

# Rousseau Put Forward that Natural Education is the Philosophy of Education in Emil

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## Abstract

The book is an educational novel with narration and discussion. It takes Emil, a rich orphan, as the protagonist, discusses the educational reform of men, criticizes the absurdity and corruption of the old British education, and puts forward the principles and ideals of the new education. And through education of Emil's future wife Sophie, this paper demonstrates the innovation of women's education. The book reflects the naturalistic educational thought and expounds the theory of good nature. His thoughts have inspired and influenced many educators in later generations, and this book systematically puts forward a new concept of children's education for the first time in the history of western education, thus setting off a "Copernican Revolution" in the history of education.

## Keywords

Emil; Education; Rousseau.

## 1. Work content

The book consists of five volumes.

The first four volumes, with Emil as the protagonist, put forward the important natural period of children's growth and the corresponding educational principles, contents and methods.

The first volume focuses on how to carry out physical education for worthy children before the age of two to make children develop naturally.

The second volume focuses on sensory education for children aged 2 ~ 12.

The third volume discusses the intellectual education of teenagers aged 12 ~ 15.

The fourth volume concentrates on moral education for young people aged 15-20.

The fifth volume, taking Sophie as an example, puts forward the model of women's education reform, and discusses the love education of young men and women. In this work, Rousseau describes himself as an ideal teacher and Emil as an ideal student. He describes the whole process of Emil's growth and education from birth to the age of 20, and hears his thought of "natural education".

## 2. Thoughts of Work

### 2.1. Educational

From Emile, it can be seen that Rousseau believes that the purpose of education is to make people become natural persons, that is, what he calls "in accordance with the order of nature", "trust nature", "take nature as the only Bible" and "those who follow conscience follow nature". The nature mentioned here is an absolutely free, equal and kind environment. Only living in this state can human life be encouraged to the highest level. Rousseau believes that the purpose

of children's education is to foster the internal development of their abilities and organs. Education can make their minds move constantly and expand their talents to the greatest extent. This educational viewpoint, which emphasizes the development of human internal nature and takes children as the standard, is at the heart of Rousseau's educational theory. Rousseau's naturalism takes children as the starting point and aims to cultivate children's body, mind and nature, that is, let children live the life they should have.

He believes that a person's childhood is of great value and significance to his life, so we can't bind children with various shackles and hinder the development of their inherent nature. This is Rousseau's fundamental position and an essential principle of his unique educational theory. Take into account this, Rousseau put forward "intuitive education". "Intuitive Education", that is, direct education, makes the intuitive things children are exposed to consistent with the concepts they should learn. Rousseau believed that children's knowledge before the age of 12 was limited to the scope of feeling and had no comprehension; only after the age of 12 can we play rationally.

Rousseau emphasized that children should understand and feel the world of objective things. The purpose of "intuitive education" is to teach children according to specific facts, so that the external knowledge is completely coherent with the children's internal cognitive ability. Rousseau believes that appropriate education methods should be given according to the law of children's physical and mental development, so as not to exceed children's acceptance ability.

## **2.2. Limitations:**

### **2.2.1. Contempt for School Education**

Rousseau believes that the main way to educate children is through the family, and rarely mentions the role of "school" on children. What he unilaterally gives priority to is to let children obtain knowledge from personal activities and despise the systematic education of scientific and cultural knowledge for children. Emil in the book has never been to school. He does not have any father or mother. The educational enlightenment mainly comes from the words and deeds of the teachers around him. The teachers, like his father, take him around to socialize. As we all know, kindergarten is an important place for children to live together and study. Kindergarten education has the same status as family education. In Rousseau's era, there was no kindergarten, and Rousseau's thought had certain limitations of the time.

### **2.2.2. Ignore Children's Feelings**

As the sole character in the book, Rousseau gave Emil life and educational content and methods from beginning to end. Emil had no right to choose. Even the ideal partner in the future was fixed by Rousseau, a teacher. Therefore, from this perspective, Rousseau ignores children's self feelings, which are quite contradictory to his emphasis on child centered view (Wang Shuyun, 2021). As a member of society, although Rousseau dared to challenge feudalism, he was inevitably influenced and shackled by the society at that time.

