

Gardening and sensitive reason: towards a romantic aesthetics in Rousseau's educational thought

Jardinagem e razão sensitiva: por uma estética romântica no pensamento pedagógico de Rousseau

Jardinería y razón sensible: hacia una estética romántica en el pensamiento educativo de Rousseau

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ABSTRACT

This article's main idea is that there is an aesthetics of nature in Rousseau's thought. Thus, the cultivation of gardens is directly related to human formation, or to the education of sensitivity, as well as to the development of a sensitive reason. The metaphors of the "garden," "gardening" and the "gardener" that appear in the book *Emile or on the Education*, are reverberated by the cultivation of the *Elysium*, an English-style garden, which appears in the novel *Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse*, which can be taken as an example of virtuous action in favor of both nature and man, since it is by virtue of his creation that the development of sensitivity can be possible, better saying, of sensible and sensitive reason. The aesthetic perspective appears in the description of the *Élysée*, aided by the descriptions of nature, and has to do with a deep concern about the inner nature, the search for a psychological *Elysium* in which the soul finds shelter, comfort and satisfaction.

Keywords: Rousseau. Education. Gardening. Aesthetics. Sensibility.

RESUMO

O artigo parte da ideia de que há no pensamento de Rousseau uma estética da natureza, principalmente no que diz respeito à jardinagem, voltada para a formação da sensibilidade e o desenvolvimento de uma razão sensitiva. As metáforas do "jardim," da "jardinagem" e do "jardineiro" que aparecem no livro *Emílio ou da Educação*, são reverberadas pelo cultivo do *Eliseu*, um jardim inglês, o qual aparece no romance *Júlia ou a Nova Heloisa*, de Rousseau, o qual pode ser tomado como um exemplo de ação virtuosa em favor tanto da natureza quanto do homem, pois é pela virtude de sua criação que foi possível o desenvolvimento da sensibilidade, melhor dizendo, da razão sensível ou sensitiva. Mas também a perspectiva estética que aparece na descrição do *Eliseu*, auxiliada pelas descrições da natureza, empreendidas por Rousseau em outras obras, tem a ver com uma preocupação profunda acerca da natureza interior, da busca de um Eliseu psicológico no qual a alma encontre abrigo, conforto e satisfação.

Palavras-chave: Rousseau. Educação. Jardim. Estética. Sensibilidade.

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RESUMEN

El artículo parte de la idea de que existe en Rousseau una estética de la naturaleza, principalmente en lo que se refiere a la jardinería, centrada en la formación de la sensibilidad y el desarrollo de una razón sensible. Las metáforas del “jardín,” la “jardinería” y el “jardinero” que aparecen en el libro *Emilio o de la Educación*, son reverberadas por el cultivo del *Eliseo*, jardín inglés, que aparece en la novela *Julia o la Nueva Heloísa*, que puede tomarse como ejemplo de acción virtuosa a favor tanto de la naturaleza como del hombre, ya que es en virtud de su creación que fue posible el desarrollo de la sensibilidad, mejor dicho, de la razón sensible o sensitiva. También la perspectiva estética que aparece en la descripción del Eliseo, ayudada por las descripciones de la naturaleza, emprendidas por Rousseau en otras obras, tiene que ver con una profunda preocupación por la naturaleza interior, la búsqueda de un Eliseo psicológico en el que el alma encuentra refugio.

Palabras-clave: Rousseau. Educación. Jardín. Estética. Sensibilidad.

Whether right or wrong, Rousseau is repeatedly cited as one of the forerunners of the Romantic Movement, both in its historical and psychological dimensions.¹ Among his multiple works (*oeuvres complètes*), there are texts that contributed to shaping this literary style, most notably the epistolary novel *Julie, or the New Heloise*,² as well as other writings imbued with a lyrical, intimate, and sentimental quality, such as *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, *Confessions*, and numerous short pieces of poetry, music, and theater. These works opened a new perspective on the fusion between humanity and nature, which elevated not only Rousseau’s own sensibility but also that of the Western world as a whole,³ to the extent that Isaiah Berlin (2013) claimed that, after Rousseau, all great writers might be considered Romantic. In the words of Jean-Louis Lecercle (1969), in *Rousseau et l’art du roman*, it was Rousseau who transformed the novel from a despised genre into a respected and celebrated one. Within this context, although Françoise de Graffigny’s⁴ (1993) epistolary novel *Lettres d’une Péruvienne* had already enjoyed success fourteen years prior to the first publication of *The New Heloise*, Rousseau’s pioneering role and the significance of the Genevan writer cannot be denied.

According to Carpeaux (2019, p. 1,365), Romanticism was an “ideological literature that consciously positioned itself outside social reality — either by escaping from it or by confronting it.”⁵ Babbitt (1924) characterizes the “romantic” as one who rejects technique in favor of artistic spontaneity, turns away from obscure reality toward the pursuit of idealized visions, and renounces luxury and progress in favor of pastoral values and the exuberance of nature. These traits were

1 Here, we adopt Benedito Nunes’ (in Guinsburg, 1978) categorization of Romanticism, distinguishing its historical dimension, which pertains to the dated literary and artistic movement, from its psychological dimension, which concerns the subject’s inner feeling and action.

