

Rousseau and his child-centered, anticultural education

Rousseau e sua educação infantocêntrica e anticultural

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Abstract

This article intends to expose how J.J. Rousseau, in his *Emile*, adopts the assumption that liberty is a natural given, thus something innate in men and intact in children. That being so, a pedagogue who wishes to educate starting from this assumption – that liberty is a natural given – and seeking for virtue would only find it much later, and perhaps only through artifices such as stating that it is God's will that makes man virtuous. In doing so, even after convincing us that it is not possible to educate without reference to values accepted by one's cultural tradition, Rousseau fails to show how cultural tradition is transmitted, or even how cultural tradition could be renovated and employed as

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basis for further development of cultural traditions. As an effect of this first rejection and future, late acceptance (and even during epochs posterior ethical transcendence), Rousseau established the separation between educational and cultural fields, a separation whose ultimate, broad implication is the commonly accepted idea of anticultural education along with child-centered education.

Keywords: Culture. Education. Liberty. Rousseau.

Resumo

Este artigo busca expor que Rousseau, no seu Emílio, parte do pressuposto segundo o qual a liberdade é um dado natural; e por conseguinte considerou a liberdade como algo inato ao homem e intacto na criança. Por isso, o pedagogo que procurasse educar a partir desse princípio, (qual seja, de que a liberdade é um dado natural), ao buscar a virtude somente a encontra depois de muito esforço e, talvez mesmo de alguns artifícios, ao enunciar que é a bondade de Deus que torna o homem virtuoso. Dessa forma, mesmo depois de nos convencer não ser possível educar sem valores aceitos por sua tradição cultural, Rousseau não nos mostra como a tradição cultural é uma referência a valores aceitos por sua tradição cultural, não nos mostra como a tradição cultural é transmitida nem como a tradição cultural pode ser renovada e utilizada como base para o desenvolvimento posterior da cultura. Como efeito da sua rejeição, a princípio, e sua aceitação tardia, e isso em tempos diferentes do princípio ético transcendente, Rousseau estabeleceu a separação do campo educacional do cultural, cuja larga significação foi a ideia comumente aceita da educação anticultural paralela à educação infantocêntrica.

Palavras-chave: Cultura. Educação. Liberdade. Rousseau.

Introduction

The Singularity of Rousseau

Rousseau's name is often heard in discussions on account of his relevance in the gallery of men to whom Western societies pay reverence. Jean-Jacques Rousseau was a philosopher, poet, political essayist, author, assiduous frequenter of theater plays and, above all, educator. In Western social history, only the names of Nietzsche and Plato stand on the same level as Rousseau's, notwithstanding the problems arisen from the divergence between these three minds, which is even transcendent at some points. The three of them were unquestionably educators, in the strongest sense that the word education carries, as they endorsed the view that the ultimate finality of education is the acquisition of liberty, providing the individual with a free view of the community to which he belongs. Beyond the immediate finality of education – acquisition of knowledge and adaptation of the individual to society – the ultimate objective of education is liberty. This goal can be maintained as ultimate even in the context of an educational system whose authoritarian plan is sketched while bearing in mind the ultimate objective of producing liberty.

In this way, aided by the critical wealth made available during the current revival of Rousseau, with plenty of contributions for the understanding of his place in the philosophical citadel – as the ones extracted from the reading of Ernest Cassirer (1999), Jean Starobinski (1992), Claude Lévi-Strauss (1963), Jacques Derrida (1976), Albert Schinz (1929), and Bento Prado Júnior (2008) –, the author of this paper attempts to demonstrate how Rousseau, in his *Emile*, adopts the assumption that liberty is a natural given; innate to men and intact in children. In that sense, a pedagogue who intends to educate starting

from this assumption (that liberty is a natural given) while seeking for virtue would only find it much later, and perhaps only through artifices such as stating that it is God's will that makes man virtuous.

