

VIEWS OF FRENCH RENAISSANCE THINKERS ON CHILD UPBRINGING

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the importance of the Renaissance in the upbringing of children by the thinkers who created it in French literature. Parenting is not a topic born in the age of enlightenment. Nevertheless, the philosophical and innovative spirit inherent in this period attracts the attention of many authors. They write their own textbooks, their goal is to raise children adequately, but they are still subject to the will and authority of the family. In addition to the fact that the issue of education is at the center of revolutionary changes, the attention paid to women and the views of thinkers on recognition were discussed.

Keywords: education, college, religious education, pedagogical authorities, education of women

INTRODUCTION

In this article is showed education of children has long given rise to the interventions of a few French writers between the Renaissance (Rabelais and Montaigne in particular) and the Revolution. In the midst of the ferment of the Enlightenment, the formation of the child is transformed into a priority with a view to the renewal of the modern individual. After 1750, and especially at the end of the eighteenth century, many writings appeared focusing exclusively on education or having education as one of the main subjects, such as Rousseau's *Émile* (1762), which depicts one of the masterpieces of educational research. Despite the great reputation enjoyed by *Emile*, Voltaire denigrates Rousseau's educational work because of the ideas presented and the character differences characterizing one rather than the other. Other novelists (such as Diderot and Laclos) and some women (such as Madame d'Épinay and Madame de Genlis) offer the public their own educational proposals. This study considers the delineation of an overall framework explaining the evolution of education during the eighteenth century, as well as its importance in some writers of the century.



RESEARCH MATERIALS AND METHODS

In the eighteenth century, education was still reserved for the wealthy classes and, above all, aimed at the intellectual formation of the male gender within the framework of French society under the Ancien Régime. At the age of ten the children are taken away from the family because of family projects: the children intended for the ecclesiastical career or the public administration are sent to colleges, while those who will devote themselves to a military career are supported by soldiers. Because of the forced separation wanted by the families, the children rarely have the opportunity to know their own brothers and sisters[1,334]. In the same way, relations with parents are often severed. Since the seventeenth century the Jesuits have controlled education in colleges as well as teaching in some universities by imposing their educational model throughout Europe: the best representatives of the Enlightenment (Voltaire) and the Revolution (Desmoulins and Robespierre), moreover, were formed with the Jesuits [2, 245].

The teaching given by the monks involves the study of classical Greek and Roman authors, on the one hand, and the analysis of French authors, on the other. Although he is anticlerical, Voltaire speaks with respect and gratitude of the teachings received at the Parisian college Louis-le-Grand, the most famous of the Jesuit colleges, which offers free in-depth education. Despite his enlightened opinions, Voltaire rejected the literacy of the people, as evidenced by the letter of April 1, 1766 addressed to Mr. Damilaville [3,333]. Provided in the convent or at home, the education given to girls is generally considered inadequate and neglected. While several novelists of the century denounced the insufficiency of religious education, it was Madame de Genlis who spoke out forcefully against conventual education in her Discourse on the suppression of convents of nuns and on the public education of women (1791). Remembering her religious training, she observed that domestic education was sometimes given to girls from the well-to-do classes by governesses, although there were complaints of the ignorance of certain teachers. One of the first writers to propose an educational change was certainly Montesquieu. After highlighting the superiority of the pedagogical model of Antiquity, Montesquieu observes the diversification of modern education as well as a gap between the modern model and the ancient one.

While Voltaire's education is still indebted to a rather traditional pedagogical model, d'Alembert offers a more modern and concrete training [2,245]. Following the condemnation of the methods and programs of the Jesuits, whose colleges would be abolished ten



years later, d'Alembert proposed a very modern reform aimed at the teaching of mathematics and physics, the introduction of foreign languages modern and classical and modern philosophy, as well as the deepening of history and fine arts.