### **2.2.3. Demanding Stage Education**

Rousseau's idea of phased education according to age characteristics is undoubtedly a major progress in the history of education. It provides valuable enlightenment to the later development of bourgeois pedagogy, especially the development of educational psychology. However, it is very rigid to think that the corresponding education should be conducted in strict accordance with the corresponding age group. In addition, for children before the age of 12, Rousseau believes that intellectual and moral education should not be conducted. The education of pre-school children should be the all-round development of morality, intelligence, physique, beauty and labor. If it is limited to sport, sensory training and living habits, it is obviously divorced from children's actual life. In dealing with children's education, adults should have dynamic educational concepts and flexible response measures, understand

children's "Recent Development Zone", build support for children and help children reach the level of possible progress.

#### **2.2.4. Contempt for Women's Education**

Rousseau believed that the inequality between men and women was due to nature, and regarded women as men's vassals. Women only are to become a good wife and mother without intellectual education. Rousseau lived in Europe in the 18th century. Regardless of the fact that women with fame and status were active in the social circle at that time, most women still existed as accessories to men. In this social context, Rousseau himself rarely talks about women's education in *Emil*, and generally believes that women's education is structured in before and after the age of 10. On the one hand, Rousseau ignored women's independence and autonomy in society; on the other hand, he also emphasized freedom, equality and fraternity, which seemed contrary to each other. In fact, the equality he advocated did not include women (Wang Shuyun, 2021).

##### **Ignoring class limitations**

*Emil* is a book that Rousseau opposed the feudal educational system and expounded his bourgeois educational thought through the education of *Emil*, the didactic object he assumed. Although his educational thought represented the interests and requirements of the bourgeoisie and played a progressive role in anti feudalism at that time, due to his era and his own class limitations, he did not understand the science of class and class struggle, so he did not understand that since mankind was divided into classes, education has always been class and a tool to serve a certain class. For this reason, his natural education theory was later used by many monopoly bourgeois educators, who advocated bourgeois schooling as "super class" and "super politics" to serve imperialism to deceive the working people. Limitations: Rousseau ignored the educational role of the city. Although the countryside is the starting point and matrix of the city, when the rural population and wealth gather to a certain extent, cities and towns dominated by commercial exchange appear; when the scale of towns expands to a certain extent, cities appear. The emergence of villages and cities, in the final analysis, is that the material supply of agricultural production has a relatively abundant source. The relationship between the two is caused and effect. When the countryside can not accommodate people's living space needs, the city will make life better; once the city imprisons people's spiritual world, the countryside has become a habitat for people's yearning for idyllic poetic life. Rousseau's naturalistic view of education praises the advantages of rural education, which is worth advocating, but it is not advisable for him to deviate from the dialectical and unified relationship between countryside and city and unilaterally deny the educational role of the city on human development.

### **3. Summary**

Rousseau opposed the feudal educational system and expounded his bourgeois educational thought through the education of *Emil*, the educational object he assumed.

Rousseau's educational thought starts from his view of innate human nature. He believes that man is born free and equal; in the natural state, everyone enjoys this natural right. It is only after mankind enters the state of civilization that inequality, privilege and slavery between people appear, which makes people lose their individual nature. In order to change this unreasonable situation, he advocates "natural education" in the development process of children in order to cultivate "original people" in the kingdom of reason.

Rousseau's ecological education is to obey the eternal law of nature and allow the free development of people's body and mind. Its means is life and practice. It advocates the use of physical teaching and intuitive teaching methods to enable children to obtain the knowledge they need from the personal experience of life and practice through sensory feelings, which are

closely related to natural education. Rousseau also advocated labor education and education of freedom, equality and fraternity for children, so that they can learn the means to make a living, improve the ability to control their freedom and physical strength as soon as possible, and maintain natural habits.

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