2 According to Moretto (1994, p. 19): The *New Heloise* is, therefore, the novel of Rousseau’s thought that his other works would go on to theorize, but it is also a novel of his sensibility and lyricism. A dense book that fully engages both the thinker and the artist, it serves as the starting point for a body of work that would provide a new orientation to literature, philosophy, education, and the social sciences over the past two centuries.

3 Also according to Moretto (1994, p. 16), no one before Rousseau had achieved the fusion between man and nature to the point of making it the very content of consciousness. What impressed his contemporaries and paved the way for Romantic literature were the connections linking the landscape and the characters’ states of mind.

4 Françoise d’Issembourg du Buisson d’Happoncourt (1695–1758): French novelist and playwright who hosted a salon in Paris.

5 Carpeaux (2019, p. 1,366) offers the following precise definition: “Romanticism is a literary movement which, drawing upon the historicist, mystical, sentimental, and revolutionary elements of pre-Romanticism, reacted against the Revolution and the classicism revived by it. It sought to defend itself against the rationalist objectivism of the bourgeoisie by proclaiming emotional subjectivism as the sole source of inspiration.”

anticipated by Rousseau in his early writings. He was not only among the first to employ the adjective *romantic*⁶ in his works, but also provided later generations with more than a vocabulary — offering an entire imaginative framework (Delon, 2014). As Façanha (2012, p. 54) rightly observes, “without Rousseau’s influence, it would indeed be very difficult to account for the transformation of pre-Romantic tendencies into the full-fledged Romanticism of the nineteenth century.”

However, beyond the aesthetic movement or literary school that later developed, what emerges from Rousseau’s writings is a new worldview and a new state of mind that challenge Enlightenment reason, taste, and aesthetics. The vision shared by the members of the *République des Lettres*⁷ — that is, the *philosophes*, much of the nobility, and many among the bourgeoisie — held that scientific and artistic development, under the auspices of reason, had contributed to the civilizing process. Art, in this view, possessed a socio-pedagogical function: the elevation of the spirit, the refinement of taste, and the moral improvement of society as a whole. This perspective was later accepted even by some Romantic writers, such as Schiller,⁸ who makes clear in his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* that the appreciation of beauty and the moral cultivation of a people result from an educational process through art. Such a conception elevates the artist to the status of educator, endowing him with a privilege and authority that, however, find no equivalent in Rousseau’s thought. On the contrary, Rousseau’s aesthetics is also negative in nature, and aesthetic impulses must be sought, first and foremost, in nature itself.

In this new worldview, the impulses produced by the retina are energized by nature’s “*tout est bien*.” Thus, original goodness (*bonté naturelle*) becomes a categorical principle, and Rousseau rejects both the classical view based on negation and opposition to the natural state and the mechanistic, materialist outlook promoted by modern science. Primitive conditions appear as a model of equilibrium, in which the highest degree of harmony is achieved at a point diametrically opposed to even the slightest trace of human artifice. In other words, Rousseau’s perspective stands in direct contrast to the Aristotelian conception of natural sociability — defended by thinkers such as Locke and Pufendorf in the seventeenth century and by Baron d’Holbach⁹ in the eighteenth. In his work *Système de la nature*, Baron d’Holbach (2010, p. 85) states that man “finds himself in nature and constitutes a part of it,” yet differs from other animals by his moral and political constitution. The distinction between the classical and modern thinkers, on the one hand, and Rousseau, on the other, lies in the fact that, for none of the former, does nature emerge

6 Rousseau introduces the term in the *Fifth Walk* of the *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, where he writes: “The shores of Lake Biel are wilder and more romantic than those of Lake Geneva, for there the rocks and woods press more closely upon the water; yet they are no less delightful” (Rousseau, 1959–1995, p. 1040, emphasis added). He also employs the term in a passage from his letter to the Maréchal de Luxembourg, in which he observes that “all solitaries have a romantic spirit” (Rousseau, 1959–1995, p. 256 *apud* Lecercle, 1969, p. 37, my translation).

7 The term *Republic of Letters* — or *respublica litterarum* — was coined in the fifteenth century and remained in use until the nineteenth. It referred to an imagined community composed of intellectuals from various countries who gathered in salons and disseminated their works through engaged periodicals. Their collective efforts culminated in the publication of the *Encyclopédie*, organized by Diderot. Yet, according to Goodman (1994, p. 4), Voltaire was its most prominent figure: “Voltaire, a zealous defender of French culture and the foremost citizen of the Enlightenment’s Republic of Letters, contributed more than anyone else to this self-representation of national identity.” Goodman (1994, p. 12) also cites the philosopher Pierre Bayle (1647–1706), who wrote: “*C’est la liberté, qui règne dans la République de Lettres. Cette République est un état extrêmement libre. On n’y reconnaît que l’empire de la vérité et de la raison.*”

8 Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller (1759–1805): German poet and philosopher, considered a precursor of German Romanticism. In his work *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (Schiller, 2015), first published in 1794, he expresses disillusionment with the French Revolution and advocates for the moral and human restoration achievable through art. In Brazil, the foremost promoter of his work was the poet Gonçalves Dias, who was influenced by Schiller’s perspective, as exemplified in his play *Patkull*, written in 1843.

