapes, prepared to overcome our biases and misconceptions regarding what it means to be human and how to educate others, so they can live both free and responsible lives, caring about both themselves and each other.</p>	
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1 A Paradoxical Approach

One of the most legendary educational books ever written is Jean-Jacques Rousseau's¹ *Emile, or, Treatise on Education* (in orig. *Émile ou de l'Éducation*²). In the *Author's Preface* Rousseau formulates his aim with *Émile* as a treatise on how to form men,³ and in Book I he continues with the assertion that men are formed by education.⁴ He wanted to set up a contrast to the established educational methods and describe a strategy that follows 'the course of nature,' and meets the request of the human heart. *Émile* is not built around one single thesis. Most obviously Rousseau wrote the book guided by diverse more or less conscious purposes and he did not write a concrete educational proposal, but a hypothetical one. It is a book about freedom, but also responsibility, and it is all but easy reading. The problem it presents is paradoxical: Does education have to promote freedom by force? In this thesis I will discuss this quandary. But such a discussion cannot lean merely on *Émile*, since it touches on the topic of many other books by Rousseau. I will, therefore, discuss *Émile* along with Rousseau's other works.

1.1 Why Study *Émile*?

I see Rousseau as an obvious point of reference in the educational philosophy of today. Few others have entered the discourses on nature, education, equality, and modern personal identity with such enthusiasm as did Rousseau, who dealt with these issues in most of his writings. He participated in discourses on what 'human nature' is and what it means to live in accordance with what is 'natural'. These questions caught his interest from ontological, political, and metaphysical perspectives. In addition, he concerned himself with methods for encouraging human potential and saw ethical criteria as the

¹ Rousseau lived 1712-1778.

² In this thesis *Émile* (in italics) denotes the book, Émile (in ordinary letters) the boy. I mainly refer to Rousseau's books with a short form of the titles (*Confessions, Dialogues, Reveries*, etc.). When exactness has been crucial, I have consulted the French Pléiade version of *Oeuvres Complètes (OC I-IV)*.

³ "Notwithstanding so many treatises whose only purpose, it is said, is public utility, the very first of all the utilities—that of forming men—is still forgotten" (Payne, 1892/2003, p. xlii).

⁴ "On façonne les plantes par la culture, et les hommes par l'éducation" (*OC IV*, p. 246).

foundations of a decent society. He questioned many ideas of his epoch still relevant in today's educational debate. Even though he often stood apart from the mainstream of the Enlightenment, he also agreed with and encouraged certain other fundamental Enlightenment tendencies. He was, nevertheless, more of a naysayer than a 'yes man', and almost his entire literary production, as well as his own life, was to a degree an embodiment of resistance towards behind-the-scenes uses of power. Rousseau was a man who dared to dissent and to argue frankly against what he regarded as corrupt. Yet, he is also an outstanding example of how difficult it is to bring theory to bear on real life choices.

Rousseau inspired school reformers in many European countries, in the Americas and in Russia, and his political thoughts had an influence on many thinkers.⁵ His radical vision, one whose influence has largely faded as education is increasingly being influenced by industrial models, is worth revisiting in the context of today with its many unsolved ethical problems.

Since the book is not a straightforward story with only one target, scholars have presented many suggestions on what kind of a book *Émile* really is. Many have read it as a utopia, but it has also very often been interpreted as a practical educational guide. It is, however, possible to consider Rousseau's writing technique as the outcome of a conscious striving to develop *a new way of writing philosophy*, designed to generate a transformation of the reader's thinking. Read in accordance with such an approach, one's reading experience would be different. The book in itself would be seen as educational and dealing more with politics and freedom than with practical education. I will start with an outline of *Émile*, because it is easier to discuss the book when one understands why and how it was written. After that I will finally discuss the book from diverse angles. The focus will be on Rousseau's view on how to promote freedom through education.

⁵ Benner, 2005; Tenorth, 1988; deGarmo, 1907/2006.

1.2 What Kind of a Book is *Émile*?

In many of his works, Rousseau presents various educational ideas. At first glance, his varied approaches certainly appear contradictory. For example, in *Considerations on Government in Poland and its Planned Reformation* and in *A Discourse on Political Economy*, he recommends state education, and in *Émile* and in *Julie, or the New Heloise* private education. Nonetheless, his diverse suggestions have to be considered in their proper contexts.

Rousseau described *Émile* as a project that took him twenty years of thinking and three of writing.⁶ He called it the keystone of his philosophical construction⁷ and “his greatest and best book.”⁸ When Rousseau outlines the purpose with his project in the *Author’s Preface*, he attacks the contemporary form of teaching for being more destructive than educative and states that “the art of forming men, is still forgotten.”⁹ Rousseau did probably not want to sketch *Émile*’s education as the only education possible. Yet, he wanted to propose a direction, not to lay out an effortless road. Therefore, the whole idea with the book might have been an incitement. In *Lettres Écrites de la Montagne*, Rousseau asserts that his intention with *Émile* was never to describe a method but to outline a new education system for the wise to reflect on.¹⁰ However, the book is not only about education; it is “a treatise on the original goodness of man”¹¹ and shows how the initial goodness of humans changes if vice and error are let into their minds.

Indeed, one can ask what kind of book *Émile* is? Actually, there are many suggestions. It is sometimes referred to as a novel.¹² Stig Bendixon specifically called *Émile* an “educational novel,”¹³ while Johann Wolfgang von Goethe called it “a pedagogical nature gospel.”¹⁴ Since Rousseau also composed music, Marjatta Bardy compares *Émile*

⁶ C.

⁷ *RSW*.

⁸ *RJJ*, p. 23.

⁹ *É*, p. 33 (“[Q]ui est l’art de former hommes, est encore oubliée,” *OC IV*, p. 241). Compare the word “former” with “build” and the German word “Bildung.”

¹⁰ See *OC III*.

¹¹ *RJJ*, p. 213. Plamenatz, 1969, criticizes Rousseau for his use of the misleading concept “natural goodness”

¹² E.g., Kroksmark, 2003; von Oettingen, 2001.

¹³ Bendixon, 1929, p. 73.

¹⁴ According to Kroksmark, 1989, p. 76 (Wolff’s trans.).

with a symphony and depicts the book as “an ocean of ideas about life and the human being.”¹⁵ The book is also described as a “thought experiment.”¹⁶ I prefer to classify *Émile* as ‘a philosophy of education operating in part as a thought experiment,’ and I do not deny that it has utopian features. The thought experiment is not the center of attention in the entire *Émile*, but it is intermingled with Rousseau’s other theories in an interesting fusion.

Thought experiments have been used for thousands of years in different fields and for different purposes.¹⁷ They strive to challenge the understanding of some common situation by bringing in a new perspective on the relevant phenomena. Both philosophers and scientists employ thought experiments. In philosophy, a thought experiment would present some fairly detailed but physically unrealized (sometimes even unrealizable) scenario.¹⁸ It is an “imaginary scenario with the aim of confirming or disconfirming some hypothesis or theory,” according to Gendler.¹⁹ These descriptions seem to not only suit Rousseau’s intentions with *Émile*, but also the *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men* (2nd Discourse), and the *Social Contract* very well. It is obvious that his thought experiments strive to change the common understanding of a situation by offering a new perspective. Thought experiments can provide possible solutions by testing situations that, for some reason, are impossible to perform in reality, but a thought experiment needs some connection to supporting empirical data, otherwise it would not be possible to use it in an argument that challenges our previous understanding of existing phenomena.²⁰ This is exactly Rousseau’s technique: in his thought experiments, he uses the findings of others and also illustrates with the data of his own experiences, of his own life.

Because of Rousseau’s complicated writing style, readers might, however, miss important points.²¹ Janie Vanpée emphasizes that *Émile* has been reduced to a literary ‘work’, instead of letting the reading itself constitute an educational experience.²² She, therefore, suggests the readers put themselves into the pupil’s shoes and become

¹⁵ Bardy, 1996.

¹⁶ E.g., Kroksmark, 2003; Johnston, 1999.

¹⁷ Gendler, 2002.

¹⁸ See Gendler, 2000; Brown, 2004.

¹⁹ Gendler, 2002, p. 388.

²⁰ De Mey & Weber, 2003.

²¹ See, e.g., Gay, 1966; Vanpée, 1990/2006.

²² Vanpée, 1990/2006.

participants in Rousseau's pedagogical lessons. Only then can readers fully start to recognize the problems of education as 'social transmission' and appreciate the narrative's allegorical dimensions. Stephen G. Salkever defends a similar view, and refers to *Jugement sur la Polysynodie*²³ where Rousseau states that readers must learn to read rather than the authors learning to be consistent.²⁴ Nicholas Dent also argues that any contradictions may be within the reader; that it makes no sense to blame Rousseau for paradoxes if they were writing tools intended to trigger careful reading.²⁵ Was it not Rousseau's intention to encourage alternative thinking by readers? Moreover, are readers to blame for misunderstandings rather than the author for supposed inconsistency? There are actually numerous ways to read *Émile*. Yet, Lars Løvlei states that paradoxes have an educational function by forcing a transformation of thinking, even if they may be a nuisance for those looking for clear-cut answers.²⁶ John Plamenatz states that there is no paradox in Rousseau's saying that it is society that makes human both corrupt and moral,²⁷ however, a paradox enters the stage when the educator has to use corrupt methods to promote another's virtue. But Plamenatz also demands an explanation from Rousseau about why he states that virtue is more natural than vice,²⁸ and in a contemporary context, we might also ask who is to decide what should count as virtue and what as vice.

In Steven G. Affeldt's opinion, the paradoxical quandary of using force to make another free is a problem Rousseau encounters throughout his philosophical experiments.²⁹ This philosophical position challenges, for instance, the problem that Plato addresses in the parable of the cave.³⁰ Instead of enlightening students to make them change, as was one aspect of emerging from darkness into the clear light of day, Rousseau saw humans as born free and without prejudices (not as sitting chained in a dark cave as in Plato's allegory). Therefore, the best education is not the one that enlightens and liberates, but the one that starts early enough to prevent humans from having their minds enslaved by

²³ *OC III*.

²⁴ Salkever, 1977-8/2006. Rousseau also talks about the problem with consistency in a long note in *Émile* (p. 108n) and he admits that he often contradict himself in his expression. To his defense he puts: "Definitions could be good if words were not used to make them."

²⁵ Dent, 1988.

²⁶ Løvlei, 2008.

²⁷ Plamentz, 1969.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Affeldt, 1999/2006.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, see also Plato's *Republic*, Book VII, 515c-e. The cave dwellers must be "compelled" to turn their heads and to walk and look towards the light; they must be dragged outdoors to daylight by force.

error to begin with, according to Rousseau.³¹ Rousseau saw ideal students as uncontaminated individuals with the innate potential to make good judgments if only somebody pushed them forward and empowered them to proceed. Because unlearning is very difficult once a vice has developed, it has to be stopped from emerging in the first place.

Émile undeniably addresses this paradoxical problem in noting that education is based on the idea that an individual is free but the teacher is the one who controls how to use this freedom, Immanuel Kant, whose educational lessons fundamentally leaned on Rousseau's *Émile*, raised the "education paradox" as a problem in *On Education*:

One of the greatest problems of education is how to unite submission to the necessary *restraint* with the child's capability of exercising his *freewill*—for restraint is necessary. How am I to develop the sense of freedom in spite of the restraint? I am to accustom my pupil to endure a restraint of his freedom, and at the same time I am to guide him to use his freedom aright. Without this all education is merely mechanical, and the child, when his education is over, will never be able to make a proper use of his freedom.³²

In Plamenatz's opinion, to talk about forcing another to be free is to talk nonsense, if we lift the idea out of its social context of Rousseau, where the general will is the will to both be just and to be treated justly, and to maintain the society one prefers.³³ We need laws, but the aim must be to educate persons to willingly bind themselves to the laws, according to Rousseau.³⁴

³¹ See Kelly, 2009.

³² Kant, 1803/1900, Chapter 1, Introduction, p. 29.

³³ Plamenatz, 1969.

³⁴ Ibid.

2 Various Purposes

In addition to exposing a new way of writing, it is possible to identify many other hypothetical purposes that engendered *Émile*. Inspired by the various aims that Ville Lähde distinguished in his reading of the 2nd *Discourse*,³⁵ I have tried to search for what might have generated *Émile*. However, the aims I distinguished are so intermingled that it is not obvious why separating them makes sense. Nevertheless, treating them separately is useful as a way of illuminating the layered meanings of the story. Among Rousseau's aims with *Émile*, beside that of

1. setting forth a general transformation of the reader's thinking, Rousseau seems to have aimed at:
2. participating in the educational discourse of his time (especially to argue against Locke and other scholars' educational theories);
3. contrasting a more ideal type of education with the existing one;
4. making the importance of childhood more visible;
5. demonstrating social contradictions and injustices;
6. advancing a vision of a better society;
and lastly, but definitely very important
7. working out his picture of human nature in greater detail.

