

In the Shadow of *Emile*: Pedagogues, Pediatricians, Physical Education, 1686–1762

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Abstract This article takes as its starting point the commonplace that Rousseau's *Emile* enabled his contemporaries to discover not only childhood but physical education. Focused on what the pedestal erected for Jean-Jacques somewhat overshadows, a brief historiographic overview and a survey of some major writings on education before Rousseau (by the Abbot Fleury, John Locke, Jean-Pierre de Crousaz and Charles Rollin) will show that the ideas defended by the writer were not innovative in the slightest. But also, and this seems far more important, that these ideas took place in a particular context: the mid-eighteenth century dispute between pedagogues and physicians over the body of the child, which resulted as much from the medicalization of pedagogy as from the educationalization of medicine, at a time when the boundaries between disciplines had not yet been defined. In the context of the ascension to power of physicians, reinforced by the first statistics on child mortality, as will be suggested in conclusion, Rousseau's advocacy for corporal education gave the initiative back to the pedagogues.

Keywords Rousseau · *Emile* · Pedagogues · Medicine · Pediatrics · Domestic education · Physical education · Enlightenment

Introduction

There is a commonplace that Rousseau enabled his contemporaries to discover not only childhood but also physical education. The term had a wide meaning at the time: corporal activities contributing to the fulfillment of the goals set by education.¹

¹ I am borrowing this definition from Jacques Ulmann (1997, pp. 182–183). Inspired by John Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), Ulmann shows that, aside from the physical care of newborns, corporal education in the eighteenth century covers all that concerns diet, clothing, and sleep and rest, including the movements and trials that the body is subjected to with the aim of recreating or reinforcing it.

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Whereas it is not the only work by Rousseau in which this theme appears, *Emile* (1762) is said to contain the summary of his innovative opinions. The frontispiece by Charles-Nicolas Cochin the Younger (1774–1783) adorning the book illustrates this: Gathered around the pedestal of Jean-Jacques and surrounded by children in full energetic play are a suckling newborn, another freed of its swaddling, and a third, barely older, being bathed by its mother.

Advocating the suppression of swaddling and, in general, everything hindering the freedom of movement of the newborn child, books I and II of *Emile* recommend the following activities, as soon as a child is old enough to take part in them: swimming, throwing, jumping, climbing or walking along a wall, as well as activities that exercise the five senses, including games, archery, crafts, and drawing. The purposes of corporal education are clearly explained by Rousseau. Beneficial for one's health and superior to all medicine, it encourages the budding adolescent's mental aptitudes. Equally invested with a moral role, specifically for its ability to keep passions at bay, corporal education aims to shape the human being as a whole in the context of a natural education. If the body must be strengthened, it is because nature is harsh and full of dangers but also because of the link between the physical and the moral: If the body is strong, the soul will be, too. This saying is illustrated in book II of *Emile* by an engraving of the goddess Thetis bathing her son in the Styx to make him invincible.

In the following, I would like to cover what the pedestal erected for Jean-Jacques somewhat overshadows. To start, a brief historiographic overview will show that in a diachronic as well as synchronic perspective, the ideas defended by the writer were not innovative in the slightest. I will then formulate the hypothesis that Rousseau's recommendations took place in a particular context: the mid-eighteenth century debate over the body of the child that opposed pedagogues and doctors. This resulted as much from the medicalization of pedagogy as from the educationalization of medicine, at a time when the boundaries between disciplines had not yet been defined. The former can be observed in the treaties on education by the abbot Fleury (1686) and by John Locke (1693), who created a space, as I will demonstrate, for physical exercise in moral education. The latter can be found in the works of Pierre Brouzet, whose concept of "medicinal education" (1753) makes the body and the mind of the child dependent on doctors.

The environment for the reception of the ideas on corporal education circulated by *Emile* was therefore far from neutral, and as I will suggest in my conclusion, Rousseau clearly picks a side. He favors the pedagogues, whose initiative in the face of the conquering attitude of doctors he applauds.

