

Emile: An Insigh into Education and Citizenship in Pluralistic Society

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the educational aspects of Rousseau's various works, focusing on the idea of creating a rational citizen. With special reference to Emile and the Social Contract, I argue, beyond the discussion of 'man or citizen,' that a general educational ideal which aims at creating free and rational members of an ideal society may be inferred from Rousseau's educational, social, and political concerns. Rousseau's concepts such as that of a rational being and freedom are examined to achieve a sense of how an individual becomes a citizen who reasonably and willingly appreciates the general will. Finally, some suggestions are drawn with respect to education for a pluralistic society that may operate under a general will.

Keywords:

education, citizenship, pluralistic society

INTRODUCTION

Rousseau's educational ideas have been discussed by various thinkers from different perspectives. Rousseau's *Emile, for example,* has been discussed as a book that shows the natural goodness of man and as a book that elaborates on how to shape individuals rather than societies through private education (Cook, 1975; Melzer, 1983). In addition, his political views have been interpreted from different standpoints, such as the idea that Rousseau attempts to eliminate human plurality from politics and that he wants to create citizens in the mold of one single model individual (Canovan, 1983). Yet some thinkers emphasize the importance of the relationships between Rousseau's various writings, pointing out that his works are to be read with reference to one another (Martin, 1987, 45; Melzer, 1983, 633). In this respect, for example, it is argued that Rousseau's educational ideas provide an answer to the concern regarding how to create an ideal social unity along with its virtuous and rational members (Boyd, 1963, 196; Parry, 2001, 248). In this study, it is argued that the educational ideas of Rousseau, based primarily on *Emile* and



his social and political ideas constructed chiefly in the Social Contract, may provide a perspective of citizenship education with special reference to pluralistic societies.

The first chapter of the Social Contract begins with "man was/is born free and everywhere he is in chains" (Rousseau, 1994c, p. 131). Similarly, Rousseau (1993) declares in the opening sentence of Emile that "God makes all things good; man meddles with them and they become evil" (p. 5). Rousseau tries to overcome these corruptions and to reach a form of government by passionately standing for the ideal state. What Rousseau argues for in both Emile and the Social Contract is an ideal (natural) society that "is a real spiritual unity with a rational personality and a general will different from the individual personalities and wills of its constituent members" (Boyd, 1963, p. 196). With this in mind, Rousseau (1994a) also argues that "one of the greatest chimeras of Philosophy is having to seek some form of Government in which the citizens can be free and virtuous by the force of law alone" (p. 12). Undoubtedly, arriving at these ends requires well-educated, proper citizens. As Parry (2001) succinctly puts, "the significance of education for Rousseau is that it seems to offer a means of solving one of the central dilemmas of his social and political thought," which aims "to create a virtuous circle in which transformed human beings could live in a transformed society in which all could equally enjoy a sense both of self-fulfillment and community with others" (248). To put it briefly, Rousseau educates Emile as a free and rational being and as an individual who, later in his life, takes his place in his society as a fully developed and educated social contributor. Before discussing how this well-educated social contributor might be educated in a pluralistic society, it may be constructive to examine some essential aspects of Rousseau's educational and political ideas as follows.

MAN AND CITIZEN

In Book I of Emile, Rousseau explains the main characteristics of natural man and citizen. The former "is the unit, the whole, dependent only on himself," whereas the latter is one whose "values depend upon the whole, that is, on the community" (Rousseau, 1993, pp. 7-8). Clearly, the concept of the whole in these statements represents different ideas. In effect, Rousseau provides us with two different educational systems whose goals are seemingly conflicting since they are determined by different notions of the whole. While one aims to make man, the other aims to create the citizen. In fact, one of the most challenging of Rousseau's ideas to interpret is about the vagueness between creating either man or citizen and creating man and citizen at the same time. As Rousseau (1993) asks,

but what can be done when they conflict, when instead of training man for himself you try to train him for others? Harmony becomes impossible. Forced to combat either nature or society, you must make your choice between the man and the citizen, you cannot train both (p. 7).