Since I regard the last aim as the core, I will end this divided interpretation by discussing it in more detail than the others.

2.1 Polemic Exchange with Contemporaries

Rousseau's educational ideas result from many influences, including Plato, Plutarch, and Michel de Montaigne, but also philosophers of his own time. When Rousseau focused on education he participated in a discourse typical of the Enlightenment along with other authors such as John Locke, Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, Baron de Montesquieu, Voltaire, Claude Adrien Hélvétius and Denis Diderot. Moreover, Thomas Hobbes inspired Rousseau to argue against his picture of *human nature*. The second motivating force that might have generated *Émile* is, therefore, Rousseau's eagerness for disputes.

³⁵ Lähde, 2008.

Against Locke

John Locke, particularly, provoked many ideas in Rousseau, both for and against the Lockean position. When Rousseau describes education in practical terms, his language even sounds like that of Locke. Thus an aim (or a drive) for which Rousseau was writing *Émile* was most certainly to argue with Locke's ideas as expressed in his *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693). There are many similarities between the two books, especially with regard to ideas of Stoic origin, and in the focus that both placed on the training of the soul. Other similarities are, for example that Rousseau, like Locke, sets a tutor the task of educating a rich boy and making a habit of the simple life.³⁶

Rousseau also followed much of Locke's advice concerning physical training and preventive healthcare. In addition, Rousseau agreed with Locke that all humans were born equal with no innate knowledge, but Rousseau rejects Locke's advice on reasoning with the child and introducing moral instruction at an early stage. Instead of reason, Rousseau uses a kind of experimental hands-on method in his moral instruction. According to this method, *Émile* becomes familiar with morality through practice (and not merely through words).

While Locke thought that children became good or evil through education, Rousseau indicated that humans were born good, but are corrupted by society. Rousseau also strongly argued against the custom of correcting children with punishments and prohibitions, and he completely opposed Locke's conclusion that the child should be bent and forced to obey. *Émile's* education is, therefore, not cruel, but it is purposeful and it even resemble manipulation, although the methods are extraordinary. For Rousseau, children are naturally free and their freedom should not be overruled, at least not openly, to prevent them from discovering that they are purposefully controlled, since he certainly realized that education is impossible without any control at all. He wants *Émile's* guidance to take place by help of clever means that prevent the child from noticing that learning situations are arranged. *Émile* is also taught to suffer the consequences of his own actions; for example, he has to sleep without a window when he has shattered the window pane with a ball, but he is not beaten. However, being

³⁶ Employing a tutor to educate a boy was nothing rare in these days.

made to sleep in a cold room could also be considered to be cruel punishment. We can, of course, excuse Rousseau for being a better educational philosopher than practitioner and call his examples flawed, but at least his intentions were scrupulous and far reaching.

Rousseau's *Émile* can also be seen as a critique of contemporary political arguments, and thus as a general critique of Locke's political philosophy. In such a light, *Émile* becomes a polemic against Locke's liberal recommendation for economic individualism based on competition. According to Rousseau, the doctrine of acquisitiveness endangered the development of a humane society, decent relationships, and equality. Therefore, children should learn to become unselfish and know what their immediate needs are, so that they can distinguish needs from superfluous desires.

Against Hobbes

Another argument to which Rousseau was definitely opposed was that of Hobbes. According to Hobbes, humans are born aggressive, always striving to pursue their interests in utter disregard for others. In the state of nature, he notices particular inborn features that create disputes among the human species members; *hate, lust, ambition* and *covetousness*.³⁷ Hobbes supposed that humans in such a state, lacking a common leader and isolated from each other would live in a state of continuous war, neglecting all other pursuits, in perpetual fear for their lives. In such a condition of no laws and no rights, no person possesses anything. Humans thus have good reasons to strive for peace, on the one hand, because of their fear of death and, on the other hand, following their desire for a comfortable life. Human reason makes them unite and frame laws, according to Hobbes. The problem with violent behavior disappears when individuals willingly transfer their individual rights to a Sovereign in order to attain protection. This mutual transferring of rights is what Hobbes calls the "covenant" and it presupposes the initial existence of a law of nature, "justice", or "that men perform their covenants made."³⁸ When many humans join and transfer their powers in a covenant to a common strong ruler, they form a state, according to Hobbes, but not Rousseau. According to

³⁷ Hobbes, 1651/1998.

³⁸ Ibid, p. 95.

Rousseau it is only a common will that can form a stable state, not individual interests to obey.³⁹ Rousseau's vision was a society where everybody joins the social contract and becomes a responsible member of society.⁴⁰ So instead of like Hobbes, viewing the individuals giving their particular rights to their represent, the sovereign, Rousseau saw the people becoming responsible and forming the sovereign themselves. (I will return to this issue in 2.5.)

Plamenatz emphasizes that Rousseau, unlike most other advocates of equality of his time, connected increased national wealth with enlarged inequality between citizens.⁴¹ A problem with increased riches was that it reduced freedom both for the wealthy and the poor. Freedom is only possible among equals. Education can also hold back the development of freedom and equality, since inequality, freedom and education are associated, or in Plamenatz's words: "It is inequalities of power and wealth and education that weaken the sympathies of human beings for one another, making it more difficult for them to put themselves in each other's shoes."⁴² What is then the alternative? In the following, I will gradually try to answer that question.

2.2 A Contrasting Education

While Rousseau had a strong trust in education as a tool for societal transformation, I will suggest that his third aim with *Émile* was to assert the necessity of an innovative education, contrasting with that generally practiced. In the preface to *Émile*, Rousseau pointed out that he would say little about the value of good education or blame the customary education, but this intention did not succeed very well. In *Émile* Rousseau very clearly emphasizes that the education of his time relied on false premises about childhood and, therefore, was developing in the wrong direction. So to remedy the situation, he wanted to present a completely new kind of education built on other grounds, namely what children actually were able to understand. To make his stand clear he thoroughly drew a picture of an education totally contrasting with the generally accepted view. This picture must have been intentionally provocative.

³⁹ SC; see also Winch, 1972.

⁴⁰ SC; Winch, 1972.

⁴¹ Plamenatz, 1969.

⁴² Plamenatz, 1969, p. 405.

Transformation of Humankind

According to Rousseau, a new generation, educated in a new way could *start* a transformation of humankind, but this transformation requires a particular procedure. Liberty and discipline as well as political thinking are all central to Rousseau's educational thinking,⁴³ but they are not always so easy to combine, especially as their foundations of knowledge are often in conflict.

The foundations of education are three, according to Rousseau: *nature*, *men* (humans) and *things*.⁴⁴ The natural foundations of education entails the inborn physical and physiological inclinations that are beyond the influence of instruction; the education of humans entails that they can be brought by others to use their own inborn features; and the role of things in education entails education through the experiencing of artificial objects as well as natural elements. The world around us becomes familiar through the direct experience of the senses, not through representations, pictures, or models. Other people—educators—can only partly intrude into the education of things. If the teachings of these three 'masters' (nature, things, and humans) conflict, a person is poorly educated.⁴⁵ If they are in harmony, the person is well educated. For example, hasty education neglects nature and leads children to become independent too quickly; this actually risks making them reliant on others. In the end, Rousseau wanted children to become responsible, not selfish. In *Émile* Rousseau argues:

Natural man is entirely for himself. He is numerical unity, the absolute whole which is relative only to itself or its kind. Civil man is only a fractional unity dependent on the denominator; his value is determined by his relation to the whole, which is the social body. Good social institutions are those that best know how to denature man, to take his absolute existence from him in order to give him a relative one and transport the *I* into the common unity, with the result that each individual believes himself no longer one but a part of the unity and no longer feels except within the whole.⁴⁶

This might at first sound like a paradoxical contradiction of Rousseau's other thoughts in *Émile*. Is it not foolish to want to educate somebody that is complete to become only a fraction of a greater entity, thus making someone who is independent in effect

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ *É*.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 39-40.

dependent? Did Rousseau not emphasize freedom and autonomy? Yes he did, but Rousseau did not take self-sufficient freedom to be the ultimate purpose. Natural humans are ‘pre-social’, and they have a natural drive towards social commitments. Therefore, they need to be encouraged to develop altruistic tendencies, since only responsibly united they can stay autonomous.

Learning for Life

A critical stance towards education is also obvious in the *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts (1st Discourse)* where Rousseau claims that the children of his time are not learning what is essential for life. Large institutional settings are destroying them; they can hardly speak their own language but, instead, speak a language nobody uses any longer (viz., Latin). Generosity, justice, moderation, human kindness, and courage are unfamiliar to them, and they do not learn to separate truth from delusion, although they are capable of deception that hides their profound ignorance. Schools also neglect the native country and God. A child should rather engage in play than waste its time learning useless facts, according to Rousseau. Neither words nor pictures can compensate for experiencing the real world. Words are easy to repeat, whether one understands them or not, and art cannot promote virtuous education. When reading books, the author steps in between the content and the reader and this impedes the child’s own thinking.⁴⁷ Not only words, but also pictures and sculptures represent perversions of mind, says Rousseau, upset that children encounter such images in their immediate surroundings even before they can read.⁴⁸ It is easy to make use of the child’s memory, but this is not an intelligent use of their childhood, and it is definitely also a question about education by use of force; but a force that neither aims at an education that is good for its own sake, nor for a higher future aim such as freedom or goodness.

Force a child to study languages he will never speak, before he has even learned his own; make him constantly rehearse and parse verses he does not understand, the whole harmony of which for him is only in his fingers,⁴⁹ muddle his mind with circles and spheres of which he has not the faintest notion; overwhelm him with a thousand names of cities and rivers he constantly mixes up and learns anew each

⁴⁷ Parry, 2001.

⁴⁸ *1st D.*

⁴⁹ This refers to the habit of counting syllables on the fingers (see Stewart & Vaché, 1997).

day; is this cultivating his memory for the good of his judgment, and is this whole frivolous learning worth a single one of the tears it costs him?⁵⁰

Everything children see and hear makes impressions, and the objects displayed for children should therefore be chosen carefully. In order to teach *Émile* humanity and love of his fellows, Rousseau, the tutor, provided him with occasions that allowed him to experience models of decent behavior. Actions, not words, were central. Children's vices all come from bad role models; this is preventable by keeping them away from things and people that can destroy their innocence, sparing them from developing prejudices. Instead of filling children's brains with all kind of recalled information, Rousseau argued that they need to know their duties as human beings, and how to live in accordance both with their particular, individual natures and with human nature in general.

All the first moments of nature are good and right. They aim as directly as possible toward our preservation and our happiness, but soon lacking strength to maintain their original direction through so much resistance, they let themselves be deflected by a thousand obstacles which, turning them away from their true goal, make them take oblique paths where man forgets his original destination. Erroneous judgment and the strength of prejudices contribute a great deal to our being thus misled.⁵¹

2.3 Childhood as an Aim in Itself

A fourth aim with *Émile* might have been to demonstrate the importance of childhood. Disappointed with how children were raised, Rousseau wished to make childhood and the individual child visible, according to the idea that the other, the child, is otherwise unknown. Every child is unique; it is thus the teacher's task to learn to know the child and adapt education to the child's particular aptitudes. According to Rousseau, education has to be sensitive to the needs of childhood and not focus only on children's future lives as adults. Why train children only for adulthood at a time in history when half of them never reach that age, asked Rousseau.⁵² He already mentions this need to acknowledge childhood as an end in itself on the first page of the preface of *Émile*:

⁵⁰ *JNH*, p. 475.

⁵¹ *RJJ*, p. 9.

⁵² The high child mortality was a cruel fact in the 18th century France (see Bowen, 1981; Heywood, 2007).

Childhood is unknown. Starting from the false idea one has of it, the farther one goes, the more one loses one's way. The wisest men concentrate on what it is important for men to know without considering what children are in a condition to learn. They are always seeking the man in the child, without thinking of what he is before being a man.⁵³

Every Child is Unique

Since Rousseau considered education from the child's point of view, he saw childhood as a crucial time and aim in itself, and children as aims in themselves as well. By dividing the period from birth to adulthood in four stages: infancy (0-2 years), childhood (2-12 years), pre-puberty (12-15 years) and adolescence (15-20 years) Rousseau showed that children, not just adults, should be included in the concept of "human," and that each stage of the developing human has its own character that need to be identified and addressed by education. He emphasized that it is easier to cultivate children than to cultivate adults, since the younger they are the less they have been prejudiced by society's ills. While each stage is important, the most precarious time in human life is from birth to age twelve. This period is crucial to human development; since it is so very difficult to get rid of prejudices acquired during this period. Therefore, this time has to be the primary time for training and developing the capabilities of children and of getting them to sense the world from their own perspectives. After this joyful but not idle period, the child will be ready for focused study and work.

