http://doi.org/10.14393/ER-v32e2025-20

Emile and Emily:
or reason and sensibility on the conversations' agenda[1]

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ABSTRACT

The text seeks to analyze the interaction between reason and sensibility in the following works: the treatise on education Emile or on education, written by the Genevan philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) in the form of a novel; and the work Les conversations d'Émilie, written by Louise d'Épinay (1726-1783). This one was written with the purpose of opposing the former, but it doesn't develop the theme with the same depth. The method for the analysis was hermeneutic, with a structural and comparative reading, reaching the conclusion that the two are similar in terms of reason and sensitivity, with due regard for specific differences. Emile will not be a savage at the end of his education, but a man of knowledge and reason; and Emilie will be educated with a view to developing reason, but safeguarding sensibility.

KEYWORDS: Rousseau; Emile; Mme d'Épinay; Reason and Sensibility.

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http://doi.org/10.14393/ER-v32e2025-20

Emílio e Emília: ou razão e sensibilidade na pauta das conversações

RESUMO

O texto busca analisar o jogo entre a razão e a sensibilidade nas seguintes obras: o tratado de educação Emílio ou da educação, escrito pelo filósofo genebrino Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) em forma de romance; e a obra Les conversations d'Émilie, escrita por Louise d'Épinay (1726-1783). Este foi escrito com o propósito de se contrapor àquele, mas não chega a desenvolver o tema com a mesma profundidade. O método para a análise foi o hermenêutico, com leitura estrutural e comparativa, chegando à conclusão que os dois se aproximam na questão da razão e da sensibilidade, ressalvadas as diferenças. Emilio não será ao final de sua formação um selvagem, mas um homem de conhecimento e razão; e Emilie será educada com vistas ao desenvolvimento da razão, mas resguardando a sensibilidade.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Rousseau; Emílio; Mme d'Épinay; Razão e sensibilidade.

Emilio y Emilia: o razón y sensibilidad en la pauta de las conversaciones

RESUMEN

El texto busca analizar el juego entre la razón y la sensibilidad en las siguientes obras: el tratado de educación *Emilio, o de la educación*, escrito por el filósofo ginebrino Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) en forma de novela; y la obra *Les conversations d'Émilie*, escrita por Louise d'Épinay (1726-1783). Esta última fue escrita con el propósito de oponerse a la primera, pero no llega a desarrollar el tema con la misma profundidad. El método para el análisis fue hermenéutico, con una lectura estructural y comparativa, llegando a la conclusión de que ambas obras se aproximan en la cuestión de la razón y la sensibilidad, a pesar de las diferencias. Emilio no será al final de su formación un salvaje, sino un hombre de conocimiento y razón; y Emilie será educada con vistas al desarrollo de la razón, pero preservando la sensibilidad.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Rousseau; Emilio; Mme d'Épinay; Razón y sensibilidad.

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Introduction

When the terms *reason* and *sensibility* are used together, the association with the English novelist Jane Austen (1775–1817) is almost immediate, as she authored a novel by that very title. And rightly so, considering she is a writer whose genius has been compared to that of Shakespeare, as noted by the English poet Alfred Tennyson (1809–1892), who, according to Carpeaux (2019), was not merely offering a personal opinion but rather reflecting the general sentiment in England during his time. This recognition was largely due to the dramatic depth of her characters, whose dialogues reveal a true interplay between reason and sensibility.

However, even though Austen was familiar with French literary production, including the Rousseau's inspired novels, the author of *Sense and Sensibility* did not follow the same path. Instead, she chose to open new directions within the English romantic tradition, allowing a more realistic exploration of the social and intellectual life of her era. The disillusionment of her characters—somewhat reminiscent of the "lost illusions" of Balzac's[3] protagonists—places common sense on one side and sentimentalism on the other. This duality is embodied in the novel's two main characters, the sisters Elinor and Marianne: while the former is more rational and resistant to emotional impulses, the latter embraces emotional expression with a certain fervor.