Rousseau's Debt

In 1879, in *Histoire critique des doctrines de l'éducation en France*, Gabriel Compayré noted that Rousseau followed on from Montaigne, who he imitated more often than he quoted. Situating *Emile* amidst the treatises of his time, the historian found that it bore a close resemblance to the work of an obscure literary hack, René de Bonneval, entitled *Réflexions sur le premier âge de l'Homme* (1751) that Compayré describes as a simple "outline" compared to the work of the master. The historian's concern about tarnishing Rousseau's glory made him place *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) by John Locke, a major source of inspiration for Rousseau, in the same category, with a certain degree of chauvinism (Compayré 1879, p. 28):



Picture 1 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile, ou de l'éducation*, in : *Oeuvres*, A Paris : chez Defer de Maisonneuve : de l'imprimerie de Didot le Jeune, 1793–[1800], 18 t. in-4°. Frontispiece of vol. 4. Bibliothèque de Genève, Hf 1286/4



Picture 2 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile, ou de l'éducation*, A La Haye : chez Jean Néaulme, libraire, 1762, 4 t. in-8°. Frontispiece of vol. 1. Bibliothèque de Genève, Rsa 251/1

There is no comparison between Locke's draft and the masterpiece of Rousseau. Locke does not possess the genius's views, the profound concepts of our fellow countryman. He is only sometimes superior to him through his good sense.

This assessment did not stop Compayré from remarking that Locke pre-empted Rousseau in most of his views relating to physical education. And that the English philosopher should be credited with established the guiding principle according to which nature should be given the scope to fashion the body as it thinks best (p. 26):

no tight clothing, life outdoors, in the sun; children brought up like peasants, immune to the heat and the cold, playing bareheaded, barefoot or at the very least with shoes so thin that, when they place their feet in it, water seeps through.

Further research has not contradicted the historian about the influence exerted by Locke on Rousseau. As for the background of contemporary influences from which the writer benefited, it has improved considerably. The credit goes largely to the study that Roger Mercier conducted in the 1960s on the perception of the child in the first half of the eighteenth century (Mercier 1961). Mercier demonstrated that physicians, having become aware of the worrying level of infant mortality revealed by the first statistics in various European countries, had mainly concentrated on young children: an interest reflected in the growing number of publications advocating the return to nature that had largely inspired Rousseau. Breast-feeding, freedom from swaddling and corseting, regular baths, healthy diets, and light clothing, movement and exercises: All these recommendations present in *Emile* had already been made by doctors and naturalists before the middle of the century, and Rousseau brought nothing new to the table.

In his history of physical education, first published in 1965, Jacques Ulmann confirmed this assessment (Ulmann 1997). He considered that Rousseau's originality did not reside, as often alleged, in the connections established between the physical and the mental or the moral, or in the medical usefulness of exercise. At best, Rousseau had taken over Locke's empiricism, where reason was a combination of sensations, by making the body take part in the development of intelligence itself (p. 209). More recently, Gilbert Py reached a similar conclusion by taking an interest in the "educational fortune" of Rousseau. He notes the writer's main objective of developing a moral conscience (Py 1997, p. 318). For Rousseau, educating the body has the purpose of maturing the spirit, of "generating intellectual and moral qualities that would otherwise remain dormant, in a state of virtuality or as 'good dispositions', if education did not undertake with such vigilance and vigor to develop those vital forces while preventing their perversion by society" (p. 322). As for Rousseau's opinion of the body, it is strongly dependent on the medical concepts of the time. According to Py, it fits the views of the vitalist doctors, opposing the theses of the followers of iatromechanism. The study devoted almost simultaneously by Marcel Grandière to the educational ideal in the eighteenth century makes *Emile*, far from an avant-garde text, the most "awaited" work by a literary elite, prepared for the reading by the ongoing development of a new understanding of mankind—thanks to Condillac, Buffon, Bonnet and their contemporaries—of which it is an active witness (Grandière 1998).

Rousseau's enormous debt regarding corporal education was therefore made obvious by works spread over nearly a century. There is altogether nothing surprising about it. Why expect a bestseller to be ahead of its time? What is surprising is Rousseau's silence concerning the physicians of his era, when he praises the pedagogues that preceded him.