Even though Rousseau argued that the child is born righteous, he recommended beginning education immediately after birth.⁵⁴ Childhood has its own way of acting and sensing, and every child is a unique personality, but that personality cannot expand in the right direction without skilful guidance; natural dispositions need cultivation. Because education has to fit each child's unique personality, education starts with careful observation to determine the child's character and to plan instruction. Before children become mature, they need the freedom to be childish. No one can enforce the maturation process; it has to take its own time. This will not happen before the body has gained strength and, therefore, children have to be free to move before they grow old

⁵³ *É*, p. 33-34.

⁵⁴ *JNH*.

enough to sit still and reflect. Their first source of learning is their own body.⁵⁵ Before they reach the age of reason, they have to learn to respond to their own hands, feet, and eyes. The well-functioning mind arises from the receptive senses of a well-functioning body. Using the language of reason with a small child is futile since they cannot reason yet.

Nature is Always Right

Wise education does not only start with recognizing *a* child (the human nature), but *the* child (a human being with distinct qualities). The child's own character may not be changed or forced to suit preordained goals. In a sentence that appears to involve a contradiction, he states:

In addition to the constitution common to the species, each individual brings with him at birth a particular temperament which determines his genius and character, and should be neither changed nor constrained, but formed and perfected.⁵⁶

This might sound inconsistent: is it possible to form something without changing it? Rousseau obviously meant that the educator can help the child to make use of its own innate potentials without altering the character. Using the plant cultivating metaphor; it is more about 'choosing the best soil and fertilizers' to make the child grow than bending it to a new shape. Can education perfect somebody without any vision of the direction? Rousseau was, almost like Plato, sure that there is a goodness that is common for all humans and about which all non-corrupted humans can agree.⁵⁷ However, Rousseau's aims can be seen as universal and 'natural', but also as indefinite.

Each advances more or less according to his genius, his taste, his needs, his talents, his zeal, and the occasions he has to devote himself to them....We do not know what our nature permits us to be.⁵⁸

Rousseau meant that humans not are born with equal capabilities but the educational goals nonetheless need to strive towards equal opportunity in society. "Everything

⁵⁵ *É*.

⁵⁶ *JNH*, p. 461.

⁵⁷ See *SC* or *DPE*.

⁵⁸ *É*, p. 62.

works together for the common good in the universal system”⁵⁹ and in this system all humans have their appointed place. The role of education is to find the right order, not to correct nature, since nature is always right. It is not possible to change others unless one changes their temperament; but it is possible to make persons pretend that they are other than they are. However, there are always situations where they will fall back to their inner dispositions.⁶⁰ What does this mean? In Rousseau’s own words:

Once again the question is not to change the character and bend the natural disposition, but on the contrary to push it as far as it can go, to cultivate it and keep it from degenerating; for it is thus that a man becomes all he can be, and the nature’s work is culminated in him by education.⁶¹

The child should be prevented from the errors and prejudices and “pushed” in the opposite direction. It is not the adult’s view of the world that should be central, but the child’s own experiencing of the environment. The adult calls forth the child’s own self-directed learning. It does not take place without the adult’s careful choices, but the child is “provoked to freedom”⁶² as an individual who has the aptitude for becoming autonomous.⁶³ Alexander von Oettingen sees this provocation as a crucial educational principle throughout *Émile*.⁶⁴ I agree, because Rousseau’s main interest was to encourage the child to become independent. Children want to learn because they are born with an aptitude for improvement and the free will to choose their own lives. Rousseau saw the child as a companion possessing various capabilities but too weak to make use of them without guidance. Children should be encouraged to become curious rather than accept knowledge as fixed and final. Education should not be a matter of forceful pulling but of pushing with appropriate force. With the word “push” Rousseau meant that education should encourage children to start making their own judgments

⁵⁹ *JNH*, p. 462.

⁶⁰ *JNH*.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 464 (“Encore une fois il ne s’agit point de changer le caractère et de plier le naturel, mais au contraire de le pousser aussi loin qu’il peut aller, de le cultiver et d’empêcher qu’il ne dégénere [sic]; car c’est [sic] ainsi qu’un homme devient tout ce qu’il peut être, et que l’ouvrage de la nature s’acheve [sic] en lui par l’éducation”, *OC II*, p. 566). Please, pay attention to the verb *poussare* that is the intransitive form of *pousser* (push).

⁶² Dietrich Benner, 2001, uses the German term *Das Prinzip der Aufforderung zur Selbsttätigkeit* and Uljens, 2002, the Swedish *principen om uppfordran till självverksamhet* and the English “provocation to self-reflection.” The word *Aufforderung* is difficult to translate into English. I will use the concept “provocation to freedom,” since I see the process as more than thinking; it is also about activating, and thus includes “provocation to self-activity.” Benner also sees *Aufforderung zur Selbständigkeit* as both reflection and action. Williams, 2001, suggests “summoning” and “calling” as translation to Fichte’s *Aufforderung*.

⁶³ Benner, 2001; von Oettingen, 2001; Uljens, 1998, 2002.

⁶⁴ von Oettingen, 2001.

and to move according to their own aims instead of pulling them towards the educator's aims for them. The unbiased educator can show directions, but the future shows the final ends, because students must be allowed to participate in the creation of their own futures.

Nevertheless, the strength of the push could not be the same for every child. While humans are born with various aptitudes, they need to learn to use these aptitudes wisely and not to try to expand their selfish cravings at the expense of others.

To one genius you must give wings, to another shackles; the one needs to be goaded, the other held back; the one needs to be encouraged, and the other intimidated; you should sometimes enlighten, sometimes stupefy.⁶⁵

2.4 Social Critique

A fifth aim with *Émile* was for sure not only to criticize education, but to bring forward a broader social critique. This is because he saw that the human being is “born and grow up in societies which are riddled with injustices of various sorts.”⁶⁶ Human beings need education to understand these injustices and know how various forms of human relationships relates to unfairness and prejudices in the world.⁶⁷ Rousseau wanted to put his finger on social contradictions and anomalies and make people reflect not only on education, but also on general social and political matters. In nearly all his books, Rousseau shows his disgust of what he calls ‘depraved’ or ‘corrupt’ society. In *Émile* he also takes a clear stand against the Catholic Church and dogmatic religious principles, in the seventy pages long passage called *The Savoyard Vicar*, inserted in Book V of *Émile*. The inclusion of this material was not accepted without hesitation by the authorities.⁶⁸ It was even worse than his critique of the political system and the social inequalities.

⁶⁵ *JNH*, p. 464.

⁶⁶ Winch, 1972, p. 108.

⁶⁷ See *ibid*.

⁶⁸ After the publication of *Émile* and *Social Contract* the French Parliament decided to burn the books and imprison the author. The books were banned both by the state and the church. One of the reasons was the controversial way Rousseau dealt with Christianity and the Catholic Church in the fourth chapter of *Émile*. Rousseau's daily life became complicated after this occasion. He had to leave France immediately and was not even welcome in his native city state of Geneva.

Against Social Class Biases

If we consider *Émile* as a critique of contemporary education, it is to be read as a response to a time when knowledge was a privilege. The Enlightenment saw itself as the rescuer of the world and the tool to human improvement, but education was only for the rich. Children from the lower classes learned what they were supposed to need for life in their families and when they began working at early age they learned new roles from their masters and working fellows.⁶⁹ Many aristocratic children in France, on the other hand, attained private education or were sent to colleges in the form of boarding schools for boys. Most of the colleges were run by Jesuits. In these colleges the common language was Latin and the aim of the education was to implement the culture of classical antiquity.⁷⁰ Rousseau called the colleges “ridiculous” and blamed the education practiced in these institutions for being a waste of effort and producing “hypocrites, always professing to live for others, while thinking of themselves alone”.⁷¹ Yet, similar to *Émile*’s learning environment, the college was a world blocked from the surrounding society. The boys that attended the last course staid in the college, isolated from their families, from the age of twelve to eighteen.⁷²

Rousseau has been criticized for choosing *Émile* among the wealthy. However, this was a strategic choice that he defended by claiming that poor children do not need education, as they cannot change the situation into which they are born. Today this reasoning sounds very strange, but it has to be viewed in the context of the 18th century Genevan society of artisans and petty bourgeois, or in some other rural, traditional context of that time. Rousseau valued both the small city-state and country life highly, including handicraft and farming, to both of which *Émile* is introduced.⁷³ In a letter written many years before *Émile*, Rousseau also highlights his view of education:

I would not make them [children] into either authors or office people. I would not train them to handle the pen but the plough, the file or the plane, instruments that

⁶⁹ See Heywood, 2007.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ *É*, pp. 14-15.

⁷² Heywood, 2007.

⁷³ Rousseau himself never gave up his profession as a note copier, while he did not regard authorship as any real profession.

make one lead a healthy, laborious, innocent life, which one never abuses in order to do evil and which does not attract enemies when one does good.⁷⁴

This implied critique of existing practices. If we read *Émile* as a critique of the social situation in 18th century Paris, we can easily defend his choice of *Émile* as an aristocrat. In 18th century France social inequalities were enormous. Most people were poor and often went hungry, while the aristocracy and the churchmen were well off, and luxury and extravagance increased among the wealthy. “In general the upper classes despised the lower, and treated them with contempt and cruelty. The nobility looked upon the peasants as a lower order of life”.⁷⁵ It was common that upper class children despised the servants that took care of them.⁷⁶ Rousseau saw it as his task to try to prevent the increasingly numerous bourgeoisie from copying the extravagant life style of the rich. In this situation, he believed that the greatest obstruction to social improvements had to do with the way in which the rich brought up their children, and he consequently saw the biggest challenge in the education of the rich. In Rousseau’s opinion, it was more important to educate the wealthy than the poor, and to teach the rich simplicity and a modest life. He imagined (at least as a thought experiment) that it would be possible to adjust social conditions by an education that could change the behavior of wealthy people’s children and thus make new generations more humble. Yet, Rousseau also foresaw a revolution and said he wanted to prepare the rich for future poverty. With his gentle but incisive wit Rousseau states that it is much more likely that the rich will become poor than vice versa.

The noble become commoners, the rich become poor, the monarch becomes subject. Are the blows of fate so rare that you can count on being exempted from them? We are approaching a state of crisis, and the age of revolutions.⁷⁷

Gender Bias

Although Rousseau’s opinion was that all humans were born equal, when it came to the education of women, Rousseau was chiefly conservative, and women have argued against his education proposal for females ever since Mary Wollstonecraft’s indignant

⁷⁴ *From Rousseau to Mme de Francueil (C, p. 552).*

⁷⁵ Eby, 1952, p. 312.

⁷⁶ *É.*

⁷⁷ *É*, p. 194.

critique in the late 18th century.⁷⁸ Rousseau's book bears the title *Émile* and only one book of five, the last one, deals with women's education through the imaginary girl *Sophie*⁷⁹ who was to become *Émile*'s wife. While Rousseau wanted to educate *Émile* for independence, the same did not apply to *Sophie*. Her education was in many aspects the opposite of *Émile*'s education. *Sophie* was raised in a social context and learned about religion at an early age, because her task was first to follow her mother's religion, and when married, her husband's. He was to be strong and active, she weak and passive. The ideal woman Rousseau portrays is a gentle angel made for pleasing her husband. Rousseau repeats a view of women that was typical of his time,⁸⁰ but Rousseau's view is not completely biased, since he states in the beginning of Book V in *Émile* that "[t]hose who regard woman as an imperfect man are no doubt mistaken, but they have external resemblance on their side."⁸¹ In Rousseau's opinion males and females are similar in that they are both human, but they have distinct social roles.

It is impossible to discuss *Sophie*'s education in the present thesis, although it has relevance for Rousseau's political views. Suffice it to say that even if Rousseau's view of women's education was unfair by any modern standards, he saw the family as the place where sound social relationships could be built up.⁸² "Can patriotism thrive except in the soil of the miniature fatherland, the home?" Rousseau⁸³ asks and, as shown in *Julie*, a woman's role in the family was crucial for his social vision.⁸⁴ Motherly love should multiply and make children love their family members, and as a result they should also learn to love their country, becoming good and responsible citizens.⁸⁵

2.5 The Vision of a Better Society

As stated above, one of the primary motives with *Émile* was to present an education that should meet Rousseau's utopian vision in the *Social Contract* of an unselfish world,

⁷⁸ See e.g., Wollstonecraft, 1792/1833.

⁷⁹ The name *Sophie* that denotes *wisdom* was purposefully chosen.

⁸⁰ See, e.g., Heywood, 2007.

⁸¹ *É*, 185.

⁸² See also Spring, 2006.

⁸³ *É*, p. 340.

⁸⁴ See also, e.g., Lange, 2002.

⁸⁵ Spring, 2006. I will drop the gender subject now declaring that *Émile* after all might have been better off without the chapter called Book V.

where freedom of thought would be combined with egalitarianism. Rousseau's educational thoughts were an integral part of this system. Consequently, *Émile* has a central position in Rousseau's complete philosophy and a sixth aim with *Émile* might have been to depict a better society.