In doing so, even after convincing us that it is not possible to educate without reference to values accepted by one's cultural tradition, the educator fail to show how cultural tradition is transmitted, or even how cultural tradition could be renovated and employed as basis for further development of cultural traditions. As an effect of this first rejection and future, late acceptance (and at time periods distant from the epoch of ethical transcendence), Rousseau established the separation between the educational and cultural fields, a separation whose ultimate, broad implication is the widely accepted idea of anticultural education tied to child-centered education.

When looking over the statistics regarding academic production on Rousseau during the twenty-first century, especially on the subject of education⁴, one can easily notice that such production is centered on two countries: Brazil and the USA. These articles are, for the most part, uncritical and hermetic readings of the author, presenting punctual objections on minute details of his works: Rousseau is taken as an authority by those who write about him, their efforts engaged on reinterpreting his theories under some new perspective, reframing them in order to compensate for their flaws, or simply repurposing them for investigating new problems.

One of such works, by Richard White (2008), examines the supposedly negative opinion Rousseau presents about the normal feeling of compassion in the Book IV of *Emile* – compassion as a feeling accompanied by pity, an affirmation of power and domination towards an unfortunate fellow human – and how the tutor should deal with it during the transition of his pupil from childhood to social life. White aims to amend Rousseau's understanding of compassion in order to validate it from a moral and selfless point of view, an effort that is still coherent with the three maxims presented by Rousseau (1979, p.211) in Book IV and, the author claims, presents his true lesson. White brushes aside even modest critiques such as that from Allan Bloom, himself a commenter and translator of the works of Rousseau (1979 *apud* White, 2008), but who nonetheless regards Rousseau's notion of compassion as unvirtuous and prone to induce abusive behaviors and hypocrisy. Is Richard White's main concern defending compassion or defending Rousseau?

Aforementioned piece of criticism by A. Bloom was still mild compared to the one found in the book *Explaining Postmodernism* by Stephen R.C. Hicks (2010), a rare example of a scholar who dares to criticize the works of Rousseau and the author himself in a brash, ostensive (but neither unfounded nor completely unreasonable) way. Ricks labels Rousseau as a Counter-Enlightenment thinker, who abominated reason and material progress as corrupting trends, and a thinker who saw in collectivism the only remedy for an already corrupted society. In a nutshell, Hicks accuses Rousseau of being the root of all anti-rational, unscientific and dictatorial thought that came afterwards.

Exaggerated as it might be, this reading is more holistic and pragmatic in comparison to the fine-grained one presented by Richard White. One has to wonder: what matters most, virtue or progress? Ricks may be right that Rousseau's work was anathema to enlightenment, and Rousseau, just like the majority of his interpreters, may be right as well that enlightenment corrupted the values that the French Philosopher deemed proper. Do we actually want the values and education proposed by Rousseau in *Emile* for the children of living on present day and those who will live in the future, or are modern values best?

⁴ Querried from meta-search engine The Lens, full-results available at <https://link.lens.org/xMBAVLIMmZd>.

This work is a summary of Vieira de Mello's (1999) interpretation of the works of Rousseau, specifically from Mello's attempt to delimit a concept of culture of education with reference to the creation of an ethical spirit.

Child-centered education and the dependency, tyranny, and slavery problem

In his declared attempt to avoid the task of creating an imaginary student, of trying to guess his age, pre-existent instruction, as well as the talents convenient for working in his education from the moment of his birth until the moment this student doesn't need any guide but himself, Rousseau (1979) claims the existence of rules of nature, rules that are meant to be followed. This way of living is exactly what he intends to provide for his imaginary student.

And so he claims that the only habit one should allow a child to acquire is that of not contracting any habit at all, for as the baby pays attention only to what really reaches his senses – as his memory and imagination are still inactive – he only pays attention to his sensations. Rousseau clearly states that we should only present to a baby (and afterwards, a child) in a very distinct manner the connections of his sensations to the objects that cause them, not the other way round. And that is the point in his great treatise on education where Rousseau states his formula: conserve in the child only his dependence on things, from what follows that education should consist in exchanging dependence on people for dependence on things.