Corporal Education Under the Influence of Pedagogues: From Fleury to Rollin

In relation to corporal education, Rousseau pays a collective tribute to four philosophers and clergymen that I will call pedagogues for the sake of convenience. He writes in book II (Rousseau 2010, p. 265):

The wise Locke, the good Rollin, the learned Fleury, the pedant Crousaz—so different among themselves in everything else—all agree on this single point that there should be much exercise for children’s bodies. It is the most judicious of their precepts, it is the one which is and always will be the most neglected.

Written between 1680 and 1720, the treaties on education by the authors mentioned here demonstrate the advantage initially held by pedagogues over doctors, as we shall see.

Seven years before Locke, the abbot Fleury² stated in a subtitle of a section of his treaty of studies “That it is important to take care of the body.” (Fleury 1686) The clergyman bemoaned that “gymnastics,” honored in Antiquity, was not in use any more and emphasized that the soul would not function well if the body was unfit. The disinterest of his contemporaries for corporal exercises was, according to him, related to a form of class prejudice. With sharp irony, Fleury evokes the “privilege” of rich people to spend all day listening to their own words and basking in “sluggishness.” According to Fleury, they are the ones who “raise their children in the worst possible way” (p. 164):

They cover them up to the tips of their fingers, they do not let them exercise out of fear that they might hurt themselves or get worked up, they regularly purge them during certain seasons, and they persuade them so effectively that they have a feeble and delicate complexion, that the poor children believe it for the rest of their lives, and attempt to distinguish themselves from the common folk through this as well as through their possessions and condition.

In a similar perspective, Fleury criticizes the only educational institutions where bodily exercises were practiced at the time: military academies. He declares them incapable of training gentlemen to adopt sober diets and to develop stamina, when hunger, cold, and fatigue “are far more common in war than dancing and the latest subtleties of fencing in an arena” (p. 161). Advocating the supremacy of nature over custom, he emphasizes that children are not fortified by eating in large quantities “as the vulgar believe” but by “working and exercising while eating and resting proportionately” (pp. 157–158). By recommending dietary sobriety for what he calls “early childhood,” the abbot deems it necessary to specify that he does not call his health advice “medicine,” this being “a long and difficult art that occupies men their whole lives and that has the purpose of curing illnesses rather than preventing them.”

Having taken these precautions regarding doctors, Fleury still set down solid notions of hygiene, which he considered essential to everyone—as opposed to “studying,” reserved for the elite—at the heart of his educational system. He did even more, by recommending movements “most suited to everybody,” such as “extensive walking, standing for long amounts of time, lifting loads, pulling on ropes, running, jumping, swimming, horse riding, training with weapons, playing the palm game and so on.” By specifying that these

² The abbot Claude Fleury was governor for the princes of Conti, for the duke of Vermandois (Louis XIV’s natural son), then under-tutor for the duke of Burgundy at Fénelon’s request. Author of an *Ecclesiastical History* in twenty volumes, many times reissued, he saw his catechism excluded under pretense of Jansenism. See Hoarau (2005).

movements have to be done “according to the ages, conditions and future professions of those concerned,” Fleury limits, as do most pedagogues and tutors, the blurring between social hierarchies that would result from an undifferentiated use of exercises for the body.

Some Thoughts Concerning Education by John Locke (1693) begins with a chapter entirely dedicated to physical education, under the aegis of Juvenal’s motto, *mens sana in corpore sano* (Locke 1992). The philosopher believes this education, as a guarantee of health, to be tied to hygiene habits that must be adopted, as they prepare the body to lead a hard life without any danger, a premise for self-knowledge and “self-government.” Like Montaigne in his *Essays*, and with the idea subsequently taken up by Rousseau, Locke gives the example, to illustrate this statement for the gentry, of farmers and peasants who do not behave delicately. Without giving physical education supremacy over intellectual and moral education, the philosopher integrates it into his educational plan. He covers many details about bathing, swimming, clothing, food, walking, air, sleep, constipation, to conclude with “medicine,” by firmly recommending against the medication of children. This is what makes it original and also contributes, in my opinion, to the explanation of the success of his work.