The Social Contract

In the 2nd discourse Rousseau meant that the natural humans were solitary, but they united because they faced a situation when this was their only way to survive. Yet, as his primary concern the question arose of how free humans, focusing on their own wellbeing and survival, could agree on common rules while still protecting their own interests.⁸⁶ At this stage of his reasoning, Rousseau starts creating his idea of a *social contract* based on *the general will*. He brings into consideration a stage of social development that was not immediately apparent and posits this as a preliminary stage of the development of human societies.⁸⁷ It is a model for how humans could both be united and remain free.⁸⁸ The “freedom” Rousseau talked about was human freedom formed through the self-realization of human individuals as moral and rational beings, with natural inclinations both as members of the human species and as unique individuals. In addition, he argued that they have equal rights as members of society. However, while no one has priority for membership, society based on equality depends on reciprocal duties everybody has to fulfill. This is, so to speak, the price individuals must pay for the advantages of social life. In Rousseau's own words:

These clauses, properly understood, may be reduced to one—the total alienation of each associate, together with all his rights, to the whole community; for, in the first place, as each gives himself absolutely, the conditions are the same for all; and, this being so, no one has any interest in making them burdensome to others.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ *SC*.

⁸⁷ See 2nd *D*.

⁸⁸ But, to understand this reasoning, it is necessary to restrict the interpretation of the word “free” to an explanation that comes close to what is often referred to as “positive freedom”. Since Rousseau and Kant, many social scientists and philosophers have interpreted the concept of ‘freedom’ in a double sense. The two extremes of freedom are, *positive freedom* (*internal* freedom, freedom *to*, *self-fulfillment*), and *negative freedom* (*external* freedom, freedom *from* external constraints, freedom in relation to the demands of *others*) (see Kant, 1788/2002; Plant, 1995). This division is only a hypothetical construction to show polar, and polarizing, tensions since negative and positive freedoms always are in dynamic interaction. See also page 30.

⁸⁹ *SC*, p. 8.

When all individuals thus give up of themselves and what is theirs (their persons and powers) to the general will of which they are only a part, they are repaid to their individual benefit. A “moral and collective body” is shaped.⁹⁰ Rousseau saw the Sovereign as a united body of power consisting of all the citizens in a state ruled by the common general will of all. According to Rousseau, individuals cannot contribute to society without contributing to their own lives and, thus, everyone’s wellbeing and society’s wellbeing are interdependent. Therefore, the general will is initiated from everyone as being applicable to everyone. Human justice and liberty depend on law: the social contract depends on mutual agreement and no one can put one’s private interests above the law.⁹¹

Each of us puts his person and all his power in common under the supreme direction of the general will, and, in our corporate capacity, we receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole.⁹²

However, some individuals have personal interests and yet want to enjoy the benefits of their citizenship, even if they are not willing to fulfill their duties as citizens.⁹³ These turn out to be what is called “free riders.”⁹⁴ These individuals think only of their own best interests and are not willing to take responsibility for the common interest that allows them to enjoy such benefits over the long run. They leave the ‘payments’ they owe society to the others. For instance, when sorting out who shall pay the costs of the polluted environment in contemporary societies, the dilemma of ‘free riding’ often occurs. A great many people want a clean environment, but they neither want to participate in the costs nor sacrifice their living standards. But, as already stated, Rousseau argued that those who do not obey the general will must be forced to do so by the whole of society.

In order then that the social compact may not be an empty formula, it tacitly includes the undertaking, which alone can give force to the rest, that whoever refuses to obey the general will shall be compelled to do so by the whole body. This means nothing less than that he will be forced to be free; for this is the condition which, by giving each citizen to his country, secures him against all personal dependence. In this lies the key to the working of the political machine; this alone

⁹⁰ *SC*, p. 8-9.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *SC*, p. 8. The italics are original.

⁹³ *SC*.

⁹⁴ ‘Free rider’ is a concept Garrett Hardin raised in his essay *The Tragedy of the Commons* first published in *Science* 1968.

legitimises civil undertakings, which, without it, would be absurd, tyrannical, and liable to the most frightful abuses.⁹⁵

This is what Rousseau calls the key to the “political machinery.” Everyone has to assent to the social contract and become part of the general will that is collectively social both in its aims and its essence.⁹⁶ According to Lagerspetz,⁹⁷ ‘the general will’ is distinguished from ‘the will of all’ because the former involves a certain mindset where citizens tend to address questions of common interest from the perspective of what they take to be the interest of society as a whole.⁹⁸ However, this is not easy, and according to Winch⁹⁹ interpretation of Rousseau, conceptions of justice are only developed through discussions of injustices. Political commitment (citizenship) depends on an education that creates human beings that are capable of recognizing various human relationships and makes them ready to enter into sound relationships.

“He who wills the end wills the means also, and the means must involve some risks, and even some losses.”¹⁰⁰ Humans who have left their natural state can no longer blindly follow their desires; they have to reason and think about what is the best for all and for themselves in the long run. In Rousseau’s own words:

Although, in this state, he deprives himself of some advantages which he got from nature, he gains in return others so great, his faculties are so stimulated and developed, his ideas so extended, his feelings so ennobled, and his whole soul so uplifted, that, did not the abuses of this new condition often degrade him below that which he left, he would be bound to bless continually the happy moment which took him from it for ever, and, instead of a stupid and unimaginative animal, made him an intelligent being and a man.¹⁰¹

What, then, is lost when they take on the role of citizens? It is the natural liberty to do and to take whatever they like. Yet, they get something in return: the civil liberty and rights to their possessions. In addition, they gain moral liberty. As a part of the sovereignty, prescribing and following the laws amounts to liberty or autonomy. This amounts to being the master of one’s self instead of a slave to one’s own desires. Those who think they have the right to rob others of their land are slaves to their greed. Even

⁹⁵ *Sc*, p. 3

⁹⁶ *SC*.

⁹⁷ 2004.

⁹⁸ See also *SC*, Book I: IV.

⁹⁹ Winch, 1972.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹⁰¹ *SC*, p. 10.

though humans are born with natural differences (physical and mental), they become equal through the social contract and the rights it advances. To protect one's own life and rights, one has to be even willing to pay with one's own life, if needed.¹⁰² 'Citizens' are politically active members of the state; others cannot act for them. Being a citizen implies making an equal contribution to society, formulating the rules that organize the life shared with other citizens, and being protected by all other citizens in this role.¹⁰³ When particular members of the society are treated as secondary to the laws of the state, they are called "subjects" according to Rousseau.¹⁰⁴ Individuals who have subjected themselves to the general will obey themselves; when they obey the sovereign they become freer under the social contract than in the state of nature.¹⁰⁵

Shared laws protect the citizens and aim at the most profound goods, freedom and equality, according to Rousseau.¹⁰⁶ Yet, there is a problem, because all the citizens do not necessarily know what is good. Following Aristotle, Rousseau states that "men always love what is good or what they find good; it is in judging what is good that they go wrong."¹⁰⁷ Free action depends on two variables: the will, and the ability. Deeds are thus dependent on both a wish and a capacity to act. Freedom and justice are not always given first priority. But the legislator is well aware that there are forces other than laws that sustain society: the power of habits, such as customs and public opinion that are engraved in the minds and hearts of the citizens.¹⁰⁸ These forces create the vision of what is worthwhile striving for because of its 'normality.' In an ideal state, citizens who are free from inner conflicts uphold the social contract by constantly transforming and reshaping society,¹⁰⁹ and therefore, this disposition does not need to result in anything negative.

¹⁰² Rousseau has met much critique for supporting death sentence.

¹⁰³ *SC*; see also Dent, 1992.

¹⁰⁴ *SC*.

¹⁰⁵ *É*.

¹⁰⁶ *SC*.

¹⁰⁷ *SC*, p. 60.

¹⁰⁸ *SC*.

¹⁰⁹ Shklar, 1966/2006.

From Vicious to Virtuous Circle

Viewed in the light of Rousseau's educational agenda in *Émile*, persons need to strengthen their wholeness before they can profitably enter the greater entities of society and humankind. If we read *Émile* as part of Rousseau's overall vision, we will also recognize that a just society requires more than only one good member, like Émile; his education has to be the model of a larger enterprise and be repeated in others. Geraint Parry correctly maintains that Rousseau rejected an education that repeats the vicious circle of fostering corrupt individuals to uphold a corrupt society, and that he wanted to replace this circle with a more virtuous one.¹¹⁰ While parents as well as others involved in a child's upbringing are infected by their own prejudices, the tutor is the one who can break the vicious circle.¹¹¹ This is achieved by keeping Émile apart from society where others could contaminate him. Parry shows how Rousseau uses education to solve central dilemmas in his political philosophy, and thus become trapped in a *virtuous circle*, where transformed human beings could create transformed societies that transforms the conditions for the entire humankind.¹¹² Given that Rousseau saw the connections between the organization of society and the management of the individual (both self-mastery and instruction), there has to take place a steady reorganization of many dimensions for a change from a vicious to a virtuous circle to occur.

However, the importance of the tutor was not to be overlooked. Because Rousseau regarded the child as intrinsically good, what he called a *negative education* holds the child back and protects it from mistakes, instead of normatively teaching virtue and forcing the child in a particular direction.

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 his knowing how to distinguish his right hand from his left, at your first lessons the eyes of his understanding would open up to reason. Without prejudice, without habit, he would have nothing in him which could hinder the effect of your care. Soon he would become in your hands the wisest of men; and in beginning by doing nothing, you would have worked an educational marvel.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Parry, 2001.

¹¹¹ Broome, 1963.

¹¹² Parry 2001.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 93-94.

Rousseau states clearly in the beginning of *Émile* that he wants to show what humans would be without the self-contradictions that are obstacles to happiness. Thus, the best route to human happiness is not what educators do, but what they leave undone; their non-action. Mimesis is natural for humans, but it is damaging in society, since children easily imitate bad habits. Self-knowledge and self-control are the first things a child needs to learn. According to Rousseau, *Émile* definitely needs guidance, but his moral education shall be carefully prepared as a hidden agenda. The lessons thus take place through appropriate experiences rather than words. Parry calls this “defensive” or “protective” education.¹¹⁴

Let him always believe he is the master, and let it always be you who are. There is no subjection so perfect as that which keeps the appearance of freedom. Thus the will itself is made captive. The poor child who knows nothing, who can do nothing, who has no learning, is he not at your mercy? Do you not dispose, with respect to him, of everything which surrounds him? Are you not the master of affecting him as you please? Are not his labors, his games, his pleasures, his pains, all in your hands without his knowing it? Doubtless he ought to do only what he wants, but he ought to want only what you want him to do. He ought not to make a step without you having foreseen it; he ought not to open his mouth without your knowing what he is going to say.¹¹⁵

Bloom finds ironic Rousseau’s formula that the child must always do what he wants to do but he should want to do only what the tutor wants him to.¹¹⁶ Bloom’s claim makes it sound like the tutor was obsessive, however, and gives an oversimplified picture of Rousseau’s educational endeavor. Nonetheless, it is not so far from what Rousseau says in *Émile*, namely that the impression should be given that the student is the master; education thus shall seem free even though it is calculated to direct the child’s own will. In Heywood’s opinion, creating this illusion of freedom is even manipulative “to a degree that now seems shocking.”¹¹⁷ I agree, but perhaps Rousseau’s actual intention was perhaps to shock his contemporary readers.

While Rousseau often used allegories, the relation between the child and his tutor can also be read as a miniature of the relation between the citizen and the law, in order to make the readers realize that they might need to submit to the general good before they have the right to enjoy the benefits of society. One can even interpret *Émile* as an

¹¹⁴ Parry, 2001, p. 252.

¹¹⁵ *É*, p. 120.

¹¹⁶ Bloom, 1978/2006.

¹¹⁷ Heywood, 2007, p 40.

allegory for adult human self-improvement in which (in Platonic language) the rational and strong part of the soul teaches the desiring and weak part to distinguish between artificial and natural needs.

Obviously, Rousseau provocatively wanted to address the unsolvable conflict between individual freedom and social responsibility, but when Gabriel Compayré states that Rousseau wanted to build a wall around *Émile*,¹¹⁸ I prefer to say that Rousseau wanted to ensure that nobody cut off *Émile*'s wings before he was ready for full-fledged flight. Rousseau's main purpose was the education of an individual who is free but also responsible. Freedom has to be constantly re-claimed throughout life, but the process requires continuous participation in actualizing the general will.¹¹⁹ By "freedom" Rousseau meant freedom from one's own subjugating passions and the craving to obey social pressure. It was not a freedom to do whatever one like but, rather, freedom from slavery of all kinds, what Kant called "positive freedom" or autonomy.¹²⁰

If we experimentally imagine that the larger society that awaits *Émile* after the completion of his education is generally virtuous, his will then becomes a part of the general will through the social contract. If, on the other hand, society is given to vice, his will may become directed towards ends he would not otherwise seek. An education that develops his own will makes him free and thus ready to respond independently to social demands.