As it is through crying that babies express, in their own language, the discomfort of their needs, while expressing themselves through signs when the aid of order is necessary (because they are either sleeping or feeling affected), they cry a lot. It is from crying that the first relation of man with everything surrounding him is born. According to Rousseau (1979, p.65), it is through this language that is "forged the first link of the long chain that constitutes social order".

If the first cries of babies are attended to, we should be careful, for soon they may become orders; babies start by getting themselves helped and end up getting themselves served. From the weakness of the child, where the feeling of dependency is born, the ideas of empire and domination are born as well.

In that way, the secret intention that dictates the gesture or the shout is not in nature but in our services, whose effects result in a feeling of dependency. For this reason, Rousseau (1979, p.66) warns:

When the child stretches out his hand without saying anything, he believes he will reach the object because he does not estimate the distance. He is mistaken. But when he complains and screams in reaching out his hand, he is no longer deceived as to the distance; he is ordering the object to approach or you to bring it to him. In the first case carry him to the object slowly and with small steps. In the second act as though you do not even hear him. The more he screams, the less you should listen to him. It is important to accustom him early not to give orders either to men, for he is not their master, or to things, for they do not hear him. Thus, when a child desires something that he sees and one wants to give it to him, it is better to carry the child to the object than to bring the object to the child. He draws from this practice a conclusion appropriate to his age, and there is no other means to suggest it to him.

If the cries of the babies are given vent to, they will soon come in the form of shouts, and so what was just a need soon becomes something noxious, whose result is to awaken the will to give orders. And such a desire does not get extinguished along with the need that originated it. This is how babies

become bothersome, tyrannical, imperious, mean, and indomitable during childhood; not as result of a naturally dominating spirit, but instead the product of a long experience during which children realized how pleasant it is to act through the hands of others, as moving one's tongue is all that is needed to make the universe move. And this potential evil comes by, according to Rousseau (1979, p.67) because all evil emanates from weakness; "the child is evil only because he's weak". In other words, he turned into a tyrant because he was simultaneously becoming weak.

As for Rousseau dependency on things neither harms liberty nor creates vices, it is necessary to maintain the child's solely dependent on things. No fulfillment should be granted to his wishes just because he's asking, only when he needs. So, we should not trust children who desire what they can do themselves, but demand that others do it for them. It is thus required to carefully distinguish true, natural need from fantasy that surges in him, or from that which comes from overabundance in life.

But if the child is always readily attended by those around him – thus instilling in his mind the intuition that simply wishing is enough to get what's needed – he will come to believe he is the owner of the universe, to see all men as his slaves and, when others are ultimately forced to refuse him something, the child, believing all his desires are possible, takes this refusal as an act of rebellion. All the reasons given to someone too young to be capable of reasoning seem nothing but excuses, and all he sees everywhere is ill will. As a result, the feeling of a supposed injustice takes upon the spirit and the child soon starts to feel hatred towards others and, never showing any gratefulness for the complacency of others who always helped him, becomes revolted at any opposition.

Such a child, dominated by ire and devoured by his most irascible passions, is not happy. According to Rousseau (1979, p.88), the effects are contradictory, because the child is "[...] a despot. He is at once the vilest of slaves and the most miserable of creatures". But if such ideas of domination and tyranny make children miserable from the cradle, what will be of them when they grow up and their relations towards other men multiply? If they are habituated to see all bowing to their feet, what a surprise shall they have upon entering society and soon perceiving that everything resists them, as they fell squashed by a universe they once believed themselves capable of moving at their will? That's what Rousseau (1979, p.88) answers:

Their insolent airs, their puerile vanity, attract to them only mortification, disdain, and mockery. They drink affronts like water; cruel experiences soon teach them that they know neither their situation nor their strength. Not omnipotent, they believe they are impotent. So many unaccustomed obstacles dishearten them; so much contempt debases them. They become cowardly, fearful, and fawning and fall as far below themselves as they had previously been raised above themselves.