These seemingly conflicting educational aims have been discussed by various thinkers from different perspectives. For example, Perkinson (1965, pp. 91-92) argues - contrary to Boyd, who asserts that



Rousseau adopted a faulty perspective by which he developed an either-or education theory (education for the individual or society) - that although Rousseau frames different educational ideas, he is not inconsistent with respect to the aims of his educational thoughts, but advocates a constant educational aim in all his works. In fact, Rousseau suggests contradictory educational approaches in Emile and the Considerations on the Government of Poland. A primary difference between the two works is that the latter provides an authoritarian education that is opposed to what is outlined in the former in general. However, a careful analysis reveals that these two works are intended to respond to fundamentally different concerns with different perspectives. To put it clearly, while Rousseau frames an ideal education for an individual in Emile in order for the character to become a fully developed individual, he provides practical educational implications in Considerations on the Government of Poland for a society that is indeed corrupted. More specifically, Rousseau's (1953) concern in the latter work is to contribute to the development of a nation that "will date her second birth from the terrible crisis from which she is emerging" (p. 180) through a proper national education that is supposed to "give souls a national formation and direct their opinions and tastes in such a way that they will be patriotic by inclination, by passion, by necessity" (p. 176). Rousseau limits his suggestions with respect to the aspirations and current situation of Poland. Rousseau (1953) clearly emphasizes his limited but practical suggestions, asserting that "my purpose here is only to give a few general suggestions; but that is enough for those I am addressing" (p. 180). In short, Rousseau's perspective on Poland's situation is not to be understood as a part of his ideas on an ideal education system for an ideal society, since it is specific to a corrupt society that is expected to reemerge. Beyond this, it may also be argued that Emile's education happens in a non-ideal society that is too corrupted by the people who value the wrong things and who do not live by the laws of nature. However, as Parry (2001) discusses, the education framed in Emile "is designed to allow persons to live an honest life even when surrounded by the pressures of a corrupt society" (p. 249). Emile, in any case, provides not a limited but a complete account of education for the development of an ideal individual who may become a participant of an ideal society, even when desired social conditions do not match the realities.

Now, considering the question about how to create a man and/or a citizen, a possible answer may be provided from a view in which creating man and citizen is seen as a complementary and continuing process that aims at a single educational end which is compatible with Rousseau's social and political ideals. First, it may be argued that an individual is educated to become a man by private education, followed by public education that makes him a citizen, in such a way that the two educations may be seen as consecutive parts of a single education. In Rousseau's account of education, a man is created through a private (domestic or natural) educational system, while a citizen is created through that of a public (civic or citizenship) system (Rousseau, 1993, p.8). At the same time, he maintains that individuals are to be educated in a way that is appropriate to their developmental stages. Rousseau (1992a) argues that educational tasks should be



"within the reach of their age and experience" (p.168) so that they can comprehend. As Shklar (1969, p. 147) discusses, Emile's education is specifically concerned with his developmental stages which are appropriate for him to improve his physical, moral, and intellectual traits. Private education comes prior to public education since human beings are not developmentally able to be educated through public education to become citizens before a certain period in their lives. In this respect, individuals should experience the concerns of their society only when they satisfy the conditions necessary to comprehend social concerns. Until that time, they are educated by means of private education. In other words, individuals are to be educated appropriately according to the developmental stages they are in, which enables Emile to be educated first by private education and then by public education. It is, therefore, reasonable for Rousseau to argue that an individual is to be educated for citizenship after developing his/her appropriate characteristics for becoming a citizen. Therefore, it becomes clear that what Rousseau means by you must make your choice is that instead of making a man and/or a citizen, one must first make a man and ultimately a citizen.

Second, if these educational systems are to be seen as continuous parts of a single educational theory, in order to understand the entirety of these two educational systems one may need to take a close look at Rousseau's works, particularly Emile and the Social Contract. The two works were published in the same year in 1762. In the Social Contract, Rousseau constructs his political theory, while in Emile he describes his educational theory. Emile elucidates in detail how a virtuous individual, who is to be seen as the foundation of the ideal society theorized in the Social Contract, can be created through education. As Martin (1987) states, "Emile provides the educational theory that any account of an ideal state requires, but that is not to be found in the Social Contract itself; the Social Contract enables one to understand how Rousseau solves the problem he poses at the beginning of Emile – educating Emile simultaneously as an autonomous man and a citizen" (p. 45). As Perkinson (1965) states succinctly, Rousseau conceived education as the best-suited institution to solve problems of social engineering, and Emile, as his work that comes after the Social Contract, is "primarily a treatise on social reconstruction through education" (p. 89). In this sense, therefore, the book Emile may be understood as the work that analyzes the educational system of the ideal state, while Emile himself is seen as the exemplary citizen of the ideal state constructed in the Social Contract.