2.6 Human Nature

As already stated, it would be a mistake to read *Émile* outside the context of Rousseau's other writings. I agree with Jack Howard Broome, who relates *Émile* to Rousseau's whole "prospect of man's successful adaptation to the physical and moral environment."¹²¹ A crucial aim of many of Rousseau's writings was to identify and explain *human nature*; that is, to describe the original state of the human being, the human character unaffected by society. So, a seventh aim I distinguish with *Émile* is

¹¹⁸ Compayré, 1953.

¹¹⁹ See Affeldt, 1999/2006.

¹²⁰ See Note 88.

¹²¹ Broome 1963, p. 76.

that Rousseau wanted to discuss the idea of human nature. To find this ‘human nature’ Rousseau also aimed at exposing the *state of nature* in its most initial and *pure* state, although he did not in fact clearly distinguish between ‘state of nature’ and ‘pure state of nature’. In *Émile* he gave the topic a new direction. The purest form of human nature is manifested in newborn children, who, however, soon lose their innocence through socialization processes. But before I can discuss what ‘human nature’ denotes in *Émile* I need briefly to discuss the background. The ‘human nature’ topic that Rousseau first addressed in his *1st Discourse* was to become a basic undertaking in his *2nd Discourse*. Rousseau was familiar with accounts by voyagers who portrayed native peoples from the colonies.¹²² However, while he did not believe these peoples lived in a pure state of nature, he clearly admitted that accounts of their forms of life contributed to his thinking when he wrote the discourses.¹²³ Thus, with this knowledge about ‘savages’ and hypothetically reflecting on how humans would act in a state of nature, Rousseau worked out his theory. He wanted to show how humans differ from other animals and what would be typical for a non-civilized human, thus portraying human nature as uninfluenced by civilization. In Rousseau’s dichotomous story, the savages occupy a middle position between the state of nature and civilized life. Rousseau saw savages as still living in a happy state, uninfected by civilization and its sciences and arts, and he thought that humans would be better off without the ever-expanding knowledge that had become an end in itself.¹²⁴

Humans are Naturally Good

On the question of whether humans are naturally good or evil, Rousseau first states that, initially, human beings are neither good nor evil, as they have no knowledge and hence no depravity. However, in a note in the *2nd Discourse* he declares that humans are naturally good: “Men are wicked, a sad and constant experience makes proof unnecessary; yet man is naturally good, I believe I have proved it...”¹²⁵ In their natural state, humans live in the present and only care about what takes place in their immediate neighborhood. In comparison to the reflections of civilized people, savages do not

¹²² See, e.g., Muthu, 2003.

¹²³ E.g., Note VI in *2nd D.*

¹²⁴ *1st D.*

¹²⁵ *2nd D.*, Note IX, p. 197; see also *RJJ* (“... l’homme est naturellement bon...” *OV III*, p. 202).

worry about the whole world.¹²⁶ The first and pure state of nature is prior to all purposeful social and moral relations between human beings. In that state, humans have no other needs beside the most basic (e.g., hunger, sexual desire). They have neither moral needs nor conscious regard for their fellow beings. In the state of nature, humans are free but only in a natural sense, compared to reasoning and moral humans who are free to make moral choices.¹²⁷ When Rousseau says: “To will, and not to will, to desire and to fear, must be the first, and almost the only operations of his soul, till new circumstances occasion new developments of his faculties,”¹²⁸ he talks about freedom to choose food, shelter, and the like.

Rousseau criticized other writers for having rejected the study of the state of nature; studies that could have revealed the foundations of human society and made the discussions about natural rights less complicated.¹²⁹ In the two discourses mentioned above, he hypothetically describes an ideal situation that might have existed before human beings became corrupted by society. He is well aware of the paradoxical human position he portrays and in which he is personally situated. On the one hand, humans are no longer living in paradise. On the other hand, they have become enlightened through education. Thus they are capable of reflecting on this lost heaven and writing about it. But there is no key that unlocks this forever hidden knowledge, and there is so much they still do not understand.¹³⁰ This ascension to a higher state of consciousness, on the other hand, brought humans into a situation where they hardly knew themselves and their own inner life longer. In this situation, it was difficult for them to investigate human nature by studying what was easily at hand, namely themselves.

Natural humans were satisfied with a life for themselves; they did not need recognition and adoration bestowed on them by others. Hence, they made their decisions independently, regardless of any opinions by others; in other words, they were naturally free. As civilized life is reduced to a façade of conformity, all decent human qualities have become empty appearances. In addition, the increased accessibility of goods and arts has generated complex social rules. Rousseau did not like all these general and

¹²⁶ 2nd D.

¹²⁷ See also Scott, 1992/2006.

¹²⁸ *DPE*, p. 88.

¹²⁹ 2nd D.

¹³⁰ We still lack relevant answers for many of the questions Rousseau struggled with, despite advanced archeological and paleontological research methods.

unwritten rules¹³¹ and was definitely not convinced that the new lifestyle had increased human freedom. Civilized humans have forgotten who they are; their own existence is camouflaged both from themselves and from those others on whom they want to make an impression.¹³² Trapped in their own chains, they have given up their freedom.

[I]t is unbelievable how regulated, measured, weighed everything is in what they call etiquette; whatever is no longer in the sentiments, they have put into rules, and with them everything is rules. If this people of followers were full of original characters it would be impossible to know about it; for no man dares to be himself. *One must do as the others do*, is the primary maxim of wisdom in this country. *That is done, that is not done*. This is the supreme pronouncement.¹³³

Rousseau saw goodness and virtues as complementary. For him, to know one's limit was natural goodness. While goodness makes one follow one's own inclinations without harming anybody else, virtue allows an individual to overcome one's own inclinations and succeed in benefitting the welfare of others.¹³⁴ Virtue does not only consist in being just, but also in combating one's own passions.¹³⁵ Civilization promotes greed: good persons have few needs; they are enough in themselves. When Rousseau blamed the sciences and arts for having made humans live a lie, it is the platonic difference between reality and appearance that he echoes. The conclusion Rousseau draws from his depiction of human history, is that a country where nobody breaks the law, but always act in accordance with the common harmony, does not need laws or officials.¹³⁶ However, ambitious and cowardly individuals will always be willing to risk their fortune and either obey or command. According to Rousseau, society does not appreciate honesty, praising virtuous sounding speech instead of virtuous living. For Rousseau, virtue is not just a matter of ethical rules; it is more a matter of moral practice than of studies. The truth is written in our own hearts, if we are willing to search for it. Proper action does not necessarily go hand in hand with knowledge. We do not need to strive for acknowledgement and a good reputation. Instead we can do our utmost to act well.

¹³¹ This idea about general rules that enslaves people can be compared with Martin Heidegger's theory about 'das Man', the comfortable neutral existential mode that allows an individual to be both all people and nobody at the same time. The theory means, in short, that people tend to act as people in general; *one* enjoys, *one* has an opinion, *one* makes—but *none* is responsible (see Heidegger's *Being and Time*, 1927/1996).

¹³² 2nd D.

¹³³ JNH, p. 205.

¹³⁴ Kelly, Masters & Stillman, 1995.

¹³⁵ LF.

¹³⁶ 2nd D.

Sensitivity

All humans are somehow sensitive, according to Rousseau. “Sensitivity is the principle of all action¹³⁷.... God himself is sensitive since he acts”.¹³⁸ Sensitivity is twofold; one aspect, the physical and passive part, has self-preservation and the survival of the human species as its aim, while the other is moral and involves active attention to other human beings. This attention fluctuates in intention and can either involve positive attraction or negative repulsion. Nature generates positive sensitivity, and it strives to nurture human beings through love and empathy while negative sensitivity makes them constrict each other through hatred and malicious passions. In Note XV in the 2nd *Discourse* Rousseau introduces the concepts of *amour-de-soi-même*¹³⁹ and *amour-propre*, two concepts that he uses frequently in *Émile*. *Amour-de-soi* (shorter form of *amour-de-soi-même*) produces positive sensitivity and makes individuals search for what is good for them, whereas *amour-propre* can take two routes and, therefore, produce either positive or negative sensitivity (see below).

Rousseau took *amour-de-soi* to mean a natural inborn feature that helps all animals protect themselves and safeguard their own survival. In a state of nature where there is no opportunity to regard the other individual’s actions as intentionally evil, no one can be insulted. When a beast steals food from humans they can feel anger, but not indignation because they know or feel that the animal only acts instinctively. “*Amour-de-soi[-même]* signifies a concern, a care, to look to, guard, preserve and foster one’s own personal well-being, guided by a clear sense or idea of what the well-being of oneself comprises and requires.”¹⁴⁰ This concern for one’s own well-being is thus not equivalent with egoism or vanity, but is only a drive for actual self-preservation. It is not wrong that living creatures strive to safeguard themselves, but something healthy and favorable, according to Rousseau.

¹³⁷ “La sensibilité est le principe de toute action” (*OCI*, p. 805).

¹³⁸ *RJJ*, p.112.

¹³⁹ It is difficult to translate Rousseau’s concepts of *amour-de-soi* and *amour-propre* and many alternatives have been offered. Broome, 1963, translates *amour-de-soi* to Self-Interest and *amour-propre* to Selfish-Interest, but to avoid confusion, I will use the French terms. Rousseau was not the one who invented these concepts. For example Aristotle and Augustine discussed the self-love issue. All big religions emphasize some kind of self-love. According to Buddhism humans reach Nirvana when they distinguish between false and true self-love, and the Bible commands humans to love their neighbors as themselves.

¹⁴⁰ Dent, 1988, p. 20.

[T]he first movements of nature are always right. There is no original perversity in the human heart. There is not a single vice to be found in it of which it cannot be said how and whence it entered.¹⁴¹

Whereas Rousseau's use of *amour-de-soi* can be regarded as a constant norm in contrast to the socially stimulated *amour-propre*,¹⁴² it is not constant in its appearance. It changes according to the constitution of the person. There is nonetheless a solid core of care for one's personal good, independent of the shifting varieties of *amour-de-soi*.

Amour-propre, in contrast, is an attitude relative to a social condition. It can be described as a concern to be something—an individual—for others and to be engaged in reciprocal bonds with others. *Amour-propre* arises “from social relations, from the progress of ideas, and from the cultivation of the mind”¹⁴³ and it makes humans strive for an extension of their natural being through recognition and admiration. *Amour-de-soi* is gentle and loving and reaches out for one's own happiness. If it is deflected into *amour-propre* by some complication, it can (but does not have to) turn into a negative feeling that aims at harming others.¹⁴⁴ Comparison nourishes *amour-propre* that, in contrast to *amour-de-soi*, is a love of oneself for being unique and different from others. In its “inflamed”¹⁴⁵ form, *amour-propre* entails feeling superior to others; it is a kind of pride in oneself for being better than others.¹⁴⁶ While *amour-de-soi* is satisfied when basic needs are satisfied, inflamed *amour-propre* easily starts to compare and command others and measures itself in relation to others, resulting in struggle and superiority. This becomes an endless process: the higher one rises above the other, the more eagerly the individual struggles onward.¹⁴⁷ In contrast, *amour-propre* cannot survive in solitude where nothing nourishes it; honestly social individuals suffer in social situations and, because they are always searching for truthfulness, they cannot accept deceitfulness. This was Rousseau's own experience: “I am my own only when I am alone. Apart from

¹⁴¹ *É*, p. 92.

¹⁴² Bernstein, 1990.

¹⁴³ *RJJ*, p. 113.

¹⁴⁴ *RJJ*.

¹⁴⁵ In *Émile* (p. 247) Rousseau writes that one can “inflammé” (*enflamer*, *OV IV*, p. 540) a child's *amour-propre*. Consequently, Dent (1988) uses the adjective ‘inflamed’ when he talks about a bad *amour-propre* and Bernstein (1990) uses ‘deformed’ in contrast to ‘benign’ forms of *amour-propre*. Rousseau claims that “hateful and irascible passions are born of *amour-propre* in contrast to “gentle and affectionate passions” that are born of *amour-de-soi* (*É*, p. 214).

¹⁴⁶ *RSW*; see also Dent, 1988.

¹⁴⁷ *RJJ*.

that I am the plaything of all those around me.”¹⁴⁸ Accordingly, *amour-de-soi* fosters benevolent feelings in contrast to *amour-propre* that, in the worst case, produces hate and anger. Inflamed *amour-propre* brings about self-alienation,¹⁴⁹ and humans become strangers from themselves, their own proper needs, and their purpose, and thus they start acting unnatural.¹⁵⁰ But, as Dent and Jay Bernstein point out, *amour-propre* does not always need to become inflamed; it can take another course.¹⁵¹ This is also what Rousseau states in *Émile*:

This *amour-propre* in itself or relative to us is good and useful; and since it has no necessary relation to others, it is in this respect naturally neutral. It becomes good or bad only by the application made of it and the relations given to it.¹⁵²

This quotation shows that according to Rousseau, *amour-propre* is a favorable quality given that it is encouraged in a positive direction, but since it also has a tendency to take a distasteful route, the encouragement towards the opposite becomes crucial. If it were possible to strip civilized humans of their acquired social roles and leave aside all social influences in the form of prejudices and bad habits, they would come close to the natural state and could be steered to develop in a positive direction. Repeatedly, Rousseau employs the natural human as a symbol for what modern humans would be like if all harmful socially and artificially induced elements were removed from their selves; or, rather, if these detrimental influences could be avoided from the very beginning.