Because he was both a physician and a tutor, Locke combined ideas found in medical treatises about the “conservation of children” with others related to “moral education,” the field of pedagogues. Whereas Fleury presented justification for giving advice on hygiene, Locke boasts about it: He states that if he starts with a chapter on physical education, it is because, aside from spending as little time as possible on a subject that he says can be so quickly summarized, people expect him to be most knowledgeable about it due to his studies (in medicine). It is interesting to note that it is precisely this element that led the French public to place so much trust in him. If translator Pierre Coste’s (1721) preface to the French edition of *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* is to be believed, it was the philosopher’s recommendations relating to body care in early childhood that sparked the most reactions. Locke’s piece of advice that “upset” readers the most, according to the translator, was the one about washing children’s feet in cold water every single day, regardless of the season. Coste tries to add new arguments, as has become common since the end of the seventeenth century, by citing travelers’ stories, in this case the example of the inhabitants of Peru.

The double nature of Locke’s treatise is confirmed by the social aspect of corporal education, a common idea for pedagogues: If on one hand it aims to preserve health, as claimed by treatises on hygiene, on the other hand physical exercises help prepare for the lifestyle of a gentleman, according to treatises on studies and civility. In a separate part to the first, the intellectual training of the young man being educated is completed by dancing, music, arms, and riding, as well as learning a mechanical trade. Locke specifies in his conclusion that a prince, a nobleman, and a gentleman of ordinary birth must each receive slightly different educations.

Traité de l’éducation des enfans (Crousaz 1722) by the third pedagogue mentioned by Rousseau, Swiss philosopher and ex-tutor to the court of Hesse-Cassel Jean-Pierre Crousaz, is influenced both by Locke, whom it references several times, and by the new medical ideas on the importance of movement. Crousaz considers the idea to be generally accepted that “the author of Nature” has given children the “instinct” that it is necessary for the human body “to move about a lot while growing.” Whereas he does not include the existence of muscles in his reasoning, the pedagogue mentions the “circulation of sap in the veins.” He recommends dance as a “moderate kind of exercise that agitates every part of the body” (p. 436).

The purposes of corporal education are linked, according to Crousaz, to a recurring preoccupation in the educational treatises for future gentlemen: to kindle a taste for studying. Therefore—riding, beneficial because they make the body stronger and more flexible and known for appealing to children in particular—will tire them enough that “their activeness no longer prevents them from sitting, reading, writing and listening” (p. 443). Walking is recommended not only for exercise but also for the opportunities it provides regarding study of the climate, the stars, fauna, etc. Crousaz considers that physical education should start around the age of seven or eight and, like Fleury, criticizes military academies, but for a different reason: He blames them for enforcing corporal education without helping to develop the mind. In general, Crousaz is concerned with removing violence from exercise practiced by the nobility, as well as with dispelling the idea that they stand in competition with studying. He therefore considers refusing the handling of weapons by children who are deemed aggressive and strongly condemns hunting.³ But the physical education that he advocates remains inseparable from nobiliary status. As for dance, a form of exercise not limited to the nobility, the pedagogue insists on the fact that it should be practiced with “art and method” and without “licence and getting carried away” as peasants do (pp. 437, 443).

Charles Rollin, the last pedagogue mentioned by Rousseau and an ex-principal of the University of Paris (Cf. Vandermarcq 2006), is one of the few French authors from the first half of the century to tailor his advocacy for physical education to the context of public education. Like Crousaz, Rollin had read Locke’s work and seems to have been sometimes directly inspired by it, insisting on the pleasant aspect that studying should have, or on the ability of children to think from a very young age. In his *La manière d’enseigner et d’étudier les belles lettres par rapport à l’esprit et au coeur* (Rollin 1732), better known as *Traité des études*, reprinted seven times between 1728 and 1789, the pedagogue recommends in a subtitle to article XL that “rest and recreation be granted to children.” Arguing that “the care of their health takes precedence over science,” Rollin addresses parents by stating that forcing children to study too early on and for too long would weaken their organs, as these are still tender at their age and incapable of sustaining big efforts. Bad for the body, overwork is also dangerous “for the soul, which gets exhausted and worn down by continuous use and which, just like the earth, needs regular alternating between work and rest to maintain its strength and vigour.” The corporal exercises lauded by Rollin as best befitting the interests and ages of children are games like playing with a ball or shuttlecock, as well as walking and running; anything that was likely to keep the body moving. As with Crousaz, Rollin offers a lot of advice representing the influence of the medical discourse. That Rollin’s warning against the intellectual training of the defenders of classic pedagogy had no theoretical aspect to it is confirmed when we read treatises by the likes of La Condamine (1751), according to whom schoolboys spent 6 or 7 years doing 9 hours of study every day, with five in the classroom and four in their own room.