In other words, this does not align with the notion of reason and sensibility as understood within the Francophone pre-Romantic aesthetic, as exemplified in the epistolary novel *Julie, or the New Heloise* by the Genevan writer Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778). However, in Austen's novel, the interplay between Elinor's rational disposition and Marianne's

[3] Honoré de Balzac (1799–1850), a French writer renowned for the psychological depth of his characters and regarded as the founder of Realism in modern literature—particularly in *Lost Illusions*—has a character declare, "This is society" (1981, p. 62) in reference to the flaws and afflictions of human nature.

emotional fervor reveals a human reality that is universal—indeed, one that is also present in the works of the *philosophes*, including Rousseau himself. This is especially evident in the nuanced characterization of figures such as Julie, the sensitive wife of the wise Monsieur de Wolmar.

In short, a reality that reflects the eternal human existential balance between reason and sensibility.

That is why these terms carry greater significance within the context of the Enlightenment, at least when reason is understood in the following sense: as an activity of the mind and a guide for human conduct that seeks to know the truth, grounded in the fullness of art, the logical-argumentative demonstration of apprehending reality, and mastery of scientific knowledge. Meanwhile, the term sensibility, in the same context, relates to the development of sensory capacity through the acuity of the senses, as well as the ability to feel existence more deeply and to perceive, within the soul, the numerous possibilities that Nature offers throughout the course of life.

The dynamic at play is no different from that found in Rousseau's writings, especially in the dramatic life of Julie, as well as in the adventures of Émile, the protagonist of the pedagogical novel *Emile, or On Education*, where we follow his educational journey and observe the dialogues—that is, the "conversations"—between him and his tutor. Before marriage, their conversations become increasingly intense, aimed even at awakening reason and prudence in Émile's passionate heart. The tutor says:

> It is conceived that the night following this meeting between Émile and me will not be spent entirely in sleep. But how? Can the mere identity of a name hold such power over a sensible man? Could there be only one Sophie in the world? Do they all resemble each other in soul as well as in name? Will all those he sees be hers? Is he mad enough to fall so deeply in love with a stranger to whom he has never spoken? Wait, young

> man, examine, observe. You know nothing yet—not even whose house you are in; and, hearing you, we would already imagine you at your own home. (Rousseau, 1973, p. 490).

Furthermore, the gentle "conversations" that the protagonist has with Sophie before their marriage serve to help her balance her feelings and regulate her passions. On this, Rousseau (1973, p. 465) states: "Sophie is too sensitive to maintain complete evenness of temper, but she has too much sweetness for this sensitivity to trouble others; it harms only herself." And this is what her lover does—that is, with the help of his tutor, he adds a measure of reason to this "empire of sweetness" (ibid., p. 480). Jean-Jacques, the tutor, says: "It is believed that during our colloquy this evening, Sophie and her mother did not remain silent; confessions were drawn out, instructions given" (ibid., p. 491 — emphasis mine). Further on: "Emile speaks and gestures with ardor; it does not seem that the colloquy bores them" (ibid., p. 496).

Finally, throughout Book Five of *Émile*, numerous passages depict a developing sharing in which the young lover transforms the conversations into a pedagogical activity, teaching music, dance, drawing, and painting, as well as providing lessons in philosophy, physics, mathematics, and history. Although the lessons are not highly effective due to the intensity of their passion, Sophie manages to retain some of the knowledge, and the colloquies continue within the same perspective of duality experienced by Elinor and Marianne.

About the "conversations"

From this perspective, the character Emile embodies this existential duality in a particularly intriguing – albeit unusual and even peculiar– manner within the context of the Republic of Letters,[4] by deliberately

[4] The *Republic of Letters*, or *respublica litterarum*, is a term used from the 15th century and lasting until the 19th century, referring to an imagined community composed of intellectuals of various nationalities who gathered in salons and disseminated their work through periodicals.

delaying the development of reason as long as possible. After all, from Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466–1536), with his concept of a "liberal education,"[5] to John Locke (1632–1704), with his work *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, all treatises advocated for the cultivation of reasoning in the child. [6]

In *Émile*, however, what develops is a critique of this educational view, present both in the literature and in the pedagogical practices of existing institutions. Indeed, the author calls educational institutions "ridiculous," as they, in his view, served only "to make men with two faces" (Rousseau, 1973, p. 14), failing to form either true men or citizens. Rousseau's motivation for his fierce opposition to the rational development of childhood is grounded, on the one hand, in his negative analysis of the progress of sciences and arts; and on the other hand, in his critique of the pedagogical practices of colleges, most of which were run by Jesuits, as well as the educational treatises of his time.