In short, it may be argued that for Rousseau, ideal education requires a continuous process and progress starting with private education and following with public education. On the one hand, Emile is to acquire his independence from others through his education, becoming a complete individual in the process. His education is preventive in character, with respect to the early years in which nothing is imposed upon him which may lead retardation or forced progress (Shklar, 1969, p. 147). On the other hand, once Emile is to become a citizen, he rationally recognizes the wholeness of society and his dependence on others with whom he participates in political unity. As Rousseau (1993) mentions, "Emile is not made to live



alone, he is a member of a society, and must fulfill his duties as such. He is made to live among his fellowmen and he must get to know them" (p. 349). What Rousseau demonstrates in Emile may be interpreted as "how a child can be turned into a man in civil society" (Parry, 2001, p. 250). Now, to provide an insight into how this transition is made possible, with regard to the notion of the citizen in an ideal society, it is necessary to analyze some crucial concepts provided by Rousseau, which are in fact deeply interconnected.

BEING FREE AND RATIONAL The Rational Individual

One of the most important aims of Emile's natural education is to make him rational. It is one of the prerequisites that should be accomplished before Emile's private education ends, which is crucial for his later education in order to make the transition from a man to a citizen. In other words, before beginning his public education, Emile is to become a rational individual. Being rational involves being strong and good since, according to Rousseau (1992c), "all wickedness comes from weakness," and once he is made strong, then "he will be good" (p. 39). For Rousseau (1992c), a good person is one who is able to use his own reasoning because "reason alone teaches us to know good and evil" (p. 39).

Emile is to exercise his strength by using his power. Power is an important concept and a crucial element in becoming rational. According to Rousseau, each desire implies a want and individuals can satisfy their wants only within the limits of their power (Rousseau, 1992c, p. 51). On the one hand, such satisfaction is dependent upon the power of individuals, which makes them happy. Happiness, on the other, is desired by everyone. For the natural man, Rousseau (1992c) states that "happiness is as simple as his life; it consists in the absence of pain" (p. 168). Furthermore, pain is inevitable when an individual is not able to satisfy his or her desires. Emile, therefore, should learn what happiness is and how to balance his desires and power in order to maintain his happiness, because for Rousseau, a miserable man is one who suffers from the imbalance between his power and his desires. A happy man, on the contrary, is one who is able to satisfy his wants. In his words, "the happiest is he who suffers least; the most miserable is he who enjoys least" (Rousseau, 1992c, p. 51). Therefore, happiness is contingent on the balance between one's desires and power. One's power and desires should be in equilibrium because "a conscious being whose powers were equal to his desires would be happy...true happiness consists in decreasing the difference between our desires and our powers, in establishing a perfect equilibrium between the power and the will" (Rousseau, 1992c, p. 52). This is the true position in which a person can find him/herself to have human wisdom (Rousseau, 1992c, p. 52).

In brief, a rational person is one who is strong, who uses his/her reasoning to enable him/herself to be in equilibrium in his/her desires and power, and thus, who is a happy person. One of the ultimate aims of Emile's education, therefore, appears to be to make him a rational individual. But are there any differences between a rational man and a rational citizen? Are there any differences in the concept of being rational between a man's perspectives and a citizen's perspectives? An answer may be revealed if the meanings of



rational and free from the perspectives of man and citizen are analyzed within Rousseau's notion of freedom.

Rousseau's Notion of Freedom

In the Social Contract, Rousseau differentiates between natural, moral, and civil freedom. Emile's natural freedom is "an unlimited right to everything that tempts him and that he can get" (Rousseau, 1994c, p. 141). The crucial point here is the idea that a naturally free person can do whatever he/she wants to do and that he/she depends neither on others nor on abstract reason. It is the capability to fulfill physical necessities and, for Rousseau, it is the "[s]avage man, desiring only the things he knows and knowing only those things the possession of which is in his power or easily acquired" (Rousseau, 1992c, p. 86). Thus, a naturally free person can acquire whatever he/she desires if it is within his/her power. However, he/she never uses abstract reason in order to conduct his/her actions to meet his/her needs.