9 Paul-Henri Thiry, Baron d’Holbach (1723–1789) was a Franco-German encyclopedist and philosopher who played a prominent role in the Enlightenment movement. Here, I refer specifically to his work *Système de la nature*, whose Portuguese edition, published by Martins Fontes, bears the title *Sistema da Natureza ou das leis do mundo físico e do mundo moral* (Holbach, 2010).

as a possibility for the reconfiguration of the human, as it does throughout Rousseau's aesthetics. His thought encompasses a physics of the beautiful, evident in his writings on landscapes; a metaphysics of the beautiful, articulated in the *Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar*; and a critique of the beautiful, present in his work on music, theater, and the arts in general. It also involves a profound pursuit of moral beauty, capable of redirecting human action after the long process of deterioration wrought by the arts and sciences themselves.

This somewhat Orphic¹⁰ gaze upon nature — as a garden of delights or a place of pleasure, evoking the idea of lost happiness, found among the Arcadians and throughout much of Romantic production — is present not only in Rousseau but also in many classical authors. In *The Decameron* (Boccaccio, 1976, p. 276), for example, at the very beginning of the Second Day, when the characters take refuge in a rural castle to escape the plague, they encounter a garden. The author remarks: "The sight of this garden, the harmony of its design, the trees, the fountain, and the streams that flowed from it so enchanted the ladies and the three young men that they all declared that, if a paradise existed on earth, they could not imagine any form for it other than that of this garden." A commentary almost identical in spirit appears in *Julie, or the New Heloise*, when, taking refuge in the rural community of Clarens, the characters delight in an idyllic¹¹ garden called *Elysée*, preserved as a paradise.

However, to understand Rousseau's garden as part of a natural aesthetics, it is necessary to consider, as Larrère and Larrère (1997) argue, that the true philosophical debate about nature lies in the distinction between *natura naturans* — nature as process — and *natura naturata* — nature as artifact. According to the authors, while the moderns allow *natura naturata* to obscure *natura naturans*, in Rousseau the opposite occurs. This is not to say that he is opposed to human artifice or to virtuous intervention in nature; rather, the "virtue of the gardener,"¹² in Rousseau's perspective, lies in concealing the *natura naturata* beneath the exuberance of *natura naturans*. Rousseau not only defended this view but also lived it, as throughout his life he sought proximity to rural landscapes and blooming spaces that continually enchanted him. For instance, at the age of seventeen, when he returned from Turin and settled once more in Annecy, what pleased him most was the window of his room, from which he could see the garden, the orchard, and the surrounding vegetation. The paradisiacal moments he experienced in contact with nature — in Annecy, at *Les Charmettes*, in *Chambéry*, or later at the refuge of *l'Ermitage*¹³ in the Montmorency forest — unleashed in Rousseau a torrent of feeling and poetic imagination capable of producing, as it indeed did, genuine masterpieces. The most striking example of this is the novel *Julie, or the New Heloise*.

Published in 1761, this novel became what would now be called a bestseller,¹⁴ widely read across Europe and released in multiple editions in both French and English. By exploring sensibility and nature in the service of an ethics of authenticity, the work presents itself as both a philosophical and pedagogical novel, finely crafted in an epistolary narrative. The original title, intended to be *The Letters of Two Lovers Living in a Village at the Foot of the Alps*, was set aside in favor of a reference

10 According to Martin (2013; 2016), Rousseau rejects a Promethean view of nature—that of man as master and possessor of the natural world — and advocates instead for a more Orphic perspective, grounded in empathy and respect for nature. Yet, as the author notes (Martin, 2013, p. 92), there exists a "Promethean coloration even within the Orphic discourse" when, paradoxically, the garden of Elise remains an instance of human and rational intervention upon the natural order. In *Julie*, a fragment of nature is thereby recreated.

11 As Martin (2013, p. 95) concludes in his article: "*Julie* is perhaps the exemplary figure: halfway between violence and gentleness, rejecting a purely contemplative Orphism and exploring schemes of action that are not reducible to demiurgic Prometheanism, indicating the possibility of a harmonious seduction of nature, while offering in the background the dreamlike image of a complete metamorphosis of nature and culture simultaneously."

12 Here, the expression employed by Paiva (2009) is adopted.

13 In 1756, he moved there with Thérèse Levasseur and her mother. Their refuge was a chalet lent to them by Mme. d'Épinay.

14 As Cranston (1991b, p. 263) observes, "*Julie* was devoured by readers both in Geneva and in Paris."

to the drama experienced by Peter Abelard and his disciple Héloïse in the thirteenth century.¹⁵ Rousseau's "Abelard" is the commoner *Saint-Preux*, who falls in love with his pupil, the aristocratic Julie d'Étange, and is reciprocated. However, since the young woman's hand had been promised by her father, *Baron d'Étange*, to Mr. de Wolmar, the marriage eventually took place. Even after accepting this union, Julie continues to love her former tutor. After some time, the understanding husband seeks to "cure" this passion and invites *Saint-Preux* to reside on his estate — the small community of Clarens — to act as tutor to his children. *Saint-Preux* accepts, and despite his charming presence, Julie resists temptation and remains faithful to her husband. In the end, she suffers a fatal accident, contracts pneumonia, and dies.