The four authors mentioned by Rousseau are revelatory of the early stages of an evolution confirmed by many other examples, such as that of Henri-Claude Picardet, prior of Neuilly, near Dijon, whose *Essai sur l’éducation des petits enfants* (1756) advises mothers to breastfeed their children and protests against the use of swaddling (quoted in Grandière 1998, p. 132), or even Diderot, who intends to introduce dancing into schools (quoted in Laty 1996, p. 177): To begin with, physical education is a field taken over by innovative

³ Crousaz goes as far as stating that a father is working towards the ruin of his son by taking him hunting, an exercise that, should it bring him praise, would only make him an “honorable butcher” (Crousaz 1722, pp. 444 and 466).

pedagogues, whom Locke provided with a model. They treat it with importance, by integrating it into moral and intellectual education. They open their field to early childhood and take up many ideas from physicians, including the budding concept of childcare. Another evolution takes shape on top of this, brought forth by Georges Vigarello's works on the history of the body (Vigarello 2005): A conquering bourgeoisie, followed in effect by a part of the nobility, was making the natural and robust body into its new emblem, denouncing rigid and affected demeanor, as well as the physical "weakness" on display at Court. In the middle of the eighteenth century, a good physical constitution was becoming an essential cultural element linked to the interest of a new generation in the possible improvement of the human race.

From Hygiene to "Medicinal Education": Conquering Doctors

The physicians who, right from the start of the century, begin to advocate in their work the benefits of physical exercise, such as Friedrich Hoffmann, Francis Fuller, or George Cheyne, do not yet pay much attention to the child. It is the first statistics on child mortality, more precise from the 1740s onwards, that draw attention to early childhood. The statistics reveal that in France and elsewhere in Europe, mortality rates reach 45 % during the first 3 years of life. In Paris, the average life expectancy at the time is estimated at 23 years and 6 months (Mercier 1961). Anglo-Saxon physician, such as William Cadogan (1750), are the first to use their experience in hospitals and institutions for foundlings to issue printed recommendations for fighting infant mortality. In light of the limited efficiency of the struggle against internal causes of death and the absence of appropriate treatments for children (who were bled, purged, and given emetics just like adults), they concentrate on hygiene, diet, and clothing, placing a large responsibility on the parents regarding the survival and health of their children. In France, Nicolas Andry du Boisgirard, dean of the Faculty of Medicine in Paris and creator of anatomy applied to movement, works to increase the awareness of parents concerning their moral responsibility for their children's bodies through his book, *L'orthopédie ou l'art de prévenir et corriger dans les enfans les difformités du corps* (1741).

The medical profession then experiences the promotion of a new medical ethic, finely analyzed by Laurence Brockliss (Brockliss and Jones 1997). Whereas as late as the 1730s, a doctor such as Jean Astruc, professor in Montpellier and then at the Royal College of Paris, advocated obstetrics as a help to midwives rather than a substitute for them, a new generation of practitioners thinks that it is a doctor's job to deal with giving birth. They will soon come to consider that raising children was a "serious business that could no longer be left to parents, nurses and tutors" (p. 467). Due to preoccupations concerning the growth of the population combined with the optimism of the Enlightenment, physicians were encouraged to broaden their medical horizons to embrace the nation as a whole. The aim to "preserve the health of children" in the name of the good of the state or society started to become established. The above-mentioned abbot Fleury's assessment that medicine had the aim of healing illnesses rather than preventing them therefore became null and void. Not only did doctors in favor of maternal breastfeeding start a campaign against wet-nurses, but their mission for the preservation of children, as demonstrated by Roger Mercier, grew to include a battle against the "degeneration" of the human race, through a discourse heavy with eugenics. *Essai sur les manières de perfectionner l'espèce humaine* by Charles Augustin Vandermonde (1756) is a good example of this (Mercier 1961; Carol 1995; Vila 1998; Winston 2005).