In criticizing them, Rousseau cites the English philosopher by name, stating: "Reasoning with children was Locke's great maxim; it is the one most in vogue today; however, its success does not seem to me sufficient to justify its credit" (Rousseau, 1973, p. 74). Later, elaborating further on the subject, he asserts that what should be emphasized is the development of sensibility, not reasoning. In this sense, the conversations that the tutor Jean-Jacques holds with his pupil throughout the five books of *Émile* can be considered "occlusive" and limited to the essentials, as the author himself emphasizes: "Do not give

[5] Translation by Kírion Publishing House of the work: *De pueris statim ac liberaliter instituendis de ratione studii colloquium abbatis et eruditae*.

[6] Locke states: "Reasoning — It may be surprising that I mentioned reasoning with children, and yet I still believe it is the proper way to deal with them. They develop it as early as language, and I cannot help but observe that they love to be treated as rational creatur This becomes clearer when we observe the various pedagogical scenes through which the tutor guides his pupil. Like a careful gardener tending to his little plant, Jean-Jacques, the tutor, develops throughout the stages of Émile's cognitive process a set of what we might call "dialogued experiences" that enable the transition from "pure sensibility" to "sensitive reason," and from there to "intellectual reason." This movement was termed "pedagogical anthropology" by Costa (2022) in his dissertation, from which we can consider that although these elements are structuring (here borrowing Lévi-Strauss's term from *Structural Anthropology*), they do not always fully develop. As part of *perfectibilité*—which is potential—any anthropogenic element, whether structuring or not, will develop better if accompanied by pedagogical action that guides it toward what Rousseau called the "materialism of the wise."es, sooner than one might imagine" (2017, p. 64).

your student any kind of verbal lesson; he should receive them only from experience" (ibid., p. 78). Thus, since "it is through the sensible effect of signs that children ascertain their meaning" (ibid., p. 58), the clearing occurs when educational dialogues and/or informal conversations lead to practical, empirical, and lived experiences, which Rousseau calls sensible.

This becomes clearer when we observe the various pedagogical scenes through which the tutor guides his pupil. Like a careful gardener[7] tending to his little plant, Jean-Jacques, the tutor, develops throughout the stages of Emile's cognitive process a set of what we might call "dialogued experiences" that enable the transition from "pure sensibility" to "sensitive reason," and from there to "intellectual reason." This movement was termed "pedagogical anthropology" by Costa (2022) in his dissertation, from which we can consider that although these elements are structuring (here borrowing Lévi-Strauss's term from *Structural Anthropology*), they do not always fully develop. As part of *perfectibilité*—which is potential—any anthropogenic element, whether structuring or not, will develop better if accompanied by pedagogical action that guides it toward what Rousseau called the "materialism of the wise."

This is, in fact, the essence of *Émile*, a novel whose plot follows an orphan educated by a tutor throughout his life until marriage, but which, beyond its novelistic character, contains a treatise on education and a philosophical reflection on human formation; it achieved (and continues to achieve) success by emphasizing the importance of sensibility over reason. When Rousseau states in the *Letters Written from the Mountain* that his intention in the novel was to reflect on and propose a new system of education (*O.C.*, Vol. III, p. 783), the innovation lies primarily in the proposal of a plan through which educational activities can fully explore sensory capacity. And although Rousseau speaks disparagingly of "moral lessons," the dialogues between the tutor and Emile enable the development of moral sensibility.

[7] And therein lies its "virtue," as I argue in the article *"Rousseau's Garden and the Virtue of the Gardener,"* available at: https://www.revistas.usp.br/cefp/article/view/83324.