In the *Preface* to the novel, although Rousseau asserts that it is purely fictional and motivated by the customs of his time, the work reflects aspects of his own experience — not only in the depiction of gardens but also in the ardent passion he felt for Sophie d'Houdetot, the sister-in-law of his hostess, *Mme. d'Épinay*. Although the woman was married, she delighted in spending her days walking hand in hand with Rousseau at *l'Hermitage* and exchanging love letters with him. Consequently, in the community of Clarens, the backdrop is, on the one hand, the platonic love between the two characters and, on the other, the idyllic landscape. Clarens is located around Lake Léman, surrounded by beautiful plains and hills at the foot of the Alps, where the characters live in a kind of *Golden Age* (Shklar, 1985, p. 63) in which happiness can be enjoyed.

Thus, what emerges from these descriptions of space and experience is the aesthetic value of rural elements — such as mountains, lakes, gardens, and the simple way of life of the peasant population. This is an aesthetics¹⁶ of simplicity, which Rousseau had already begun to delineate in his youth and had categorically expressed during the so-called Quarrel of the Buffoons, concerning French and Italian opera. It is worth noting that Rousseau spent a period in Venice and was well acquainted with the Italian style. Although he was not the initiator of the quarrel, he did not remain on the sidelines and became an ardent advocate for Italian opera. In this context, French music¹⁷ was, for the ears, what the Gardens of Versailles were for the eyes: both evoked the splendor and glory of wealth, power, and the majesty of men and kings. Both are Cartesian and, according to Rousseau, an obstacle to the enjoyment of natural feelings, given their formality and refinement. In contrast, Italian music was sonorous, vocally expressive, and well accentuated; it was simple and drew on everyday themes, without luxury or ostentation. By the same comparison, Italian opera was to the heart what Julie's garden, the *Elysée*, was to the soul.

As recounted in one of *Saint-Preux's* own letters, the *Elysée*¹⁸ is a hidden and mysterious garden, idealized and created by the character Julie within the community of Clarens, in which *natura naturans* is manifest, its apparent originality concealing its condition as *natura naturata*. Invited to explore it, *Saint-Preux* accompanies the host couple and, upon entering the space, is overwhelmed and enraptured by such beauty. He reports that scarcely had he stepped into

15 There is even a reference to Héloïse of the thirteenth century, when Claire, Julie's cousin, tells her: "You were a lover like Héloïse; now you are devoted like her—may God grant that it may be with greater success!" (Rousseau, 2006, p. 433). Cf. Abelard and Héloïse (1875).

16 The term *aesthetics* comes from the Greek *aisthesis* and is linked to the idea of sensation, understood as an absolute unity between the sensible and the good, as discussed in Plato's *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* (1991; 2002). However, the inventor of the term is Baumgarten (1993), who sought to grant it a philosophical status as a new domain of knowledge—a field of reflection on beauty, sensibility, and art in general. According to Saisselin (1965), however, modern aesthetic theory is a product of the eighteenth century.

17 According to Cranston (1991a, p. 277), "French opera was not merely national, but traditional, authoritarian, and academic. Its intellectual complexity is closely linked to the rational and mathematical order elaborated by Descartes' philosophy."

18 (Rousseau, 2006, p. 409). The name *Elysée* (*Elysium*) refers to the Greek myth of the Elysian Fields (*Ἠλύσιον πεδῖον*, transl.: *Élysion pédion*), a paradise, the opposite of Hades, where virtuous men repose in a green, flowered, and welcoming space. Julie's *Elysée* is a hidden space, akin to *The Secret Garden*, published in 1911 by the English writer Frances Hodgson Burnett (1849–1924).

this place when he was struck by a sensation of freshness, feeling “enraptured,” “impressed,” and “enchanted,” as if “fallen from the clouds”¹⁹ by all that he beheld. It is a green, flowered environment arranged in such a natural manner that its creator remarks: “You see nothing aligned, nothing leveled; the string has never entered this place, nature never plants anything according to a string...” (Rousseau, 2006, p. 416). She concludes that, for this reason, birds and small animals were able to come and make their homes there. In other words, Julie’s good taste produced a work of art that imitates nature in a peculiar way: artifice does not violate nature — that is, its natural dispositions — but, on the contrary, seeks to reproduce them. Indeed, when the *Elysée* is described as a garden resulting from artifice, as an example of *natura naturata*, what occurs in this plot is neither a faithful imitation of nature nor a complete restoration of its natural features, given the impossibility of such a task. Rather, it is the creation of a new situation in which the traces of the human hand are paradoxically concealed by the virtuous actions of Julie, its creator. As Larrère and Larrère (1997, p. 101) note, “it is the art of the natural that realizes Julie’s garden,” through an action here designated as *natura facti* — a complete spatial reorganization that nonetheless respects the course of nature itself.