The difference between naturally free and morally free is that, unlike that of a naturally free person, a morally free person's desires are determined by his or her abstract reason. For Rousseau, man has to leave his natural freedom because there is no place for a naturally free person when it is time to join society. Rousseau (1993) argues that an isolated person who is self-sufficient and dependent only upon him/herself "could not even continue to exist" (p. 187) because once others have left the state of nature, no one can remain in a state of nature and one is forced by others to leave it too. As mentioned previously, Emile is in fact educated to join society once he develops the required skills and is able to fulfill his social responsibilities. Even before Emile enters society, the concept of social relations is gradually developed in his mind (Rousseau, 1993, 187). Yet before entering civil society, one has to learn how to be rational and morally free. In order to achieve moral freedom, the education of Emile starts right after he becomes conscious of himself. Rousseau states that with the second phase, after infancy, Emile's real personal life begins because he becomes conscious of himself, and so he is to be considered a moral being (Rousseau, 1993, pp. 49-50). From now on, Emile begins exercising his reasoning as a moral being. The morality in this stage is related to being rational and being able to preserve the balance between desires and power, as discussed above.

Emile, as a morally free being, is able to do whatever he wants to do only within the limits of his power insofar as his abstract reasoning allows him. However, it should be considered that Emile is still not able to comprehend the rationale behind the relations among citizens because moral freedom is only, in Rousseau's (1994c) words, "obedience to the law one has prescribed for oneself" (p. 142). In other words, a morally free person relies only on him/herself and the relation between his/her desires and power that are in a state of equilibrium. As discussed above, it is the true position that enables one to be in equilibrium in one's power and will. Being in the true position requires a rational person to be under the control of abstract reason. The difference between the stages of moral freedom and civil freedom is that while the former is abstract, the latter is concrete and requires obedience to the concrete laws established by free



and rational citizens as a whole. Moral freedom may be seen as the transitional period between natural freedom and civil freedom. Being able to be morally free and be in the true position allows one to become able to experience civil freedom since one has already mastered being under a law, that is, the law one prescribes for oneself. Now, a person who has already experienced being under a law of self-reason can easily and willingly want to be under the general will, which allows him/her to enter society as a free and rational individual provided that he/she acquire the concept of civil freedom. Civil freedom requires being in a society, since it is achievable only within civil society and is a relation of one's will to the general will. Since civil freedom depends upon one's obedience to the general will, it is therefore determined by the limits of general will. Emile is now able to understand the rationale behind the actions of people who live together and he has to exercise social morality and recognize others as free beings.

Similar to his educational theory, a developmental understanding is seen in Rousseau's notion of freedom too. It requires individuals, in accordance with their developmental stages, to acquire the previous one first in order to comprehend the next. It ultimately aims to reach a civil freedom that is solely realized within the ideal society. In Rousseau's (1994c) words, moving "from the state of nature to the civil state produces a remarkable change in man, by subsuming justice for instinct in his behavior and giving his actions the morality they previously lacked" (p. 141). For him, while the general will limits civil freedom, natural freedom is limited only by the force of the individual (Rousseau, 1994c, p. 141-142). Moral freedom, however, is that "which alone makes man truly the master of himself" (Rousseau, 1994c, 142). In short, natural freedom comes prior to moral freedom and civil freedom since one first lives and is educated in the state of nature. Yet, the ultimate freedom that Rousseau wants for Emile is civil freedom. Therefore, Emile is educated in order to acquire first moral freedom and then ultimately civil freedom, since becoming a free and rational citizen is the purpose of his education.