For Rousseau, then, nature made children to be loved and aided, not to be obeyed and feared. So, starting from his formula of conserving in children only their dependence on things, we shall deliver to infancy the exercise of natural liberty, but only if we consider childhood good in itself.

A World cleaved and tensioned between two principles

As a reaction against the Aristotelian tradition that states that man is a political animal, hence sociable, Hobbes attributed new meaning to the state of nature when he defined it as forces within a mechanism that allow for each one to judge for oneself, thus abolishing the privilege of the wise. But if, on one hand, fear of violent death is the coil of his political thinking, there is the desire for security, which is destined to never be fulfilled. So no matter how many fortresses or missiles are built, a prince

never feels sufficiently safe. Nothing short of what is expected from a philosophy such as Hobbes', that denies the existence of a supreme good and states that desire is unlimited.

For Hobbes, to desire more and more is a normal condition, and this statement is the one that best summarizes the condition of the modern man. In his reflections on fundamental instincts of men, Hobbes inferred from this opinion which type of order should be implanted over society by means of a contract, by which society stands as the only means available to force men out of his natural state.

Rousseau accepted the idea of a social contract proposed by Hobbes, and criticized it too. He accepted it as means to solve conflicts between individuals, conflicts unnaturally engendered out of individuals' ambition and fear of death. He agreed with Hobbes that sociability is not natural. But Rousseau was opposed to Hobbes regarding the subject of the contradictions that force men to escape the state of nature, as well as regarding the supposed universality of the state of men's nature being that of a raptor.

Rousseau's ethnological conception is mainly backed up by the writings of Michel de Montaigne ("On Cannibals") and the chroniclers from the Age of Discoveries (among them, specially the report by Jean de Léry and the one from Paulmier de Gonneville on Portuguese America), from which he learned that the *carijó* Indians from Portuguese America displayed another perception and elaborated a different matrix for thought, one anchored on spoken language and hence capable of affirming the plenitude of word and presence, whose motto would be the couplet "say=make". Rousseau perceived European culture as neither universal nor rational, for it presented a tension, an opposition between immanent and aesthetic views – through which the grand total of reality was reduced to the reality perceivable by the sensory apparatus of the human body – and the irruption of transcendent perception during the course of men's historical evolution that essentially corresponds to the surging of a religion whose nature is fundamentally ethical. Rousseau noticed the problem, but was unable to elaborate it in the sense of sharply depicting the opposition between these two traditions (present in European context since at least The Renaissance and Reform periods) and face it as a conflict between an ethical conception of existence and an aesthetic one.

The notion of social contract raised the question of the contract's finality, and the discovery of the man-citizen duality, nonexistent in ancient times in the modern sense of the term, ensued. In the ancient world, man was capable of virtue; in the world of eighteenth-century political philosophy, a man was private as a man, and public as a citizen. And for Rousseau, a private man was incapable of being both virtuous and citizen at the same time, as virtue, understood as citizen determination, would be impossible to such man. Only private virtue remains. That is blatantly stated right at the first pages of his *Emile* (Rousseau, 1979, p.39): "Forced to combat nature or the social institutions, one must choose between making a man or a citizen, for one cannot make both at the same time".

It follows that there are two possible types of education for Rousseau: one concerned with the formation of private man, particular, turned towards the domestic circle; the other one concerned with the formation of the public citizen, turned towards the whole society. One has to choose. And Rousseau chose domestic education, as for him:

Public instruction no longer exists and can no longer exist, because where there is no longer fatherland, there can no longer be citizens. These two words, fatherland and citizen, should be effaced from modern languages. I know well the reason why this is so, but I do not want to tell it. It has nothing to do with my subject (Rousseau, 1979, p.40).

While trying to understand Rousseau's choice for domestic education, one should bear in mind that the thinker did not accept that private vices, emancipating themselves from moral, were the substance from which public prosperity would be obtained inside the universal war of all against all, nor that the ultimate effect of such war would be order instead of chaos or anarchy; instead, Rousseau was an adept of theories that attributed a fixed nature to man, not a malleable one. To the political philosopher, the legislator, the only task left was to find ways to dodge selfishness, passions of individual men and his dangerous tendencies, and channel them towards what would turn into a useful tool for the common good (Mello, 1999).