Disregarding this, *Saint-Preux* formulates a critique of the absence of artifice, stating: “This place is charming, it is true, but wild and forsaken; *I see no human labor in it*” (Rousseau, 2006, p. 410, emphasis added).²⁰ Intensifying his tone, he adds: “You closed the door, the water came I know not how; nature alone did the rest, and you yourself would never have known how to act so well as she” (Rousseau, 2006, p. 410). In response, Julie argues that the invisibility of human traces does not imply their absence or passivity. She states: “It is true [...] that nature did everything, *but under my direction*, and there is nothing here that I have not arranged” (Rousseau, 2006, p. 410, emphasis added). Not satisfied, the visitor questions the existence of a birdcage and fishponds. Julie explains that the birds’ “cage” was in fact the crowns of the dense trees, and that the ponds were intended for fish that had “escaped from the pot” (Rousseau, 2006, p. 415). Thus, the visitor has no choice but to confess: “I see that you wish for guests, not prisoners” (Rousseau, 2006, p. 414), to which she replies: “It is we who are their guests” (Rousseau, 2006). Finally, probably dissatisfied with the dialogue, Mr. de Wolmar, the austere husband, intervenes, saying: “You, who are not ignorant of it, learn to respect the places in which you find yourselves; they were planted by the hands of virtue” (Rousseau, 2006, p. 421).

Thus, *virtue* becomes the key concept for understanding the specificity of this garden in the sense of *natura facti*, for *Saint-Preux* soon discovers that the waters of the grove, for instance, are carefully distributed to achieve rational and economical use. The birds, like other small animals, are provided with food and shelter while still enjoying freedom. This is made possible by Julie’s patient determination: she orders the planting of wheat, sunflowers, and other seeds favored by the birds, while also providing them with water and space for their delight. This result corresponds to what Lecercle (1969, p. 99) calls “a passion tempered by wisdom” in this extraordinary figure, who manages her garden with remarkable prudence. Mr. de Wolmar is also an extraordinary figure,²¹

19 “Ce lieu, quoique tout proche de la maison est tellement caché par l’allée couverte qui l’en sépare qu’on ne l’aperçoit de nulle part. L’épais feuillage qui l’environne ne permet point à l’oeil d’y pénétrer, et il est toujours soigneusement fermé à la clé. A peine fus-je au dedans que la porte étant masquée par des aulnes et des coudriers qui ne laissent que deux étroits passages sur les côtés, je ne vis plus en me retournant par où j’étois entré, et n’apercevant point de porte, je me trouvai là comme tombé des nues.” (Rousseau, 1959–1995, p. 471).

20 “En entrant dans ce prétendu verger, je fus frappé d’une agréable sensation de fraîcheur que d’obscures ombrages, une verdure animée et vive, des fleurs éparses de tous côtés, un gazouillement d’eau courante et le chant de mille oiseaux portèrent à mon imagination du moins autant qu’à mes sens, mais en même temps je crus voir le lieu le plus sauvage, le plus solitaire de la nature, et il me semblait être le premier mortel qui jamais eut pénétré dans ce désert. [...] je n’y vois point de travail humain” (Rousseau, 1959–1995, p. 471–472).

21 According to Waksman (2016).

as someone who rarely appears yet rules over everything in the community of Clarens — a man unbound by social constraints, such as those of class, and who “stands above the pettiness of intellectuals” (Shklar, 1985, p. 81).

From this perspective, the garden conveys the message that not everything is lost and that, with great skill and patience, it is possible to imitate nature — reproducing it,²² even if only in a limited way — and to abstract from it what is best: spontaneity, harmony, and perfection. For those who might still interpret such art as a violent act, Martin (2013, p. 92) argues that throughout the entire visit Julie's effort was to “prove that this violence is not violence, and that in no case is it against nature.” As Larrère and Larrère (1997, p. 16) put it: “if man is within nature, he is part of it, and his action is not necessarily disruptive; on the contrary, nature may even benefit from it.” Moreover, this effort affirms the principles of an art of the natural, in which artifice is accomplished with a view to a nature humanized through reproductive imitation — one that goes beyond *mimesis* and attains the meaning of *poiesis*.

In this case, virtue lies in the art of erasing the traces of one's own labor,²³ so that the exuberance of artifice provokes a rapture and sublimation²⁴ akin to that experienced by the sculptor Pygmalion before his work, Galatea — the statue that came to life — as well as by the tutor Jean-Jacques before his creation, *Emile*, the well-educated child. In this way, the trilogy garden/statue/child forms a three-dimensional aesthetic parallel that becomes moral insofar as it brings the beautiful and the good into proximity through the fusion of culture and nature. John Dixon Hunt (1996), in *L'art du jardin et son histoire*, explains that there are three kinds of nature: the first is raw and wild nature; the second is modified and anthropomorphized nature, such as pastures, inhabited mountains, and landscapes in general; and the third is the flowering, harmonious, and beautiful space that is called a garden.²⁵ Paraphrasing the author, marble, the child, and vegetation belong to the first nature, which is transformed into a second nature by human artifice. Yet only through the effort of a sensitive reason — that is, rational thought developed in conjunction with practice and derived from sensory experience — can it be transformed into a third nature. This latter is the one that “opens space for aesthetic emotion” and constitutes “the place where the mysteries of the world are revealed to the spirit” (Lefebvre, 1997, p. 56).

The most important characteristic of the third nature is, therefore, the disguise of human action, evidenced both in the landscape design of the *Elysée* and in the educational formation of *Emile*. Another feature apparent in these works is the aesthetic fusion of the beautiful and the good, which finds its highest expression in the metaphor of gardening. At the opening of *Emile*, the tutor addresses the “provident mother,” stating: “Cultivate and water the young plant before it dies; its fruits will one day be your delights” (Rousseau, 1979, p. 38). This language is later reaffirmed in the terminology used by nineteenth-century pedagogues, with the term *kindergarten*, coined by Friedrich Fröbel,²⁶ and in the broader pedagogical movement that emphasized childhood and its specificities in the learning process, viewing the child as a “masterpiece” of nature. This recalls the phrase that the sculptor of Galatea addresses to his works: “And you, young objects, *masterpieces of nature* that my art dared to imitate” (*apud* Paiva, 2020, p. 228, emphasis added).