Despite the pedagogical renewal that anticipated the abolition of the Jesuit colleges, D'Alembert did not appear expressly among the pedagogical authorities until 1770. It was rather the publication of Rousseau's *Émile* (1762) that sparked a growing interest in pedagogical issues and influences the next generation to which Bernardin de Saint-Pierre and Chateaubriand belong. In the letter addressed to Christophe de Beaumont in 1763, Rousseau summarizes the difference between the two types of education by explaining that positive education begins before the age of reason, while negative education is opposed much earlier to the birth of vices: "I call positive education that which tends to form the mind before age and to give the child the duties of man. I call negative education that which tends to perfect the organs, instruments of our knowledge, before giving us this knowledge and which prepares for reason by the exercise of the senses" [5,14-15].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Rousseau's pedagogical positions were quick to trigger different reactions among writers. On the one hand, few authors show their disdain like Voltaire who, for example, speaks of the absurdity of the pedagogical principles put into action by Rousseau: "M. Jean-Jacques wants his pupil to be ignorant to the age of fifteen, and that he knows how to plane instead of learning geometry, history, belles-lettres" . In the second half of the eighteenth century several writers turned their attention to the education of women. One of the first is Rousseau who, in Book V of his *Émile*, manifests all his anti-feminism despite the presence in society of women recognized for their intelligence, such as Madame du Châtelet or Madame du Deffand. Unlike the man who can receive an education and work, the woman is condemned to a subordinate position because of her alleged intellectual and physical inferiority. [6, 637].

Like Rousseau, Diderot and Laclos reflect on the type of education traditionally reserved for girls by highlighting the limits of such a pedagogical organization. In this respect, Diderot observes that female training is deceptive because it is centered on the search for worldly pleasures: "The main care is to prevent boredom, to multiply amusements, to extend enjoyments. At this time, women are eagerly sought after, both for the amiable qualities which they inherit from nature, and for those which they

have received from education [7, 56-59]. The education of women by Laclos, written in response to the subject proposed by the Academy of Dijon concerning women's education, testifies to a non-conformist reader of Rousseau as well as a critic of the society of the Ancien Régime. In *Dangerous Liaisons*, Laclos notes the state of enslavement of women through the character of the Marquise de Merteuil who, retracing her life and career in the famous letter 81, recognizes her inferiority linked to her sex. In *Women and Their Education*, Laclos ends up admitting that women could have changed their painful condition through a revolution: have neither the will nor the power to finish them, and how could they want to train women in front of whom they would be forced to blush? Learn that you can only get out of slavery by a great revolution”[8,9-10]. Women's education aroused the attention of several ladies such as Madame d'Épinay and Madame de Genlis. After writing *Lettre à mon fils*, which did not achieve the hoped-for educational results, Madame d'Épinay's reflections end with *Les conversations d'Émilie* (1782) inspired by the author's relationship with her granddaughter. The work, however, is configured through a dialogue between a mother and her daughter who possesses these qualities as faults[9, 58-59].

One of the last eighteenth-century contributions to the education of women came from Madame de Genlis who, best known as the educator of the children of the Duke of Orléans (between 1782 and 1791), always had an inclination for the 'education. In her *Memoirs* she tells how, still very young, she improvised herself as a schoolteacher to teach little boys the catechism, a few verses from the tragedies of *Mademoiselle Barbier* and the principles of music that she had learned by heart. In January 1782 the Duke of Chartres appointed Madame de Genlis governor of the princes her sons[10, 52]. His masterpiece remains *Adèle et Théodore* (1782), a rival work to the *Conversations d'Émilie* for obtaining the Montyon prize for the year 1783. If we consider her pedagogical theories on the training of women, Madame de Genlis proposes a model still influenced by Rousseau by affirming the need to stimulate the natural education of girls through practical experience, contact with nature, the apprehension and the realization of manual and practical activities. The great merit of Madame de Genlis is, however, to detach herself from the philosopher of Geneva when she admits that female education must include knowledge of the arts, music and living languages [11,59].

CONCLUSION

In conclusion the education of children is not a subject born in the Age of Enlightenment. Yet it is the philosophical and



innovative spirit characterizing the eighteenth century that arouses the attention of many authors. They write a kind of educational guides whose purpose is an adequate training of children who, however, still remain subject to the will and authority of the family [12,145-146]. On the eve of the Revolution, there was also a desire for a radical change concerning the education of young girls, traditionally considered misleading (Diderot) or insufficient (Laclos).

This is why new educational models come from certain more or less erudite enlightened women (Madame d'Épinay for example) who imagine an education based on the ancient dialogic model associating philosophy with pedagogy [13, 158]. However, aware of new pedagogical trends, the latter wants the State to be able to take charge of education. Because of her direct experience, Madame de Genlis conceives an educational model oscillating between male tradition and female innovation: on the one hand, the young girl must be submitted sometimes to the father, sometimes to the husband once married and, on the other hand, she must be well educated through multidisciplinary knowledge. The question of education is also at the center of the revolutionary changes if we consider that Condorcet is developing a modern school system that goes beyond the traditional limits of social classes, yet at the foundation of the society of the Ancien Régime.

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