It is a depraved civilization that fosters *amour-propre* damagingly; in itself it is merely the human “being-for others,” according to Bernstein,¹⁵³ who compares Rousseau’s concept of *amour-propre* with Hegel’s concept of “self-consciousness.”¹⁵⁴ When interpreting *amour-propre* as self-consciousness, humans’ full awareness of themselves becomes dependent on social interventions. This was actually Rousseau’s intention, too; to make humans aware of their own dispositions, and he never denied that human’s natural role was to live in society. But, if society was corrupt and made humans expand

¹⁴⁸ *RSW*, p. 85.

¹⁴⁹ *É*.

¹⁵⁰ Dent, 1988.

¹⁵¹ Dent, 1988; Bernstein, 1990.

¹⁵² *É*, p. 92.

¹⁵³ 1990, p. 71.

¹⁵⁴ Plamenatz, 1969, emphasizes the difference between the way the German idealists used *self-consciousness* and the way Rousseau used it. Self-consciousness, the way Rousseau uses the concept, is a part of the socially developed feelings humans have for themselves and others, according to Plamenatz.

negatively, their socialization had to be corrected. Therefore, Rousseau paid more attention to moral conduct than to ethical disputes and attacked philosophers and the ‘learned’ for not following their own theories. He was very concerned about the way humans relate to their own being, a problematic relation that dictates their social behavior and how they constitute themselves as ethical subjects. A basic task of his was to spell out what it means to be human. For Rousseau, human life was about knowing oneself, knowing one’s fellows, one’s society, and what life is all about. However, mere knowledge was not enough: knowledge had to lead to self-transformation that could generate a better life in fellowship with others. Socrates had wanted to be the gadfly who would sting horses to run.¹⁵⁵ Likewise, Rousseau obviously wanted to trigger his contemporaries, especially the Parisians, to care less about wealth, appearance, and knowledge for purposes of showing off, and to care more about their moral conduct.

The pressure of commonly held prejudices in society is a formidable enemy. In *Rousseau, Judge on Jean-Jacques: Dialogues* Rousseau talks about *amour-propre*, using the word “game,” and indicates a practice that nurtures prejudices. “One wants to guess, one wants to be perceptive. It is the natural game of *amour-propre*: one sees what one believes and not what one sees. A person explains everything according to his prejudice...”¹⁵⁶ True passions are replaced with diverse interests, and the folly of *amour-propre*, vanity, suppresses the passions even more.

Consequently, the more their *amour-propre* is promoted, and the more enlightened the society is, the more advanced are the means of *amour-propre*, according to Rousseau. Education and enlightenment do not prevent the growth of a competitive and acquisitive disposition but they, instead, only promote an inflamed *amour-propre* that enslaves and alienates humans from themselves. *Amour-propre* that has taken that route simply makes humans live a lie. “Slaves and dupes of *amour-propre*, they live not to live but to make others believe they lived.”¹⁵⁷ Rousseau did not reject competition, as long as the target was not to exceed the other in anything else than unselfish good deeds. People who behaved decently all had the right to be honored.

¹⁵⁵ See Plato’s *Apology*, 30e.

¹⁵⁶ *RJJ*, p. 6.

¹⁵⁷ *RJJ*, p. 214.

When Rousseau used the concept of *conscience* he meant, like Plutarch,¹⁵⁸ an inner voice that participated in internal discourse with the self and tried to say what is right.¹⁵⁹ Beside *amour-de-soi* striving for self-preservation, natural humans are also equipped with an intrinsic sense for realizing that their fellow creatures are similar in their sufferings.¹⁶⁰ Rousseau called this sense *la pitié* (compassion, pity). When reason regulates compassion and modifies *amour-de-soi*, humans will develop their humanity and virtue. When the activity of *amour-de-soi* is tempered by compassion, it aims at protecting the survival of all of humankind. Compassion is, in the state of nature, what laws, morals, and virtues are in civilization. Inflamed *amour-propre*, on the other hand, rebels against reason and deflects humans from following their own instinct¹⁶¹ or what is natural.¹⁶² Pity entails that everybody has an innate desire to care for another human being because of the other's vulnerability, regardless of class, position, or other such condition. The help one gives to others, however, should not be given with a view on future benefit, gratitude, or compensation; only for the sake of love for the other.¹⁶³ Otherwise, it is inflamed love of oneself (*amour-propre*), not of the other, that is the ruling passion. Kant¹⁶⁴ obviously built on the same idea in *The Metaphysics of Morals*, where he accentuated the duties humans owe to each other:

To *do good* to other human beings insofar as we can is a duty, whether one loves them or not; and even if one had to remark sadly that our species, on closer acquaintance, is not particularly lovable, that would not detract from the force of this duty. – But *hatred of them* is always *hateful*, even when it takes the form merely of completely avoiding them (separatist misanthropy), without active hostility toward them. For benevolence always remains a duty, even toward a misanthropist, whom one cannot indeed love but to whom one can still do good.¹⁶⁵

It is not their rationality, according to Rousseau, that sets humans apart from other animals, but the human capacity for freely chosen action. Nature rules over the animals and directs them to act in particular ways; humans, instead, have power to choose for themselves and to decide whether to obey nature or not. On the other hand, humans in a deprived state are not capable of listening to nature anymore, and they indulge in

¹⁵⁸ See Foucault, 2005.

¹⁵⁹ See *É*.

¹⁶⁰ *2nd D*, Note X.

¹⁶¹ Instead of “instinct” Rousseau sometimes talks about “fate” or “heart.”

¹⁶² *RSW*.

¹⁶³ Dent, 1998/2006; *É*.

¹⁶⁴ Many of Kant's main ideas were actually first expressed, however briefly, by Rousseau. Weil, 1952/2006, means that until Kant nobody really understood the ideas of Rousseau.

¹⁶⁵ Kant, 1797/1996, 6:402.

exaggerations that destroy their lives. Every animal has ideas gained through its senses, but only humans have a *free will* that is a spiritual talent and definitely not automatic.

Extended Being

Rousseau also made a distinction between humans and brutes when he called attention to the human ability of self-improvement or extension, *perfectibility*.¹⁶⁶ He indicated that this drive, perfectibility, is a dormant faculty already in the state of nature and, although an intrinsic natural trait, it can be further improved by education.¹⁶⁷ Lähde argues that, by perfectibility, Rousseau “refers to the potential of developing novel faculties, and it seems to be mostly latent in the pure state of nature, whereas this unnamed mimetic ability refers to the way natural men can learn to imitate the behavior of other animals.”¹⁶⁸ “Other animals” obviously also includes other human beings. Mimetic ability (the ability to imitate) is connected to instinct (nature) and perfectibility to reason: “only perfectibility truly removes humans from the realm of instinct and mimetic behavior.”¹⁶⁹ Humans can learn from experience to control their environment and to change their behavior and thus increase their reputation and profit.¹⁷⁰ Free will regulates this kind of extended conduct; it enables or holds back actions.

A problem that makes changing one’s life course such a great challenge is that most people do not know in their innermost being what they want. In that situation, life becomes not only a struggle with others, but also an internal battle with one’s self. Even Rousseau reports his personal experience of many conflicting interests.¹⁷¹ A third distinction between humans and (other) animals is that humans have a *spiritual soul*. Humans are the only creatures that are capable of extension both as a species and as individuals. In the state of nature, humans see and feel. The first operations of the human soul are to will and not to will, to desire and to fear. Like other animals humans’ first state is to sense or desire. Desires lead humans towards knowledge and

¹⁶⁶ Rousseau was not the first who introduced the term *perfectibility*, although he contributed to its application.

¹⁶⁷ E.g., *RJJ*.

¹⁶⁸ Lähde, 2008, p. 96.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

¹⁷⁰ Dent, 1992.

¹⁷¹ E.g., *RJJ*.

improvements, and they desire what they physically want.¹⁷² According to Laurence D. Cooper¹⁷³ this means that human has an intrinsic desire to exist, a self-love that is expansive but not directed towards any particular end, but strives to maximize one's own existence (*amour-de-soi*). Since the society makes us desire other goods than those that we need for our existence (*amour propre*), a conflict arises.¹⁷⁴ In this situation, the will is a means that enables humans to master their desires; it is a kind of drive or force that can be trained to help humans to become strong and make choices that acknowledges that they are limited beings that, therefore, have to limit their demands. Strong souls can expand positively, while the weak strive for self-fulfillment on behalf of others,¹⁷⁵ and positive self-esteem can be a driving force for positive development.

Self-esteem¹⁷⁶ is the greatest motive force of proud souls. *Amour-propre*, fertile in illusions, disguises itself and passes itself off as this esteem. But when the fraud is finally discovered and *amour-propre* can no longer hide itself, from then on it is no more to be feared; and even though we stifle it with difficulty, we at least easily overcome it.¹⁷⁷

I read from Rousseau that the more aware individuals become of their own shortcomings, the more confidently their self-esteem can develop and the less egoistic and exaggerated is their self-esteem. And like Dent¹⁷⁸ I consider the encouragement of recognition by others as essential for the development of self-esteem.¹⁷⁹ If *amour-propre* develops negatively, it seeks dominance and mastery over others; but it can also take another direction, as its basic purpose is solely a wish for recognition by others.¹⁸⁰

Figure 1 below tries to depict the difference between *amour-de-soi* and *amour propre*. In sum, the figure shows that *amour-de-soi* is the only intrinsic self-love and it is necessary to uphold life, but it can also be extended. *Amour propre*, on the other hand, is not intrinsic, but an extension that can take two different routes.

¹⁷² 2nd D; Broome, 1963.

¹⁷³ Cooper, 2004/2006.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ *É*.

¹⁷⁶ In French 'L'estime de soi-même' (*OCI*, p.1079).

¹⁷⁷ *RSW*, p. 73.

¹⁷⁸ 1988.

¹⁷⁹ Österlund & Wolff, 2006.

¹⁸⁰ See Dent, 1988; *É*.

Mode of self-love	Intrinsic	Social	Extension	
<i>amour-de-soi</i>	upholds one's own existence		makes one enjoy and value the own limited existence	
<i>amour-propre</i>		interrelates with others	inflamed: competitive, aiming at increasing one's own advantage	peaceful: decent, aiming at virtue and what is mutually good

Figure 1. Intrinsic and extended being.

The education of the fictive pupil *Émile* involves a situation or a space that corresponds to the state of nature. Rousseau's description of *Émile*'s education is a thorough account of how Rousseau looked upon the possibility of avoiding inflamed *amour-propre*. Small children are provided with *amour-de-soi* and education has to strive to protect them from influences that would convert their positive self-relation to an inflamed *amour-propre* and make them compare themselves with others and become nourished with pride, vanity, or a destructive self-image. Children in particular have a strong desire to extend their own being. This extension takes the shape of creativity and activity, since children are predestined to experience the concrete world.

In the state of power and strength the desire to extend our being takes us out of ourselves and causes us to leap as far as is possible for us. But since the intellectual world is still unknown to us, our thought does not go farther than our eyes, and our understanding is extended only along with the space it measures.¹⁸¹

When *amour-propre* is involved, a desired object is desired mostly as a means for reaching an extended being, but this does not necessarily mean that expansion is reached when the object of desire is achieved. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*,¹⁸² Aristotle argues that the perfect aim is something worth choosing for its own sake and not because of some limited instrumental aim. Happiness and freedom are perfect aims and thus independent and limitless. Freedom in this sense (as a perfect aim) is not selfish, but altruistic. A problem arises when the desire to extend one's being is manifested through gaining *possessions*. Then life becomes nothing but an endless struggle for

¹⁸¹ *É*, p. 168.

¹⁸² Book I.

acquiring things and keeping them, where our possessions enslave us. While Rousseau pointed out that living is acting, Cooper¹⁸³ distinguishes between *having* and *doing*,¹⁸⁴ where “having” is extension through possessions, and “doing” is, instead, the extension of one’s own existence. He takes *having* to stand for external goods, while *doing* entails an activity undertaken for its own sake, or merely for the experience as its own end. We become enslaved when the desire to possess things controls us.