22 As Lefebvre (1997, p. 32) states, “good taste is the imitation of nature, more precisely, of beautiful nature.”

23 “Everything is verdant, fresh, and vigorous, and the gardener's hand is nowhere to be seen: nothing contradicts the idea of a deserted island that came to my mind upon entering, and I perceive no human footsteps” (Rousseau, 2006, p. 416).

24 Bloom (1993) states that Rousseau was the founder of sublimation, although he never used the term.

25 Hunt (1996, p. 33) states: “The etymology of the word ‘garden,’ as well as other words with the same meaning in Indo-European languages, expresses the idea that a garden is an autonomous space and, therefore, distinct from other forms of cultural and natural spaces.”

26 Friedrich Wilhelm August Fröbel (1782–1852) was a German educator who founded the first kindergarten in 1837 in Blankenburg, Germany (Fröbel, 1903).

Although, since antiquity, humans have engaged with the idea of nature in contrast to art (Ehrard, 1994), the concept of the “third nature” breaks with this logic and reinforces Rousseau’s perspective. Moreover, although gardens and gardening have historically occupied a contentious position within the arts — since there is no established theory affirming that a garden can be considered a work of art — Rousseau’s aesthetics contributes to making this possibility plausible. Throughout his work, what can be discerned as “first nature” and “second nature” are natural spaces or, at least, landscapes with minimal intervention of human artifice. However, the “third nature,” whether in the orchards of *Mme. de Warens*, in the *Elysée*, or in gardens created under Rousseau’s influence, such as the Gardens of Mongenan and Girardin,²⁷ demonstrates that meticulous human labor serves nothing other than art. As Lefebvre (1997, p. 71) asserts, “Rousseau’s aesthetics is less a sublime exaltation than a quest for an order capable of making chaos forgotten. Beauty is controlled and constructed.”

However, it should be emphasized that the great virtue of Julie, in the realm of literature, and of Rousseau’s admirers who created their gardens, in the realm of reality, lies in the model chosen for their work of art: the English garden rather than the French garden. Following the history of gardening, which is ancient and dates back to the famous Egyptian and Babylonian gardens, two tendencies have developed over time. On the one hand, there is a more methodical form of landscaping, which designs a linear arrangement of plants and emphasizes the use of fountains, vases, statues, and carefully carved stones. The aim is to display the architecture and the geometric ingenuity of flowerbeds and their constructions, generally arranged in perspective. Its strength lies in topiary — that is, the art of pruning plants into ornamental and symmetrical shapes. Examples of this approach include the gardens of Versailles, Chenonceaux, Chantilly, Villedary, and Vaux-le-Vicomte, among others in Italy and even in Brazil,²⁸ which highlight fountains, terraces, balustrades, labyrinths, staircases, and other architectural and sculptural elements in order to correct nature and adapt it to axial design and classical perspective.

The ultimate reference is the ensemble of gardens at the Palace of Versailles, designed by the landscaper *Le Nôtre*²⁹ and built during the reign of Louis XIV in the seventeenth century.³⁰ The Sun King’s gardens embody the geometric, Cartesian spirit, refined by the scientific mastery inherited from the Renaissance: linearity becomes essential, and the sciences — particularly mathematics, physics, and astronomy — speak through the muses. In contrast to the medieval world’s inaccessibility — whose gardens were confined to the inner courtyards of monasteries — the Gardens of Versailles stand open, created to publicly celebrate artifice and science, even if “built for the king,” as Starobinski (1987, p. 14) notes. Likewise, in opposition to the medieval notion that beauty should be subordinated to divine sublimity — that is, to God as *artifex* — the French formal garden exemplifies the complete mastery of art over nature, subjecting it to the rigor of geometric design to express the pinnacle of artificiality. Here, the garden emerges as a monumental work of art — the product of human intelligence and creativity shaping and transforming nature. For this

27 Garden located at the Château de Mongenan, in Portets, in the Gironde department, built in 1736 by the architect Le Herissey for Baron Antoine de Gascq (1712–1781), president of the Parliament of Guyenne, who had Rousseau as his music and botany teacher around 1741. The other was built in Ermenonville, around 1762, by René Louis de Girardin, Marquis of Vauvray, considered Rousseau’s last disciple. Girardin himself states: “C’est là que Rousseau, fatigué de sa promenade, se reposa vers le milieu d’un beau jour d’été. La solitude des forêts, le murmure mélodieux des eaux, le calme enchanteur qui règne dans les bois le prolongèrent dans une douce mélancolie” (Girardin, 1992, p. 139).

28 Such as the garden of the Palácio do Campo das Princesas, in Pernambuco, built in 1841, and those designed by the engineer and botanist Auguste François Marie Glaziou (1828–1906), including the Passeio Público in Rio, the Quinta da Boa Vista, and the garden of the Palácio Imperial, among others.