This seeming ambiguity present in Rousseau's writings is a side effect of him being the first European to be dominated by the hunch that there exists a conflict between an antinatural, transcendent, and ethical principle against a natural, immanent, and aesthetic one. Through this hunch, he was compelled to express the perplexity of the Western man of his time, who disbelieved a transcendent world to be possible, but still felt that without such belief it would be difficult to satisfactorily organize the immanent world (Mello, 1999). This sensibility of the author towards the conflict between ethic and aesthetic principles is present in his spirit when he points out, in *Emile*, that:

Do you want to get an idea of public education? Read Plato's Republic. It is not at all a political work, as think those who judge books only by their titles. It is the most beautiful educational treatise ever written. When one wishes to refer to the land of chimeras, mention is made of Plato's institutions. If Lycurgus had set his down only in writing, I would find them far more chimerical. Whenever it's wanted to make reference to the country of chimeras, an appeal is made to Plato's institution: If Lycurgus had written only his, I would find it much more chimeric. Plato only purified the heart of men; Lycurgus denatured it (Rousseau, 1979, p.40).

Plato's World was then considered a chimera because, for Rousseau, there was a difference in nature between the old world, where only politicians talked about honor and virtue, and the new world, where politicians are surrounded by their private affairs that consisted in nothing but commerce and money. Even so, Rousseau considered it necessary to reflect on human nature before establishing what type of order is proper for society. However, he abstained from discussing what man could or should be, but rather what man is, a realist view of human kind. In that way, the intuition about a correspondence between the structure of human soul and society, the idea that man is a possibility, not a reality (as in Plato), as well as the ideal that education should have a central place in the spiritual life of men, were made null and void, or at the very least it was severely weakened.

In its place, Rousseau worked with the idea of liberty as a natural given. Put that way, the citizen stands by himself in his city as a free man and asks society for liberty. In his particularity, this man asks his city for security through assurances of his properties, including the assurance of security for himself.

While regarding the Platonic/Socratic project as chimeric, Rousseau failed to realize that the study of societies should follow the study of the human soul, and failed to notice a correspondence between the human soul and human society in the Platonic/Socratic project. This correspondence that the Greek philosophers arrived at by intuition was not an analogy, but rather a contrast; it was not an order in human soul that should reflect in society, but rather an order that should *not* reflect in society. In his choice for the idea of liberty as a natural given, Rousseau neglected to work Plato's conception, according to which men – the human nature – is neither good nor bad, neither selfish nor altruistic, neither perverse nor benevolent, but, more than anything else, is a possibility. As a possibility, men, the individual souls of the members of a given society, could only be taken as a reference point for the

construction of society if there existed a process through which such a possibility could come to reality. Plato taught us that this process does exist, and its name is education.

The possibility turned into reality by virtue of this process would then become the necessary reference point for that construction. Man is neither good nor bad, man is a possibility, and, through education, he could be made into a useful reference point to whoever intends to organize plans for social ordination. In such ordination of society, liberty is the final product that arises when the pedagogue completes his track, a track started from some virtues and striving for a single one. Justice, Good, and the vision of the Divine enable the educator to ultimately get to liberty. Such was the suggestion found in Plato's works, from his efforts to bring to reality the possibility that is man.

Rousseau saw clearly the problem of his modern world being in a state where it was cleaved, torn apart, and squashed between the antinatural, transcendent, and ethical principle and the natural, immanent, aesthetic principle, but he kept himself loyal to the immanent perspective that assaulted the intimate structure of the ethical principle, and for this reason discarded the very possibility of conflict between immanence and transcendence. In the words of Vieira de Mello (1999, p.263):

The immanentization of the idea of Good, expressed in the idea of goodness of natural man, was hence the way found by Rousseau to avoid conflict between the ethical principle and the aesthetic principle. Ethical truth was not to be found in the arts and sciences that were nothing more than mere conventions; true ethics was to be found in nature.