Recognizing Oneself and the Other

Another extension of one’s own being is the desire for *self-mastery*; virtue is a kind of overcoming of the self, where one part of the self manages to rise above another. The active moral part of the self, the true self, rules. Pity can also be seen as a kind of extension of one’s being, and among its consequences are friendship, patriotism, and citizens identifying with each other, family members, romantic love, desire for knowledge and understanding.¹⁸⁵ Dent does not look upon the way Rousseau depicts the problems humans face when they become social as an indication of hopelessness, but Dent argues instead that Rousseau wanted to show that humans are definitely very dependent on maintaining good relations with others.¹⁸⁶ Rousseau’s intention for detailing the complexities of human relations was, according to Dent, to show that we need to focus on our relationships and on ourselves as parts in these relations if we want to change the world into a more decent one.

In Rousseau’s opinion, “the study suitable for man is that of his relations.”¹⁸⁷ This is an occupation that ought to start when humans begin to understand moral criteria for relating to others, and has to last throughout life. Mutual recognition, where both parts live in harmony without controlling the other, is the ideal situation. In extreme situations, on the one hand, humans are totally isolated and left on their own and driven to choose solitude; on the other hand, they give up their selves to be wholly controlled

¹⁸³ 2004/2006.

¹⁸⁴ The Frankfurt School’s philosophers addressed the distinction between having and being, especially Herbert Marcuse and Erich Fromm. The want of external goods, like wealth, prestige or some other possession, becomes the primary existential mode and can be seen as a problematic diminishing of one’s own existence. Marcuse, 1964, calls that kind of existence “one dimensional.”

¹⁸⁵ Cooper, 2004/2006.

¹⁸⁶ Dent, 1992.

¹⁸⁷ *É*, p. 214.

by others.¹⁸⁸ Left totally alone, unrecognized by anybody, they become nothing and their existence as social beings comes to an end. But, if one considers the quest for recognition from a power perspective, we realize that real life situations are much more complicated than this hypothetical play between extremes and ideals. While human conduct involves a complex co-operative network, it is not immediately obvious who is controlled by whom or by what. And when Rousseau suggested a negative education, at least one of his intentions might have been to show that solitude and withdrawal from social pressure help one get a clear view of one's own situation, contribute to caring for the self and figuring out who one is and what one really wants and needs. This self-training helps one to free one's self from prejudices and to understand what direction one's own will wants to take. In other situations, the cure could be, on the contrary, to spend time with others and learn to know one's self through the other in a reciprocal condition of 'giving' and 'being given' (not 'giving and taking'). And, in such reciprocating situations, *amour-propre* ensures that the individual is met and honored as a particular being with his or her own aspirations and abilities.¹⁸⁹ *Amour-propre* interacts with self-knowledge and makes humans who they are. The desire for extending one's being can be given proper direction through self-transformation or education, according to Rousseau. Collective extension is emphasized through active participation in society or in family life. The inborn capacity for extension is launched in infancy and lasts the entire life. But, self-transformation is an occupation for adults (even if it may need guidance) while education is for directing the young.

¹⁸⁸ Dent, 1988.

¹⁸⁹ See also Dent, 1988.

3 The Educational Paradox: Forcing *Émile* to be Free

It is readily apparent that Rousseau's educational theory focuses on equality and justice, but it is definitely not free of problematic aspects. Does it really do away with the adult authority? While Rousseau valued freedom highly, he struggled with an obvious contradiction that we still have not resolved, namely how to educate for autonomy while at the same time encouraging good citizenship. Real freedom for everyone is not possible without common rules and people committed to the rules. In *Émile* he embarks upon the problem by declaring that we have to choose either to create a human being or a *citizen*, stating that it is too difficult to simultaneously combine these two aims. He thus first embarks on the endeavor to educate *Émile* to an autonomous, thinking and acting individual, only afterwards to make him into a citizen. Rousseau's so called 'negative education' is, however, not a simple case of granting the child complete freedom of any constraint. The citizens need to understand that they are members of a society, where the political rights of the citizens depend on every member of the society.¹⁹⁰ The work of forming men that are committed to creating a liberal society starts from the education of the young:

There can be no patriotism without liberty, no liberty without virtue, no virtue without citizens; create citizens, and you have everything you need; without them, you will have nothing but debased slaves, from the rulers of the State downwards. To form citizens is not the work of a day; and in order to have men it is necessary to educate them when they are children.¹⁹¹

In *Émile* Rousseau speaks about "well-regulated liberty,"¹⁹² and according to Peter Winch, this do not mean that Rousseau did proclaim an education without restrictions. Instead, *Émile* had to learn to understand his own needs and how far they can be fulfilled, that is, to understand his own place in the world and develop self-control. This is more important than to struggle for attention from others, according to Rousseau. But it is not enough that people understand themselves, they also need to understand the causal processes around them and they need to understand the principles that others

¹⁹⁰ Winch, p. 95

¹⁹¹ *PE*, p. 134.

¹⁹² *É*, p. 64; "la liberté bien réglée" in *OC IV*, p. 321.

follow.¹⁹³ Rousseau thus advanced a vision of the human being as essentially social, but this essence must be cultivated through an ideal education or, at the societal level, by a legislator:

The individuals see the good they reject; the public wills the good it does not see. All stand equally in need of guidance. The former must be compelled to bring their wills into conformity with their reason; the latter must be taught to know what it wills. If that is done, public enlightenment leads to the union of understanding and will in the social body: the parts are made to work exactly together, and the whole is raised to its highest power. This makes a legislator necessary.¹⁹⁴

Rousseau gave the tutor in *Émile* a similar role as he gave the legislator in the Social Contract. What the legislator achieved in society, the tutor had to realize on the individual level. Both of them arrived as liberators in a paradoxical situation. Instead of the established education that Rousseau regarded as unsuitable for human, *Émile*'s education was in "accordance with nature," since this was the only true one for the human heart, and thus a key to good human societies. Without doubt, Rousseau's utopian education focuses on equality and justice, but does it really do away with adult authority?

In *Émile* Rousseau states that humans can be happy if they solve all their conflicts, if everyone promotes both their own happiness and the happiness of others. Humans pursue too many things and forget their basic tasks: to be human. Therefore, education needs to endorse modesty and contentment. The educator's task is to unearth the intrinsic "human nature" from every individual and encourage children to be what they intrinsically are, children. They need to live a happy childhood, without undue concern for the future of humankind, until they are mature enough to understand such problems that belong to adult life. However, can isolation and hidden control lead to contented freedom? If, according to Vanpée's suggestion,¹⁹⁵ we read *Émile* without prejudice and make it our personal experience, we can easier accept the paradoxes. Then we can also cope with that Rousseau used the paradoxical element in trying to endorse the development of the child's individual freedom with the help of the tutor's controlling power. With this method the tutor attempts to take responsibility for the child's upbringing without the open humiliation of corporeal or mental punishment, even

¹⁹³ Winch, 1972.

¹⁹⁴ *SC*, p. 19.

¹⁹⁵ Vanpée, 1990/2006.

though Rousseau also failed in depicting this as an ideal approach. With this Rousseau shows that education without control is unattainable. The narrative *Émile and Sophie; or, The Solitaries*, a kind of dénouement to *Émile*, illustrates both the successes and the failures even of an exceedingly well-intentioned education. This short story cannot be neglected, whether it was an afterthought or a dilemma Rousseau intended the readers to face. In this story the happy end in *Émile* takes another turn and the happy couple *Émile* and *Sophie* separate. However, *Émile* is strong enough to survive even the toughest situations he faces in his solitary life.

Birgit Schaffar states that the paradoxical problem with endorsing freedom by force is mainly theoretical and disappears in practical educational situations,¹⁹⁶ but Rousseau's *Émile* is an evident example on how complicated this is. I do not agree with Ari Kivelä¹⁹⁷ in his argument that, at least theoretically, we can solve the paradox. Instead, I see the paradox Rousseau put on the table as a conflict that creates intellectual anxiety. This anxiety opens the doors for educational researchers and practitioners, who will continue searching for better ways of raising new generations. However, the paradox also shows that *education*, *ethics* and *politics* are three branches of the same tree of human intercourse.¹⁹⁸ The initial problem is how to regulate, but also how to stimulate, individual growth towards freedom wed to social responsibility. Dietrich Benner calls this paradox a foundation of education because the educator can set in motion learning processes that the child never could achieve without the help of an adult.¹⁹⁹ Awareness of the paradox can operate as a warning signal that prevents education from turning into indoctrination.

Lars Løvlie says that Rousseau neglected this pedagogical paradox and promoted both freedom and the establishment of rules for *Émile*.²⁰⁰ I think Rousseau actually had the unambiguous intention of using *Émile* to highlight the paradox of forcing somebody to be free. He preferred to be a man of paradoxes rather than a man of prejudices. von Oettingen addresses another side of the same paradox in Rousseau's education, namely

¹⁹⁶ Schaffar, 2008.

¹⁹⁷ 2004.

¹⁹⁸ See Benner, 2005; Uljens, 2008.

¹⁹⁹ Benner, 2005.

²⁰⁰ Løvlie, 2008.

the idea that ‘humans have to learn to become humans’.²⁰¹ Yet, if we read *Émile* in the light of the 2nd *Discourse* this is no paradox at all, because what Rousseau wanted was to educate the children he regarded as humans in the state of nature to, on one hand, remain natural and thus good and, on the other hand, to become civilized and responsible members of society. It was not enough only to be human, but also *humane*, and therefore, he wanted to force *Émile* to become free. Freedom thus consists both in participation in making the laws and in keeping them; it is about willing to be just.²⁰² This means that the child should be educated so he is prepared some day to face both his own intrinsic and animal nature and to reflect on his role as a member of society. Denying either requirement means not being a free member of human society. Kivelä notes that education has to address humans at both an individual and a social level, and should not see these different dimensions as contradictions, but as two innate and complementary forms of human life.²⁰³

In some way, I agree with Schaffar²⁰⁴ that many practical situations require that the educator intervene in the children’s use of their own will, but this does not dissolve the paradox. One power still combats another, and then the adult, being more powerful, usually gets the upper hand—for better or worse. We cannot always resolve the paradox if we start viewing it as a situated practical problem because many of the dilemmas involved are too far-reaching to be solved only in specific situations. They require some general guidelines to follow. In building these guidelines, the child needs help.

However, human freedom is limited and no one has the right to meet their own needs at the expense of others’ right to their freedom, which is why children have to learn that their own wants should not infringe on the rights of others to fulfill their needs. The young do not automatically understand this, but need guidance that can steer their quest for, and right to, recognition in a direction that is best for all. While the answer about what is “best” depends on various internal and external circumstances, the educator’s choices are difficult and rarely self-evident. Nevertheless, the adult is more experienced and thus has to be responsible for making them.

²⁰¹ von Oettingen, 2001.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Kivelä, 2004.

²⁰⁴ 2008.

The education of the human being was twofold for Rousseau: On the one hand, human beings had to be educated for themselves as autonomous members of humankind and, on the other hand, as members of society as actors with their species fellows. To be more specific: Rousseau's anthropology has two dimensions of 'nature'; one is species related and individual (the human being) and the other is social (the citizen). Because of this, there are conflicts between the education of individuals and the education of members of society. Rousseau faced many problems with this dual educational aspiration. First, he did not find it advisable to teach a child to become politically or religiously conscious, as long as the child could not reason abstractly. If children could already reason, they should not need education, he said. Secondly, it did not seem right to him to transfer readymade opinions, stemming from a depraved society, to a child. Theoretically he did not even find it favorable to raise the child in society, since the child would then obviously be exposed to bad role models.

While reflection and preparation precedes every trial to implement hypothetical ideas, such preparation makes allowance for many solutions. Carefully considered, Rousseau's education has pros and cons. As an intentional process involving development and control, education is always situated on the line between freedom and indoctrination, and there definitely are many risky steps to consider—a condition that Rousseau sometimes fails to meet, probably intentionally. However, Heywood gives us hope when he argues that we can never underestimate the power of the child.²⁰⁵ Likewise, Michael Uljens²⁰⁶ argues that the educator would be almighty if children could be formed totally according to the educator's will, but be inept if the children became cultural creatures without any guidance.²⁰⁷ This is in line with Kant and his version of the educational paradox (see above). Humans are born free, but they need guidance to become civilized human beings and thus 'humane.' I think faith in the power of education, even an imperfect one, was one of Rousseau's visions. Children should be encouraged to autonomy, and they need to learn to recognize and avoid objectionable influences. Rousseau's philosophy thus strives "to force the individual to change, to turn towards the possibility of humanity and freedom."²⁰⁸ Rousseau hardly believed that this could be achieved without social influence.

²⁰⁵ Heywood, 2001.

²⁰⁶ Uljens, 2004.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Affeldt, 1999/2006, p. 419.

Total equality would secure the same amount of freedom for everyone; then no one's freedom can be endless, and no education with such a goal can be completely safe. Education always involves risk and the avoidance of risk creates two new risks: the risk of failing to develop critical thinkers and healthy iconoclasts, and the risk of preventing brilliant new ideas from emerging because of their uniqueness. No change ever comes about without corresponding risks, and Rousseau confronted this human dilemma. Instead of blaming Rousseau for paradoxes and irrelevance, we simply have to take his paradoxes and allegories for what they are and open-mindedly face and test them in the educational discourse. Could such an attitude perhaps make Rousseau's ideas more useful even today when the challenge of education is global equality and globally shared responsibility for both humankind and other parts of nature? What he definitely showed us in *Émile* was that to know humans is not only to understand what we intrinsically are, but to see how we steadily reshape ourselves and each other in a mutual process.