When we turn to 18th-century works, we find that this theme was a recurring subject in dialogues—albeit fictional—present in various texts, some of which were even written in response to Rousseau's pedagogical reflections. That is, earlier works focused primarily on normative character and the need to educate the *gentilhomme*; this is the case with Erasmus and Locke, as well as the well-known rector of the University of Paris, Charles Rollin (1661–1741), whose famous book *Traité des études* introduced some innovations, such as teaching in the vernacular rather than Latin, but which nonetheless upheld the study of rhetoric, philosophy, and the so-called liberal arts to cultivate in young people "good taste," or as the author states in the lengthy *Discours préliminaire* preceding the *Traité*, "la manière de bien penser" (1863, p. 450). Subsequent works, on the other hand, nearly all referred back to *Émile*, either to support or to contest its premises.

Among these works, one of the most notable was the novel *Les Conversations d'Émilie* by Louise d'Épinay,[8] written in 1774 and also published under the title *Conversations entre une mère et sa fille*, which was awarded by the French Academy in 1783. According to the author's statement, the literary effort was not intended to propose a method, but rather its sole objective was to educate her granddaughter[9] through a series of "conversations" that unfold throughout the book between a mother and her daughter, named Emily, concerning her education. During the lengthy dialogues, the mother seeks to awaken the girl's curiosity, encouraging her to explore the universe and to discover a little about various fields of knowledge, such as botany, mythology, history, geography, and the arts, including music; but, obviously, not neglecting the themes of moral education.

This work was organized in two volumes, containing a total of 20 chapters or "conversations," as the author names them. For some, the work

[8] *Louise Florence Pétronille Tardieu d'Esclavelles d'Épinay* (1726-1783), French writer who had a long emotional relationship with Rousseau.
[9] Emilie de Belsunce (1767-1814). Daughter of: Dominique de Belsunce (1726-1767) and Angélique Louise Charlotte de Lalive (1749-1824), Mme. d'Épinay's daughter.

is merely a refined literary production, penned by a nineteenth-century writer closely connected with her Enlightenment intellectual friends and celebrated in literary salons, whose true aim was simply to educate her granddaughter, who was approximately six years old. For others, such as Badinter (2003), the book was written with the purpose of opposing the educational perspective of *Émile* and joining a group of women who positioned themselves against Rousseau, like Wollstonecraft[10] did, attempting to provide a model for female education. Badinter (ibid., p. 366) states that: "Louise pursued a dual objective: to portray the good mother and the image of the female model she dreamed of seeing developed."

However, I believe that Badinter (ibid.) exaggerates when she states that: "Madame d'Épinay presents herself as a rival to Rousseau in the field of pedagogy." Certainly, in *Les Conversations* there are criticisms of some Rousseauian proposals, but I do not think this work can be classified as a systematic opposition or an alternative to the set of pedagogical actions that make up the educational thought found in *Émile*, thus making her a "rival." As Gréard (1889) asserts, first of all, Madame d'Épinay was deeply influenced by Rousseau's doctrine to distance herself from it. Moreover, how could she position herself as a rival if Rousseau himself had read and approved her text? Furthermore, the author made clear in the preface that she did not intend to present a new plan or educational system, but merely to educate her granddaughter and, if necessary, contribute to a possible "filling in" (*remplissage*) of gaps left by a vigilant mother concerning her daughter's education.

In developing the content of this education through the long conversations that comprise its twenty chapters, the author presents a set of moral lessons and basic knowledge learning to which every noble or bourgeois girl had access in the eighteenth century. It can be said that this

[10] Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), English philosopher and advocate for women's rights, author of several books, including *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. In a published article, I argue that although Wollstonecraft's work is significant, her reading of Rousseau was, in some ways, unfair. See at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339917297_A_questao_da_mulher_em_Rousseau_e_as_criticas_de_Mary_Wollstonecraft.

education is not very different from that received by Sophie, Emile's companion. Being "well-born" (Rousseau, 1973, p. 462), her education was not neglected, and she learned well the matters pertaining to her sex, especially virtue, as depicted in Emily's education. However, if there is something that distinguishes them, it is the emphasis on reason that stands out in *Les Conversations*, approaching even the sophisticated education that Julia received from her tutor Saint-Preux. If we consider that in *La Nouvelle Héloïse* the perspective of women's education according to Rousseau is developed—and not in *Émile*, with the character Sophie—Mme. d'Épinay's conceptions can never be positioned in opposition to Rousseau's proposal, but rather as complementary.