But even Rousseau was compelled to accept this rejection of the ethical-transcendent principle in his treatise on education. And this late adoption of the ethical-transcendent principle has maculated his works because he managed to realize that education should be completely independent of any cultural context, thus avoiding what would be a scandalous contradiction. Such separation was articulated with his educational researches, during which he realized that the education of Emile could not be based solely on his philosophical premises.

Even though Rousseau once claimed that "A savage has a healthier judgment of us than a philosopher does" (Rousseau, 1979, p.243), what conduces us to comprehend that the natural goodness of man is the best parameter to make Emile into a man ready for the practice of virtue, the Genovese noticed, while working in his treatise on education, that natural goodness would never be able to lead Emile to the practice of virtue. That's because love of oneself – "The source of our passions, the origin and the principle of all the others, the only one born with man and which never leaves him as long as he lives is self-love – a primitive, innate passion, which is anterior to every other, and of which all others are in a sense only modifications" (Rousseau, 1979, p. 212) – molded man to be selfish, and such selfishness is only good up to a point. Virtue, then, could be practiced by Emile if he decided to engage in a combat against selfishness. If so, if we intended pedagogical effort to engrave the acquisition of virtue by our apprentice, we would have to renounce the selfish goodness of natural man.

But such an intent would compel us to abandon the idea of a natural, selfish goodness that was so dear to Rousseau. As an Educator, Rousseau decided to conserve the acquisition of virtue. Such an acquisition is ensured because "God is good; nothing is more manifest" (Rousseau, 1979, p.285) and his justice, consequence of his goodness, justifies the claim that it is the goodness of God that explains why man should combat his own selfishness. As God is good and wants man to be happy, for man to be happy it is necessary for him to abandon selfishness itself, because God knows that. In his profession of faith, the Savoyard Vicar said:

My son, keep your soul in a condition where it always desires that there be a God, and you shall never doubt it. What is more, whatever decision you may make, bear in mind that the true duties of religion are independent of the institutions of men; that a just heart is the true temple of the divinity; that in every country and in every sect the sum of the law is to love God above everything and one's neighbor as one- self; that no religion is exempt from the duties of morality; that nothing is truly essential other than these duties; that inner worship is the first of these duties; and that without faith no true virtue exists (Rousseau, 1979, p. 311).

Based on this, Rousseau exchanged the premise that man is naturally good for the statement that it is the goodness of God that makes man virtuous and happy (Mello, 1999). But such an education was tied to an anticultural position, as for Rousseau culture was what made man unhappy and the end of education would return man to his lost happiness. According to this reasoning, education should be centered on nature, aiming to protect the child from being treated as an adult, and children should be spared from any educational system made to make them cultured, competent, and ethical people.

Rousseau bestowed us with an *ersatz* authentic knowledge that is compatible with the idea of man linked to goodness, but at the same time, attributes a role to nature that only culture can fulfill, thus confusing liberty with the free interplay of passions, and failing to show the possibility of moving from the natural liberty of children to the disciplined liberty of the adult, thus nullifying the idea that men are responsible for creating social order.

It can be inferred that Rousseau's conception of liberty in education does not allow us a glance at the possibility of sustaining, by means of education, an optimistic attitude on life and the world, or on ethics, and so to claim that our will to live allows us to conciliate the vision of the world with the vision of life, to integrate knowing and wanting. In other words, there is no way to establish an order in the souls of the individual and society in which search for power and respect to life are to self-regulate each other and fatally nullify one another.

In his criticism of culture, Rousseau condescendingly rejected Greek philosophy and its idealism, reduced to mere chimeras, and even had the audacity of decreeing the death of humanism, whose central principle is that education has a central position in human life. In a way, Rousseau provided pertinent arguments to make current day men learn a very simple idea on education: that educating develops the numerous latent talents that exist in each one. When he conceived the non-necessity of discussing what man is or should be, but only restrained himself to discussing what man is (his realism), Rousseau consequently helped the modern world abandon idealism, philosophy, and education in the form they were practiced in the Classic World.