One of the first treaties entirely dedicated to the child in this perspective, in France, is owed to Dr. Brouzet of the King's Hospitals. Symptomatically, there is no mention of health or the conservation of children in the title of his work, *Education médicinale*, published in 1754. This is how Brouzet defines medicinal education in his preface (pp. I–II):

The education of children, considered from the widest possible angle, comprises a larger number of elements than is usually implied by the word Education, commonly understood to comprise only one aspect: moral education. However, raising a child in the general meaning that can be found in the word education means not only to enlighten its spirit and prepare its heart for God, for society and for itself (which is the authentic & unique objective of moral education), but also to provide for its generation, to watch over its birth, to prevent the vices of its organs & of its tempers, to establish the order or the constant succession of its duties; in other words, to make a child into an adult or a man; that is the aim of the Education that we shall call Medicinal.

It is, as we can see, a redefinition of education as such that Brouzet is suggesting. By introducing a strong distinction between “moral education” on the one hand and a new “medicinal education” on the other hand, he gives the second a wide range that impinges a great deal on the first. In the rest of the text, this emerging pediatrics goes on to partly annex studies, after a somewhat lengthy reasoning (p. XVI):

The afflictions of the soul of children & their moral causes, just as the precepts, rewards, punishments & studies, have an *aspect* by which they belong to *Medicinal Education*: the former are innate to it as effects of animal functions, & the latter as a diet or as remedies.

Less surprisingly, Brouzet also annexes the field of hygiene, including the issue of the “usefulness and medicinal necessity of clothing.” He clearly asserts the professionalization of the field of child health. Whereas his predecessors, pedagogues but also physicians, intended to increase the awareness of teachers, empiricists, and parents about questions of sanitation, Brouzet intends, in the name of social usefulness, “to undermine the dangerous self-importance of parents, the false idea of their capabilities in this respect and of those of the ordinary Directors of child health” (p. XXXIV). He launches a bitter attack on individuals and on men of the cloth in particular who give away general health advice⁴: We cannot help but think of the abbot Fleury, who stated in his *Traité des études* that he was happy, precisely, to give away certain teachings that were “simple and easy to maintain and conserve health.” To lend weight to his claim to professionalization, Brouzet gives the list of the knowledge now necessary “to wisely regulate the medicinal use of the passions, the studies, the entertainments of children [...] and the diet pertaining to the afflictions of the soul” (p. XXIV). With anatomy and chemistry, it includes what a doctor only learns in university. Brouzet's conquest stretches to the links between the physical and the moral, thus adopting the objective of the educators. Because medicinal education makes one take into consideration the possible successes of the “convenience to train the body & soul of

⁴ Brouzet wished “that Doctors would start practicing the *Medicinal Education* of children and that the law would repress in their favor or even better, in the favor of society, the abuses that are born in this regard of the harmful but unfortunately condoned usurpation of Ministers, Doctors or Empiricists” (Brouzet 1754, pp. XXI–XXII).

children almost as we see fit when this convenience is skillfully handled,” doctors can also improve the mind. The eugenics inherent to such concepts is obvious.

That Brouzet’s suggestion to extend the traditional definition of education was taken seriously can be seen in the article that Diderot and Alembert’s *Encyclopédie* (1751–1780) devotes to education in 1755. Its author, grammarian and philosopher César Chesneau du Marsais, defines education in the following terms:

Education

It is the care taken to educate, feed, raise & instruct children. Thus education has the following aims, 1° health & the good physical structure of the body; 2° matters concerning the uprightness and the instruction of the spirit; 3° lifestyle, meaning the leading of life & social qualities.