Controversies aside, when writing *Les Conversations*, whether as a form of opposition to the figure of Sophie, as Badinter (2003) suggests, or as a complement resulting from Louise d'Épinay's own conversations with Rousseau, as I argue, she practically reproduces the same intimate relationship found between educator and pupil in *Émile*, with due differences. Through this relationship, she stimulates the girl's intellectual development and, consequently, a degree of autonomy, responsibility, and knowledge not markedly different from what occurred with Julia, the Rousseauian character in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, or even with Emile himself.

Although Mme. d'Épinay denied that *Les Conversations* constituted a systematic educational proposal, throughout the text little Emily undergoes a broad process encompassing literary formation, the development of skills and feelings, and even the kind of *éducation coquette* expected of any well-bred woman. This is evident, for example, in the advice given by the censor in the twentieth conversation: "your daughter will embroider like an angel, work like fairies, according to all the chambermaids, whose approval will place the seal of immortality on her reputation" (1781, Vol. 2, p. 455).

At the beginning of the work, in the very First Conversation, a brief passage stands out for its richness of meaning and can be titled the "window episode." The author recounts a quick event in which the mother, while

giving instructions to her daughter during their daily dialogues, has their conversation interrupted by the lively movement of small monkeys playing among the branches of the garden trees. This event creates a tension in the little girl between going to the window to watch the monkeys' activity in the foliage or continuing the embroidery task her mother had assigned her. Nature and culture set the tone for the extensive dialogue through which the little girl learns various things, including that reason is what distinguishes us from animals; it is through reason that we adapt to society and contribute to the common good. All of this is allowed by the mother, after the catechism lesson and with the warning that, after observing the little animals, she must return to her daily tasks. The mother says: "Sit by the window, along with your nurse, my daughter, but when they finish, come back to work!" (d'Épinay, 1781, p. 9).[11]

In the subsequent conversations, various ideas emerge, many of which align closely with Rousseau's understanding. For instance, the notion that the child is an innocent being; that childhood is the best period for learning; that the educational triad of cultivating the body, the heart, and the spirit must be emphasized; among other premises very similar to those found throughout the five books of *Émile*. The mother tells the girl: "Little by little you will grow up, your mind will develop, your knowledge will increase, and in time you will become a person of reason"[12] (d'Épinay, 1781, Tomo 1, p. 27 – free translation). This is quite similar to the passage in which the tutor says: "I will avoid polishing Emile's judgment to the point of altering it; and as soon as he has a sufficiently fine tact to feel and compare the various tastes of men, it is on the simplest objects that I will make him fix his own" (Rousseau, 1973, pp. 397-398). Furthermore, the author of *Conversations* develops dialogues on poverty, solidarity, and compassion, in addition to enabling meaningful conversations between the mother and her

[11] Free translation of: « Mettez-vous à la fenètre avec votre bonne, mon enfant, quand ils seront passés, vous viendrez travailler ».
[12] « Après ? peu-à-peu vous grandirez ; votre esprit se développera ; vos connoissances augmenteront, & vous deviendrez avec le temps une personne raisonnable » (sic).

daughter about the nature of things, which allow the girl to develop her capacity to understand the world.