Regarding the concepts of rational and free, it may be clear how man and citizen conceptualize these notions differently, with respect to an individual's relation to him/herself and to other members of society. As addressed earlier, Emile as a natural man relies only on himself and considers only his own interests. Prior to being able to use his abstract reason, Emile is free and good insofar as he can achieve whatever he desires and thus become happy. After becoming able to use his abstract reason, Emile's conceptions of being free, good, and happy take on different meanings. Morally free, Emile still lives for himself, but within the true position according to his abstract reason. Within the concept of natural man, being morally free makes him free and good as long as he consciously wants and reaches his desires within the limits of his own power. Considering the concept of civil freedom, however, it is understood that his abstract reason is based upon the limits of the general will and thus becomes concrete reason. That is to say, the basis of his abstract reason which is necessary for him to be morally free switches from the limits of his own power to the limits of the power of the general will.

Rousseau (1992b, p.137) maintains that in this transition period, one of the educational aims is to



make individuals acquire the idea that individual will is not necessarily good, but the general will is. According to Rousseau (1994b), once an individual enters society, then the nature is no longer "an infallible guide" for him/her since "a goal of shared felicity from which each individual would derive his own" (p. 77) cannot be achieved when individuals continue to follow only their own interests and listen to their passions. Human beings' characteristics of selfishness and being capable of rationally defining their selfinterests prevent them from recognizing the vitality of the well-being of the whole society (Rousseau, 1994b, p. 77). For this reason, Emile is educated as a citizen in order to be able to use concrete reasoning in accordance with the *general will* and in order to acquire the knowledge that being free in a civil society is to be able to act within the limits of a concrete set of laws. Then, he understands his own will as a part of the general will that determines his own power and accordingly governs his desires within the limits of the general will. Therefore, a citizen becomes rational and free insofar as he achieves his/her desires within the limits of general will, and thus he does pursue a happy life within his/her society. Accordingly, it may be argued that the ultimate aim of Rousseau's educational theory is to contribute to establishing and sustaining an ideal society populated by true citizens who are responsible for their society and who have willingly and reasonably committed themselves to follow the *general will* that makes them dependent on the whole.

EDUCATION AND PLURALISTIC SOCIETY

Once Emile is able to enter society, he has to learn how to act, and how to live among and engage with other members of the society. His education replaces his independence or individual dependence with mutual dependence "so that he no longer regards himself as one, but as a part of the whole, and is only conscious of the common life" (Rousseau, 1993, p. 8). Being a part of rational but concrete agreements among the members of society is inevitable for the sake of the unity of the whole society. As Rousseau (1994b) states:

The earth would be covered with men between whom there was almost no communication...Everyone would be isolated among others, and would think only of himself...We would lie without feeling anything; we would die without having lived ... There would be neither goodness in our hearts nor morality in our actions, and we would never have enjoyed the soul's most delicious feeling, which is love of virtue (p. 78).

Emile has to comprehend a new version of how to be rational and free as discussed above and thus must learn to be virtuous. It is one of the main aims of Emile's education for citizenship, which dramatically changes everything he has learned so far. He is to agree to, and be a part of, the general will. In fact, the notion of freedom is a vital element in Rousseau's social and political theory, as well as in his educational theory. "Had Rousseau not been centrally concerned with freedom ... he would never have made the general will the core idea of his political philosophy," as Riley (2001, p. 148) succinctly emphasizes. What Emile "loses by the social contract is his natural freedom and an unlimited right to everything that tempts



him and that he can get; what he gains is civil freedom and the proprietorship of everything he possesses" (Rousseau, 1994c, p. 141). Thus, Rousseau puts citizens in a situation in which they find themselves dependent upon the laws.

The relation between citizens and laws are important since Rousseau argues that the relationship among citizens is to be minimal, whereas the one between citizens and the entire body is to be maximal (Rousseau, 1994c, p. 164). In other words, one's dependence should be upon the state rather than upon other individual members of society, since only the state can provide real freedom for its members. As discussed by Neuhouser (1993), full political freedom is achieved by citizens only if the two (objective and subjective) conditions are realized. These conditions are necessary to attain full political freedom, but one is not sufficient without the other. In this sense, Neuhouser (1993) concisely argues that (1) the laws are to be objectively liberating, meaning that "they must effectively mitigate the freedom-endangering consequences of dependence on the individuals" (p. 395) and (2) citizens are to be in an appropriate subjective relation to the laws, meaning that "the principles that inform the laws must be consciously embraced by citizens as their own" (p. 395). Emile, therefore, may be considered as still dependent only upon himself as he was in the state of nature. Yet, at this time, he recognizes other members of society as free and independent beings and he believes that each member of the state is independent from others but dependent on the whole, that is, on the laws by which they preserve their freedom and independence. Thus, it seems possible for an individual or a group of people not to share a singular cultural doctrine necessarily, in order to live together within a single society. A condition to make this possible may be the idea that the doctrines held by different groups do not contradict with the social contract and are included within it, which makes the idea of general will reasonably acceptable for everyone. But can this idea really be drawn from Rousseau's ideas? What happens if different groups come up with conflicting ideas? Are the unity of the whole and a common consensus endangered in such situations?