29 *André Le Nôtre* (1613–1700) was the most renowned architect and landscaper of the French Baroque. He was the creator of the gardens of the Palace of Versailles, among others.

30 According to Bayer (1978, p. 133), “the artists of the seventeenth century understood nature as humanized and civilized nature, such as the park of Versailles.”

reason, the French writer Stendhal,³¹ in *The Red and the Black*, when describing a small provincial town in France at the beginning of his novel, remarks: "Do not expect in any way to find in France these picturesque gardens that surround the manufacturing towns of Germany, Leipzig, Frankfurt, Nuremberg, etc." (Stendhal, 2003, p. 10).

The "picturesque gardens" to which the author refers constitute the other style, namely, the English garden. Born of Anglo-Saxon aesthetics, the English landscape stands in opposition to Cartesian schematism, as its spatial organization is based on plant diversity and the informal arrangement of elements — without linearity, perspective, or the imposition of geometric conformity. The aesthetics of the English garden, which seeks to imitate nature itself, originally followed, in part, the example of Chinese and Japanese gardens, giving rise to a new style of landscaping concerned with emphasizing natural beauty and originality. A major example is the Botanic Garden of Oxford, one of the oldest, as well as the broader landscape work of the English designer William Kent,³² considered the creator of this style. His seminal work is the garden of Stowe Palace, in the English countryside, which evokes the idea of the "Elysian Fields" of Greek mythology and even the biblical Eden.

Landscape gardening presents a vegetal panorama free from the influence of the "cord" — that is, the measuring line — as Julie observed in reference to *Elysée* garden. It combines wild plants and diverse flowers with winding paths and unpruned trees, free as in the natural landscapes of forests, meadows, lakes, streams, or mountains. This form of landscape gardening reflects the English people's appreciation of nature and their sensual and sentimental relationship with the landscape — one that not even the landowner can fully grasp, but only the poet.³³ It also serves as an invitation to aimless strolling and uncommitted reverie, much as Rousseau enjoyed in Ermenonville, in the garden of his friend, the Marquis de Girardin. This space aligns with the style of natural gardens, whose distinguishing feature lies in their unspoiled appearance, arranged according to the harmony of nature itself, where asymmetry and irregularity prevail. English aesthetics are not related to the French desire to display luxury and power, but rather to the desire to create a space of enjoyment for the common man. For this reason, Lecercle (1969, p. 79) states: "The *Elysée* is not only Julie's personal Eden; it is a critique of French-style gardens, where the vain taste of the wealthy is expressed."

Underlying this development, from the sixteenth century onward, another perspective on landscape also gained ground throughout Europe, appearing both in the *Encyclopédie* and in the works of various eighteenth-century authors. Specifically, this perspective concerns landscape as a pictorial element, whose aesthetic analysis is based on picturesque representation, in which value lies in the artistic and representational expression of the landscape rather than in the landscape itself. From this viewpoint, the aesthetic exercise is not in the act of observing the landscape and apprehending reality through the senses, but in the art of translating it into pictorial language — of representing it. As a critique of this perspective, Corbin (2001) argues that, according to Rousseau's approach, the landscape cannot be seen as a spectacle, as something to be painted and admired from afar through its pictorial representation. Instead, it must be experienced and interpreted through direct sensory engagement. This is where Rousseau's originality lies: for him, the term "landscape" refers to the very idea of nature as lived experience, just as he sought to experience it throughout his life.

This originality does not lapse into radicalism, for example, through the complete denial of human labor or representational art. If *natura facti* is understood as imitative reproduction, artifice

31 Pseudonym of Henri-Marie Beyle (1783–1842), considered one of the greatest French writers of the nineteenth century.

32 William Kent (1685–1748) was an English architect, painter, designer, and landscaper, considered one of the creators of the English garden.

33 Emerson (2011, p. 16) states: "There is a quality in the horizon of which no man is master; it belongs only to the one whose vision can integrate all its parts, that is to say, the poet."

does not merely imitate or represent but creates — in the form of *poiesis* — by making use of natural elements. As with the statue of Galatea, the human sentiment involved — whether in the garden, in education, in art, or in human relationships — can give life to the object, allowing nature and culture to merge without diminishing either. After all, love of the beautiful, in moral terms, is a feeling as natural as self-love, as Rousseau remarks in the *Letter to d'Alembert* (Rousseau, 1959–1995, p. 22).³⁴ Thus, by rejecting the Aristotelian concept of catharsis, Rousseau's "poetics" employs a purgative phenomenon that, instead of eliminating evil, seeks to use it well by regulating its measure. At no point is the object of his critique the works of art themselves, but rather their effect (Baker, 2018). Since poison can be considered a remedy, as previously noted, representation — whether literary or pictorial — can serve as motivation for the pursuit of reality, but never as its substitute. From this perspective, Rousseau's aesthetics — revealed through the style of his writing, the majesty of his musical and theatrical production, and the originality of his discourse on beauty — dazzles the audience (Lefebvre, 1997) and invites them to experience the real. Who, upon reading the description of Julie's garden, would not long to enter it, to smell the fragrance of the plants and hear the melodious song of the birds? Or feel the desire to lie in the shade of an oak by a river while reading the passages in which the writer describes the state of nature in the *Second Discourse*? Or stroll with him through the beautiful landscapes depicted in the *Reveries of a Solitary Walker*? Or follow the sweet singing, the resonant voice of the peasant girl Collette, in the opera *The Village Soothsayer*, and with her seek her lost beloved?