Moreover, while in Jean-Jacques's dialogues with Emile the tutor's authority is never questioned, Emily's mother repeatedly emphasizes that her daughter must be obedient and respect her commands. And, without abandoning the theme of respect, whereas the tutor makes every effort to clarify the dangers of self-love, Emily learns from an early age the importance of a measure of self-love for the development of self-respect. As Dalbosco (2011) states, based on Neuhouser's (2008) thesis, from the perspective of a social philosophy of human recognition, Rousseau does not dismiss the need to educate self-love, as exemplified by the tutor's careful guidance of Emile's wounded self-love after he was humiliated in front of everyone by a mere magician.[13] Found in the Third Book of *Emile*, this is a "pedagogical scene" in which the tutor gives Emile a practical lesson during a magician's performance at a fair. The magician makes a wax duck float in a basin of water while chasing a small piece of bread. This is followed by a series of events through which the student learns principles of physics, as well as to respect the work of others and to control his self-love. This episode also highlights Rousseau's intention to allow the reader to understand how his maxims can be put into practice to educate man and promote his well-being (Francisco, 2013).

However, all this happens subtly, and not through direct lessons as in *Conversations*. For d'Épinay, still not very different from Rousseau's perspective, modesty, decency, truthfulness, and restraint are virtues to be practiced (like physical exercise until they become habits), in the sense that sensibility must serve the purpose of social life. As the mother says: "And there is no happiness when one does not fulfill one's duties, for in that way

[13] No original: *Jouer de gobelets* (O.C., T. IV, p. 438).

one cannot be satisfied with oneself nor with others."[14] Therefore, duties to oneself and duties to others must be observed to preserve a good reputation, as she adds: "For this is why a good reputation is precious, since you cannot do without the good opinion of others."[15] Although the focus is on the "opinion of others," the passage recalls the lesson Emile learns at the end of the magician's episode.

Another difference between Rousseau and Mme. d'Épinay — and what truly makes him the "Ugly Duckling"[16] in the nest of the Enlightenment thinkers — is the declaration, through the mouth of the tutor Jean-Jacques in Book III of *Émile*, that he hates books, considering them a deceptive art of words; and the assertion in Book II that Emile will not learn anything by rote, neither through countless readings nor even through fables, not even the famous fables of La Fontaine (Rousseau, 1973, p. 104), since, according to him, children do not understand them and therefore they serve neither the development of reason nor of sensibility. By condemning the reading of fables, Rousseau may have been the only one to question their educational value for childhood, at least drawing attention to their problems.

In the *Conversations*, stories and fables are used as didactic tools both for general understanding of things and for moral formation. By memorizing them, the girl exercises her memory, reflects on moral virtues, and thus develops her moral sensibility. For example, in the Eleventh Conversation, the mother tells a fairy tale about a queen who tries to educate her two daughters with the help of magical beings. Celeste, the eldest daughter, is beautiful, while Reinette, the younger one, lacks beauty. The prince chooses the most beautiful, while the other seeks "other advantages" (p. 178), dedicating herself to studies such as drawing, music, and reading. However, the beautiful couple lives in an illusion granted by the fairies, but deep

[14] « Et il n'y a pas de bonheur quand on n'a pas rempli ses devoirs, parce qu'alors on n'est content ni de soi, ni des autres » (d'Epinay, 1781, p. 73).
[15] « Eh vien, voilà pourquoi la bonne réputation est précieuse, c'est qu'on ne peut pas se passer de la bonne opinion des autres » (id. ib., p. 77).
[16] According to my definition (Paiva, 2021).

down happiness escapes them; whereas Reinette, despite not being beautiful, enjoys reason and sensibility that attract the attention of another prince. The story is long and has several twists, but the point is that it enchants little Emily, with whom the mother encourages reflection on the value of family and virtues, teaching her not to trust appearances too much, although it is necessary to consider the opinions of others.

In the second volume, right at the Thirteenth Conversation, Emily says she has a vocation for country life, despite the inconvenience of getting sunburned (being less pale). Then, the fairy tale is discussed with the mother, as well as retold and expanded by the child's imagination, which shows an early knowledge of politics, justice, and logical reasoning. Other strong critiques appear, such as in the Sixteenth Conversation, which criticizes the great bustle of the city and emphasizes the prudence necessary in exercising truth and pursuing virtues; as well as reflections on marriage and the misfortunes of women in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Conversations. Finally, in the Twentieth Conversation, a subtle discussion about autonomy arises when the mother suggests that her daughter might walk alone, practicing peripatetic reflections, and states in the last lines that she might be censured[17] for advocating such an education.