Final Considerations

When searching for answers concerning Rousseau's conception of the educational process and if he said this process would generate total autonomy in man, as a result of one's formation for liberty, it was noticed that even if Rousseau had deemed it necessary to reflect on human nature before establishing the model of order that was appropriate for society, he neglected to propose to a discussion about what man could or should be, restricting the discussion to what man really is, in a search for a realistic perspective. In this way, Rousseau obfuscated the intuition about a correspondence between the structure of the human soul and that of society, the idea that man is a possibility, and not a reality, and considering this, that education must have a central position in the spiritual life of man.

As it is, it is clear that Rousseau, in spite of having written a treatise about education, caused a perverse effect, suppressing the central position of education in the spiritual life of man, by assigning a fixed, immutable nature to that man.

Thus, for Rousseau, man is a selfish and calculating being, and he may be educated to some extent, although the background of his nature remains unalterable. We have to rely on this animal nature, selfish and calculating, for all of our projects of State ordination, within which we must live with our fellow human beings. Education may attenuate these unfavorable tendencies that are innate for the members of any community, but the order, the State, and the project of building a constitution that will govern that community must necessarily presuppose the negative elements present in human nature. According to this intuition, therefore, Rousseau inferred that disorder in the human soul could not be reflected in society, for man "as he really is", will generate chaos and unbridled violence of all against all, destroying himself and any possibility of coexistence in society.

The political philosopher, the legislator, must find means to divert egoism, the passions of the individual man from his dangerous directions, and channel them for the common good. The passions of the individual man must be instrumentalized so that he may not direct his strength, his energies, and his passions against the interests of his fellow men, but rather in a convergent direction, favorable to this interest, towards a task, a work in which all will be committed, and all the other members of their society are equally instrumentalized.

As an unfolding of what has been exposed – and in lines that are still very tenuous – it is noted that if one were to invoke Rousseau as a forerunner of the conception of recognition, it must be taken into account that the principle of intersubjective communication proposed by Jürgen Habermas (and to some extent employed by Axel Honneth, in spite of the sociological deficits that Honneth attributes to Habermas) was elaborated independently of the experience of Socrates and Plato. Thus, Habermas sought to avoid the difficulties created by the philosophy of the subject through various stratagems, whose motto is to deconstruct all discourses that concede absolute priority to the subject or that conceive reason as a faculty centered on the subject. Such critiques would thus aim to free or emancipate subjectively-centered-reason from the tyranny of the subject.

Habermas's critiques, however, failed to objectify their intentions as they themselves rely on this subject-centered reason, and thus may be found guilty of the same vice, the same error against which they were engaged. In short, intersubjective communication is a self-responsible discourse of the speaker / enunciator, whose referent is his own *analogon*.

It is the speaker's paradox that instrumentalizes his referent to discern reality while taking the referent as an annunciator of himself. As already implied in the Platonic conception of language, the reality-referential-meaning relation is fabricated by the speaker / enunciator. And if one seeks to understand the mechanisms that transform reality into a self-promising referent by the speaker / enunciator agent through the rational structuring of the moral being of men, liberty and reason would necessarily be the bases of the speaker. Those are the two main forces of the human soul, and the centrality of the spiritual life of men that is given by education, with the capacity to produce virtue as the fruit of reason that is associated with feelings, noble instincts for the creation of the inner man, the man within man.

For the Other to be in fact Other in its self-intelligibility, thus devoid of a simultaneous heteronomous and self-justifying operation, the speaker cannot disregard the fact that the third-person process, by which the reality-referent-meaning relation is made by the speaker, is overall a process proper for a self-reflexive subject. In other words, the world and things have their own realities that are independent of the way in which they become intelligible by the perceptions of the enunciating subject.

Contributors

A. J. R. VITORINO contributed to the elaborator of the research design, bibliographic indication and reading, and final writing of the article. P. S. ANES PIRES contributed to the bibliographic research, text writing and translation. R. G. BROGIATO contributed to the translation.

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