The medicalization of this definition of education is even more obvious if we compare it to the one in Furetière’s late seventeenth-century dictionary that confined education to the responsibilities of raising, feeding, and instructing the child.⁵ That Brouzet’s *Education médicinale* played a part in the wording of the definition in the *Encyclopédie* is clearly indicated by Du Marsais, who goes into detail about the first element of its definition, related to health and to good physical structure: “Mr Brouzet, official doctor of the King, has just given us a useful book on the medicinal education of children,” by adding: “There is no one who does not acknowledge the importance of this article.” This medicalization of pedagogy will be strongly accentuated 20 years later in the *Encyclopédie d’Yverdon* (1770–1776), which defines education as “the care we take to feed, preserve and instruct children.” The twenty or so pages it devotes exclusively to “physical education”—with references to Locke and to Dr. Jacques Ballexserd from Geneva, author of *L’Education physique des enfants* (1762)—almost constitute a complete treatise on childcare.

In the context of the ascension to power of physicians from the middle of the eighteenth century onwards, reinforced by a cry for help from Louis XV in 1760 to fight child mortality, the advocacy for corporal education in *Emile* seems to me to give the initiative back to the pedagogues.

Whereas he mentions four renowned pedagogues, Rousseau does not name a single doctor of his time. This is despite the fact that he feeds off their ideas, and that by informing his readers on child mortality, by denouncing the use of wet-nurses and swaddling, and also by placing the “pathogenic” city in opposition with the healthy countryside,⁶ he embraces the presuppositions of the medical profession of his time. Even on a topic as widely discussed in their publications as the suppression of the swaddling cloth, which was even the subject of a doctorate thesis (Macquart 1760), the writer prefers to cite Buffon, who was a naturalist—a man of science with an assuredly good reputation but not, as if Rousseau was attempting to avoid them, a doctor.

⁵ “Education: The care taken to raise and feed children. A father must provide for the expenses of the education of his children, even if they are natural born. It is said more ordinarily of the care taken to cultivate the spirit, either for science or for good conduct. The main obligation we have towards our parents is good education” (Furetière 1690). Richelet’s dictionary gives the following definition: “Education. Manner in which a child is raised and instructed (To give a good education to one’s children. To have no education.)” (Richelet 1680).

⁶ Cf. Cadogan (1750, p. 7): “In the lower class of Mankind, especially in the Country, Disease and Mortality are not so frequent, either among the Adult, or the Children. Health and Posterity are the Portion of the Poor, I mean the laborious: The Want of Superfluity confines them more within the Limits of Nature.” Concerning this issue, see Morel (1977).

Not only does the writer literally “expel” the medical profession from the debate on physical education in *Emile*, but when he does mention doctors, it is not in flattering terms. Not content to state that “Emile will never see a doctor,” which could be seen as repeating an idea from the works on medical vulgarization—distance from doctors being the best sign of health—Rousseau drops quips about both the ethics and the skills of doctors.⁷ His criticisms earned him strong reactions from those he attacked.⁸

That Rousseau was irritated by the power taken by physicians can be seen for example in a comment to the knight de Lorenzy, to whom he wrote that he had categorically refused, at first, to read Brouzet’s work because he found the title “éducation médicinale” so “stupid.”⁹ It can also be seen in this handwritten note for *Emile* that disappeared from the published version (Rousseau 1980, p. 1306):

The league of women and doctors has always seemed to me one of the most pleasant singularities of Paris. It is through women that doctors acquire their reputation, and it is through doctors that women exert their will. We can easily infer from this what kind of skill is needed for a Parisian doctor to become famous.

Rousseau directly targets the public under medical influence. Not the middle or lower classes more inclined to turn to healers and empirical healers, but the nobility and high bourgeoisie: the elite that devotes itself, thanks to new scientific discoveries like the discovery of the nerves—by Jallabert in 1724—to the “cult of the fibre” (Vigarello 2004) and to moderate movement and women in particular, who are made responsible for the first few years when the survival of children is at stake. It is for these circles that Rousseau’s recommendations are intended: for the mothers and fathers whose society lives and businesses he deplores, because they prevent them from looking after their children. It is for them that Rousseau maintains, against all odds, that infant mortality is higher in rich families and that he pits the almighty power of domestic education against this threat, as well the educator. This is because the educator who is ubiquitous in the Rousseauian plan. He permanently creates the situations where Emile’s body can exercise, even if he sometimes resorts to very standard strategies, such as reward, to obtain what it wants.¹⁰