As with the *Social Contract*, *Émile* presents two options: the familiar corrupted and enslaving state and a contrasting state of equality and freedom. This was probably Rousseau's primary view of education: to force individuals towards freedom, not by changing them in some predictable way with respect to their motives, but by a process that builds on their natural inclinations and strives for a voluntary self-transformation. *Émile* is, therefore, not a blueprint, but a thought-provoking poem.

Frihet genom tvång: En studie av *Émile*

En av de mest legendariska pedagogikböckerna som någonsin skrivits är Jean-Jacques Rousseaus *Emile eller om uppfostran* (i original *Émile ou de l'Éducation*). I författarförordet säger Rousseau att hans mål med *Émile* var att beskriva hur man danar människor, och i Bok I tillägger han att människor danas genom utbildning. Med denna bok ville han därmed måla upp en bild av en helt annan typ av utbildning än den som var gängse i det franska 1700-tals samhälle där han levde. *Émile* grundar sig inte på en enda tes, utan det verkar snarare som om Rousseau hade många målsättningar med boken. Den är inte heller någon undervisningsmanual, utan snarare ett hypotetiskt debattbidrag. Det är en bok om frihet, samtidigt som den handlar om ansvar. Den centrala problematiken i boken ställer läsaren inför en paradox: kan man fostra till frihet med tvång? I denna avhandling diskuteras detta problem främst utgående från *Émile*, men eftersom de flesta av Rousseaus böcker tangerar samma teman stöder jag mig delvis också på annat material.

Paradoxen som skrivstil

Rousseau deltog i debatter som fokuserade på vad som är människans sanna natur är och vad det vill säga att leva i enlighet med det "naturliga" från bland annat ontologiska, politiska och metafysiska synvinklar och kastade fram sin fräna samhällskritik med avancerade uttrycksmetoder för att uppmuntra andra att ta vara på och utveckla sin mänskliga potential till förmån för hela samhällets bästa. Många av de problemställningar som han brottades med har stor relevans ännu i denna dag, inte minst de som berör pedagogiken. Få andra har med sådan entusiasm och med sådan bredd som han diskuterat pedagogiskt filosofiska frågeställningar ur ett så provocativt etiskt perspektiv.

I *Émile* väljer Rousseau att tackla problemet med att dana både fria individer och samhällsmedlemmar genom att först fostra individen och därefter medborgaren. Rousseau motiverar denna tågordning med att det är för svårt att kombinera de två målen. Den uppfostran som Rousseau kallade "negativ" går därför snarare ut på att

undvika social påverkan än att aktivt styra socialisationsprocessen. Det är emellertid ingen lätt uppgift att fostra ett barn till frihet och samtidigt till en aktiv samhällsmedlem. I boken *Om samhällsfördraget* säger Rousseau att de som vägrar anpassa sig efter den allmänna viljan ska tvingas att göra det, och i *Émile* talar han om en välreglerad frihet. Rousseau ville åskådliggöra att de enskilda individernas välmående är beroende av att hela samhället mår bra. För att skapa ett gott och rättvist samhälle måste alla samhällsmedlemmar kontinuerligt verka för samhällets bästa. Pedagogens roll är därför, enligt Rousseau, att leda barnen in på en väg som inte enbart gynnar barnen personligen, utan i högsta grad hela samhället. För att uppnå detta måste barnen skyddas från all ofördelaktig påverkan som skulle kunna göra dem fördomsfulla, ogina och egoistiska. Boken *Émile* kan ses som ett tankemässigt prov på hur en sådan ”negativ fostran” skulle kunna gå till.

Många olika personer genom tiderna har funderat på vilken typ av bok *Émile* är. De förslag som förts fram är framförallt att den är en roman, eller närmare bestämt en ”pedagogisk roman”²⁰⁹, men också mer poetiska beskrivningar förekommer. Själv anser jag dock att *Émile* främst är ett tankeexperiment. Inom filosofin har tankeexperiment använts och används än i denna dag för att utveckla en ny förståelse för olika sakförhållanden och för att tankemässigt pröva en idé som inte så lätt låter sig prövas i praktiken. När Rousseau framställer den fiktiva eleven *Émiles* uppfostran drar han sig inte för att leka med paradoxer och utmana läsaren till att reflektera och omvärdera sin syn på fundamentala pedagogiska frågeställningar.

Många tänkbara avsikter

Förutom att Rousseau ville presentera ett nytt sätt att skriva om pedagogik, verkar han också ha haft många andra mer eller mindre klart uttalade avsikter med boken *Émile*. I detta arbete har jag försökt identifiera några sådana avsikter och har strukturerat innehållet i texten enligt sex andra potentiella målsättningar. Jag utgår ifrån att Rousseaus inte bara ville skriva på ett tankeväckande sätt, utan att han också ville delta i en pedagogisk diskurs med samtida och tidigare filosofer, presentera en mer föredömlig uppfostran än den rådande, synliggöra barndomen, visa på samhällsmotsättningar och

²⁰⁹ Benedixon, 1929, s. 73.

orättvisor, föra fram en vision om ett bättre samhälle, och sist men inte minst, utarbeta en bild av vad människans sanna natur är. Alla dessa potentiella avsikter är starkt sammantvinnande, men genom att behandla dem var för sig blir det lättare att presentera den mångbottnade problematik som diskuteras i *Émile*.

Rousseau gjorde ingen hemlighet av att hans tankar om pedagogiken bar spår av många andra tänkare, såsom Platon, Plutarchos och Montaigne. Han polemiserade också mer eller mindre öppet med bland annat Locke, Condillac, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Hélivétius och Diderot om pedagogiska frågor och lät sig provoceras av Hobbes tankar om människans natur. Rousseau kunde inte gå med på att människan skulle vara född ond, och han försvarade entusiastiskt sina idéer om att människan föds utan onda avsikter, men senare fördärvas av samhället. Av denna orsak såg han en ny pedagogik som ett sätt att bryta den onda cirkel samhället hamnat in i – en cirkel där degenererade människor överför sin snedvridna syn på sig själva och samhället till nästa generation, som därmed blir än mer fördärvad och forstsätter att reproducera ett orättvist samhälle.

Rousseau kritiserade hårt det sätt barn uppfostrades på, i synnerhet de rika barnen i Frankrike under hans tidevarv. Enligt honom fick de inte lära sig det som är mest väsentligt i livet, nämligen generositet, rättvisa, anspråkslöshet, vänlighet och mod. I stället lärde de sig rabbla utantill och prata språk, som de inte hade någon direkt nytta av.

Rousseau såg barndomen som en väsentlig tid, som inte skulle offras på bekostnad av det vuxna livet. Han såg tiden mellan tvåårs och tolvårsåldern som den viktigaste för människans utveckling och den åldern skulle inte få slösas bort på att försöka lära barnen något som de inte ännu kunde begripa såsom religion, moral och vetenskapliga teorier. I stället skulle tiden användas till att involvera dem i meningsfulla pedagogiska aktiviteter, där läraren skulle fungera som en god rollmodell. Barnen behöver uppmärksamhet som enskilda fria individer för att småningom kunna förstå att alla har samma rätt till frihet, enligt Rousseau. Han menade att alla föds med en inre drift till utveckling, ”perfektibilitet”, och kan därför uppmuntras till att utveckla ett eget omdöme och en egen moral, i stället för att låta sig alltför starkt påverkas av lärare, föräldrar och övriga personer. Uppfostraren skall vara den som lägger ut kursen, men inte den som bestämmer målet, enligt Rousseau.

Att fostra någon till frihet innebar för Rousseau att lära barn från första början att ta kontrollen över sina egna liv, i stället för att blint följa andras åsikter eller vara slavar under sina egna begär. Precis som lagstiftaren i boken ”Om samhällsfördraget”, skall läraren vara den som hjälper sin elev att inte av bekvämlighetsskäl låta sig lämpas in i någon genomsnittsform eller följa sina egna okontrollerade drifter. Rousseau ville visa vad människan skulle vara utan de motsägelsefulla drifter som hindrar henne från att bli lycklig. Det sätt som Rousseau beskriver förhållandet mellan pojken Émile och hans tutor kan också ses som en metafor för människans förhållande till lagen eller som den vuxne människans kamp att stävja sina egoistiska strävanden.

Det skulle vara ett misstag att läsa *Émile* utan att samtidigt bekanta sig med Rousseaus övriga skrifter. I *Émile* vidareutvecklade han sina tankar om människans natur, som han framfört några år tidigare i essäerna *Avhandlingen om vetenskaperna och konsten* (1st D) och *Avhandling om ojämlikhet mellan människor* (2nd D). Det var angeläget för Rousseau att söka svar på och diskutera vad som är människans ursprungliga natur, det vill säga vilka kännetecken som är karaktäristiska för alla människor på grund av att de tillhör samma art. I diskurserna bygger han sitt resonemang på historier han hört om människor från andra delar av världen, men också sina egna teoretiska spekulationer. Rousseau skisserar en bild av vad det vill säga att vara människa och vad som är grunden till alla hennes tillkortkommanden. I den bilden går han inte heller själv fri, eftersom han åtminstone delvis tillhör den grupp han porträtterar, ett faktum som han är väl medveten om.

Enligt Rousseau var människorna ursprungligen solitära varelser, som tog dagen som den kom och levde ett fritt liv utan andra behov än de mest elementära, såsom hunger, törst, skydd och sexualdrift. När Rousseau påstår att den civiliserade människan däremot har glömt vem hon är och lever ett konstlat liv, där den egentliga existensen döljs för både henne själva och andra påminner hans tankar starkt om de Platon framförde i grottmyten. Enligt Rousseau är människan ursprungligen god i det avseende att hon inte önskar skada någon annan, medan samhället kan göra henne dygdig, om hon lär sig att handla utgående från moraliska överväganden. Människans ursprungliga ”godhet” eller snarare neutralitet, som bygger på självkärlek i form av ett naturligt behov av att värna om sitt eget liv, kallade Rousseau *amour-de-soi*. Som samhällsvarelse har människan utvecklat en annan form av självkärlek, *amour-propre*,

som är en kärlek i relation till andra. Om denna kärlek utvecklas i en ogynnsam riktning blir dess mål att överträffa andra människor, människans högsta önskan blir att överglänsa andra och vinna andras beundran, ja, denna kärlek kan till och med utmynna i illvilja och hat. En positiv utveckling av *amour-propre* kan däremot leda till altruism och förmåga att uppleva den andra som likvärdig i stället för som en konkurrent. Eftersom ett samhällsliv är ett resultat av en naturlig utveckling, enligt Rousseau, måste människan formas för att det gemensamma livet ska bli så bra som möjligt för alla. Det betyder att individerna dels behöver satsa på sin egen förkovran, men även stöda varandra genom att erkänna och uppmuntra den andra som en likvärdig individ. Rousseau ansåg att det viktigaste en människa har att lära sig är att utveckla sina sociala relationer på ett sunt sätt.

Sammanfattning

För att människans självkärlek ska kunna utvecklas i en så gynnsam riktning som möjligt behövs uppfostran, enligt Rousseau. Den uppfostran som beskrivs i *Émile* tål att diskuteras. Pojken Émile uppfostras av sin tutor (Rousseaus *alter ego*) utan några andra straffmetoder än att han får stå för följderna av sina handlingar. Tutorn försätter Émile i olika situationer, som Émile upplever som spontana händelser, men som egentligen är minutiöst planerade. Émile ska tro att han är fullständigt fri, trots att tutors vakande öga hela tiden iakttar vad han gör, och tutors hand hela tiden dirigerar hans utveckling. Detta gör att den uppfostran Rousseaus beskriver lätt kan ge sken av att vara en fullständig, om dock dold, manipulation. Men *Émile* kan också läsas som en berättelse som avsiktligt skrivits för att visa på det paradoxala i att fostra till frihet. Utan någon som helst normativ styrning går det knappast att fostra samhällsmedlemmar, men om styrningen blir för hård, blir den individuella friheten hämmad. Det betyder att fostraren ofta rör sig på en snäv och farlig gräns mellan tillåtelse och inskränkningar. Att hitta den rätta vägen till frihet är ingen lätt uppgift och att fostra till frihet medför alltid en slags risktagning. En ansvarsfull och kärleksfull fostran kan varken chansa lättvindigt eller staka ut färdiga mål. Det är denna problematik jag tror Rousseau ville ställa läsaren inför. Han visade på ett mångbottnat problem, som inte kan lösas med någon trollformel, utan kräver ständig begrundan och aldrig upphör att utmana den pedagogiska diskursen.

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