However, instead of censorship, *Les conversations d'Émilie* received a gracious letter from Louis XVI, King of France and Navarre, approving its publication and recommending that it be distributed throughout the kingdom. This reception was very different from that of *Émile*, which was publicly condemned by the Church and the Parliament, and even burned in a public square in Paris. Another clear distinction is that the educational purpose for young Emily is not the development of passive (physical) sensibility, but predominantly active (moral) sensibility, whereas

[17] « Un censeur judicieux me reprocherait sans doute, d'avoir soufert que vous vous occupassiez dans un âge si tendre, soit de la lecture, soit d'ouvrages convenables à notre sexe ; de vous avoir peut-être même désiré ce goût ; de l'avoir du moins remarqué avec complaisance, de peur qu'exercée plus tard, vous ne restassiez mal-adroite & ignorante » (d'Épinay, 1781, p. 455).

throughout the scenes, episodes, adventures, and conversations in the book *Émile, ou de l'Éducation* both are valued and developed in due time, starting with the passive and culminating with the active.

If Rousseau read and approved the *Conversations*, even though the work presented an advancement of reason in the educational process through reflections and certain moral lessons, this may indicate that the Genevan understood that, in practice, especially in his time, some concessions could be made. Both agreed on the necessity of sensitizing the learners, but not at the same time. While Emily's mother tries to teach her that conscience is an inner feeling, a voice that speaks to us and guides us, this idea — whose definition is identical to Rousseau's — is only developed with Emile in the *Fourth Book*, through the voice of the Savoyard Vicar, that is, when the boy was already over fifteen years old.

Conclusion

It can be said, as final considerations, that the work *Les conversations d'Émilie* certainly marks an important stage in the development of eighteenth-century pedagogical thought, not only in France but throughout Europe. Furthermore, it is necessary to recognize that Mme. d'Épinay's name should be counted among the intellectuals who contributed to the education of the eighteenth century. Her name hardly appears in any major reference works, but *Les conversations d'Émilie* brings forth interesting discussions and reflects not only on the education of women but on educational issues as a whole. Moreover, it is a mistake to place her in opposition to Rousseau and to assert that her work systematically contradicts *Émile*, or that she combated Rousseau and tried to refute some of his ideas, as Mary Wollstonecraft did.

As I have sought to discuss in this text, both Mme. d'Épinay's work and Rousseau's explore the relationship between reason and sensibility. While Emily has a tutor who aims to develop both simultaneously, the great

distinction of her counterpart, Emile, is that his tutor advocates a kind of "negative education" that prioritizes the development of sensibility before reason. More than that, Rousseau differentiates passive sensibility, related to bodily senses and which should be developed more intensively until about the age of 12; and active sensibility, related to moral feelings, which develops throughout life from adolescence onwards. Beyond the discussion undertaken by Jane Austen regarding the balance between emotion and rationality, Rousseau's work exalts feeling and deepens the dimensions of sensibility—both passive and active—recasting it in the shaping of reason. As Lenne-Cornuez (2021, p. 185) aptly points out, "far from any intellectualism, man is primarily defined as a sensitive being."[18]

Since Rousseau stands as the "father of contemporary pedagogy" (Cambi, 1999), the "archetype of intellectuals" (Johnson, 2007), and the seminal figure who articulated and shaped the modern concept and sensibility of childhood (Ariès, 1973), I would like to conclude this text echoing the provocative assertion by philosopher Alfred Whitehead (1861–1947) that all Western philosophy is essentially a footnote to Plato's oeuvre.[19] I venture to propose, with equal boldness,[20] that *Les conversations d'Émilie* and the corpus of educational literature succeeding *Émile* may be regarded as footnotes to the work of Rousseau.

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[18] Free translation of: "Loin de tout intellectualisme, l'homme se définit d'abord comme um être sensible".
[19] (Whitehead, 1978, p. 39).
[20] As bold as the author's own statement when he says: "My subject was entirely new after Locke's book, and I greatly fear it will still be so after mine" (Rousseau, 1973, p. 6).

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Received in November, 2024.

Aprovadd in May, 2025.