It is these parent-educators of high society who first recognized Jean-Jacques as the father of a corporal education that they integrated into their ways, and who erected a monument in his honor. “Everyone adopted Rousseau’s physical education system,” Germaine Necker summarized in 1788 (quoted by Py 1997, pp. 133–134). A system taking liberties with social conventions that had up until then limited the suggestions of the

⁷ Rousseau declares in particular that he has no intention of enlarging on the “vanity of medicine,” that it is necessary to balance “the advantage of a cure effected by the doctor against the death of a hundred sick persons killed by him,” that medicine is a “fashion among us,” “a lying art, made more for the ills of the mind than for those of the body,” that if it is “useful to some men” it is “fatal to humankind,” and finally “Let me be given, then, a pupil who does not need all those people, or I shall refuse him. I do not want others to ruin my work” (Rousseau 2010, pp. 180–181).

⁸ See the letter by Pierre-Jean du Monchaux, King’s doctor in the military hospital of Douai, from 8 June 1762: “There is only one thing I don’t like in your book. You despise doctors, you appear to hate them.” Dr François Thierry wrote in a similar vein to Albrecht von Haller, on 13 July 1762: “A bit of friendship and respect that I believe I still deserve from him should have stopped him from insulting doctors as he does, or at least encouraged him to make some exceptions” (Leigh 1970a, b/XII, pp. 28–29). A refutation of Rousseau’s criticism of doctors was published in numbers 49 and 50 of the *Gazette de médecine* (June 1762).

⁹ Letter from Rousseau to the knight Orlando de Lorenzy from 3 November 1760 (Leigh 1969/VII, p. 282).

¹⁰ For example, by offering a biscuit to Emile’s friend who was willing to run, when Emile was being lazy (Rousseau 1980, pp. 393–395).

pedagogues who taught gentlemen, wrenching Emile away from dance lessons and nobiliary exercises to make him throw stones and climb trees. How many of his contemporaries, following the example of the Russian nobleman Alexandre Golowkin (Bonnet 1905), who lived in Paris and published a pedagogical treatise there, took his recommendations and plunged their children in baths of cold water upon awakening?

Considering the importance of the medical knowledge that Rousseau vulgarizes for educators—*Emile* even covers the structuring of medical treatises by ages of life—it is necessary to note what the writer did not take from the work of doctors. For example, their preoccupation about cleanliness, considered to be essential for the survival of children, and largely neglected even in wealthy families, where newborns were often left in their own excrements for hours on end. Or also their thoughts on movement as a means of healing (Quin 2010). They have no place in the book, as Rousseau deliberately chose to make Emile a healthy student, not wanting his tutor to become a nurse.¹¹ There is therefore no mention of childhood illnesses either, whereas those are given priority in the “Childhood” article in the *Encyclopédie* by Diderot and Alembert (Teyssie 1982). Finally, Rousseau does not take up the idea of physical education for girls. For Sophie, as we learn about Emile’s marriage, it will be limited to dancing and singing, contributing to the preparation of her role as fiancée and wife who knows how to please. Yet the discovery of muscles encouraged doctors to advocate physical exercises for girls. That women in the higher ranks of society were particularly deprived in this respect was denounced by Jean-Charles Desessartz, who pointed out the “differences between our ladies and the women of Antiquity and villagers”—the ladies being afflicted, through lack of movement, with a delicate health (Desessartz 1760, p. 352). If with the subject of corporal education, Rousseau was well and truly *within* his time, he was not, unlike others, *ahead* of his time. It is true that he was neither a doctor nor an pedagogue but rather a writer, crowned with the recent success of *The New Héloïse*. Perhaps this is what caused his success?

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¹¹ “I would not take on a sickly and ill-constituted child, were he to live until eighty. I want no pupil always useless to himself and others, involved uniquely with preserving himself, whose body does damage to the education of his soul.” (Rousseau 2010, p. 180).

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