Regarding Rousseau's understanding of passions, it may be argued that passions lead people to hold conflicting ideas. Rousseau (1992c) discusses how "the more violent the passions, the more necessary Laws are to contain them" (p. 38). Conflicts may arise among different groups and become harmful for both individuals and the whole. Yet unity must be fostered through the control of the laws. Rousseau (1994c, p. 91) argues that if personal interests and passions dominate over public interest, then abuses become inevitable and the social structure turns out to be disastrous for the whole. Rousseau (1994d, p. 70) criticizes moralists for considering human beings as reasonable. For him, human beings are sensitive, consult solely their passions to act, and use reason to decrease thoughtless actions led by their passions (Rousseau, 1994d, p. 70). So, should children be taught how to destroy their passions in order to make themselves rational? His answer is clear, since he argues that no one can be good without possessing any passions (1992a, p. 155). Yet, instruction on how to control passions through reason is vital.

Self-love may provide a good example for such concern. According to Rousseau (1993, p. 208), as an



effect of self-love, everyone loves him/herself above everything. Yet everyone also loves anything that contributes to their preservation (1993, p. 208). In this sense, two crucial concepts appear as vital: reason and contribution. From Rousseau's perspective, reasoning should instill in students the idea that they are dependent on only general will, and any contribution to the well-being of society (the whole's selfpreservation) is in turn a contribution to their individual self-preservation. Therefore, within a society consisting of well-educated citizens, every group is understood to overcome any conflicting ideas among each other and arrive at a common consensus in order to preserve the well-being of the whole.

Furthermore, since Rousseau gives human actions dependence upon laws and morality, citizens are to be educated to embrace the sacredness of the bonds of social unity, to love and serve each other, and, in his words, to "scrupulously obey the laws" (Rousseau, 1992c, p. 80). Thus, students are to acquire the vital role of reciprocal relationships between individuals and different groups. According to Rousseau (1994b), justice can be found in "the fundamental and universal Law of the greatest good for all" (p. 114) rather than in a relationship between two individuals. Similarly, regarding pluralistic societies, justice must not be in a relationship between groups of people or individuals. Therefore, well-educated citizens in a pluralistic society that aims to be just should always search for a fair consensus, even if their ideas conflict.

In the final analysis, Rousseau provides us with an insight that may help us establish a framework of citizenship education for creating free, rational, and virtuous members of a just society. His educational ideas may give us some crucial elements of the curriculum in citizenship education concerning pluralistic social structure. For instance, reasoning appears as a crucial element in order to create rational individuals who acquire the necessary limits of relationships among citizens and who embrace principles of equality and the value of love. Moral education seems to be another important component of such an educational curriculum in order to instill the meaning of being free and virtuous into students. According to Rousseau, children are to be trained early enough to see themselves as parts of the whole and to learn obedience to each other. In order to achieve these ends, they are to be "raised in common in the midst of equality" and to be surrounded by love so that they can internalize the value of loving one another as brothers and sisters, wanting nothing but what the society needs (Rousseau, 1992a, p. 156). Even though Rousseau did not have a specific interest in a pluralistic social structure, his ideas may be interpreted with a special reference to citizenship education in pluralistic societies. It may be concluded that Rousseau's educational theory suits the realities of pluralistic societies well and does not conflict with them, insofar as an educational system is provided that includes crucial elements in its curriculum such as reasoning, moral education, and equality alongside the aim of creating rational, free, and equal citizens. Unquestionably, a further and detailed discussion on the integration of these and similar curriculum elements into existing curriculum is required in order for us to benefit from and extend his ideas. Yet, for now, Rousseau's educational theory appears to provide a viable direction for the future.



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