Indeed, if Rousseau condemned the false values of sophisticated culture in the *First Discourse*, it is in this opera that he presents the aesthetic and moral qualities of popular — and thus less sophisticated — culture (Cranston, 1991a). In this sense, the English garden, Italian opera, and even the education of *Emile* share the same status: that of closeness to nature, the purity of the human heart, and the preeminence of natural feelings. Moreover, although Rousseau dismissed the visual arts as lifeless and frivolous, he nevertheless ensured that *Emile* was published with a refined frontispiece and four other elaborately designed plates. His novel *Julie* was also enriched with twelve engravings that guide the reader toward a deeper understanding of its message. The therapeutic aspect, discussed previously, is evident here in two ways: first, in the fact that nature itself appears as the backdrop in all these illustrations; and second, in that they function merely as references that point toward the real, which is nature.

However, it is undoubtedly in the *Reveries of a Solitary Walker* that nature appears in its most sentimental, intimate, and poetic form. In this unfinished text, Rousseau feels like a shepherd, a guardian of a natural garden, where he spends the principal moments of his days botanizing. A reading of the text makes it clear that, during these moments, feelings flood his soul, and he merges with nature itself, fostering inner calm and a peaceful state of mind. In this sense, in *The Metaphysics of the Beautiful*, Schopenhauer (2003, p. 93) writes: "This is why nature, through its aesthetic beauty, has such a beneficial effect on the mind." If inner feeling³⁵ can change the character of a figure or simulacrum, then nature itself — as vegetation and environment — can also influence human behavior, either passively, as in Rousseau's perspective, or from the standpoint of a "will" inherent in nature, as Schopenhauer (2013) argues in *On the Will of Nature*. Rousseau does not speak of "will," but in the *Reveries* he acknowledges an "inclination of nature" (Rousseau, 2017, p. 75) that brings benefits to the human soul. He states (Rousseau, 2017, p. 111): "I believe it to be a natural consequence of the power of sensations over my inner feelings."

34 "L'amour du beau est un sentiment aussi naturel au cœur humain que l'amour de soi-même".

35 Which Rousseau also calls nature: "La nature, c'est-à-dire, le sentiment intérieur..." (Letter to Vernes, 18 February 1758, CC. V, p. 32 *apud* Audi, 2008, p. 261)—that is, nature as absolute interiority.

Thus, his meditations, interwoven with reveries,³⁶ reveal not misanthropy or an antisocial disposition,³⁷ as many have interpreted, but rather a special relationship with nature that positions it as the true garden of sensibility. This results, according to Hatzenberger (2015), in a synesthetic experience aimed at establishing a meaningful connection that evokes pure feelings in the heart. In Rousseau's case, botany was a contemplative activity: the pursuit of the genuine beauty of plants as well as the harmony of their constitution. Had Rousseau been familiar with fractal theory,³⁸ he would likely have gone further, relating this botanical contemplation to his metaphysical reflections on the cosmos, in a manner similar to that of the Savoyard Vicar, who guided *Emile* to contemplate a hill, revealing in that moment the sublime — that is, the magnificence of the natural landscape — unfolding before his eyes.³⁹

Hence the importance of these reflections, for, as Larrère (2012) aptly points out, modernity has disenchanted nature, emptied it of meaning, and turned it into a “vague term.” In this sense, Rousseau's discourse serves as a remedy against this disenchantment, since his legacy concerning forests, fields, and gardens has the potential to assist contemporary thought related to the environment and the protection of nature. It is not an exaggeration to consider him one of the precursors of ecology, given that concerns now associated with the environment were already present in his restless mind. For example, when commenting on the influence of climates on civilization in the *Fragments politiques* (Rousseau, 1959–1995, p. 530), Rousseau states that “man clings to everything that surrounds him,” meaning that he depends on his environment and cares for the space around him, aware that his actions modify, for better or worse, the place where he lives. This perspective can be considered ahead of its time, since, as Larrère and Larrère (1997) emphasize, deliberate concern for the environment emerged only after the nineteenth century. However, since humanity left nature, abandoning the symbiotic harmony in which it once lived and gradually began to mutilate plants and animals, what is to be done now? A return to the state of nature is neither possible nor desirable. What remains is a change in human mentality and action, though not in the sense of an ultra-Romantic, ecosystemic stance that defends a virgin and wild nature devoid of human presence — which would be dehumanizing. Despite apocalyptic hysteria, claims announcing the end of nature and advocating anti-humanist naturalism constitute a dangerous thesis and do not belong to Rousseau's perspective. His legacy lies in a middle ground between sacralizing and utilitarian visions.

This legacy also involves a profound concern with inner nature: the pursuit of a psychological *Elysée* in which the soul may find shelter, comfort, and fulfillment. In this case, the gardener is neither Julie nor Girardin or Kent, but the Savoyard Vicar, the character in *Emile* who contemplates the sublime in nature and abstracts from it a kind of natural religion⁴⁰ that can be found within his

36 “Sometimes my reveries end in meditation, but more often my meditations end in reverie” (Rousseau, 2017, p. 85).

37 “I have become a solitary, or, as they say, unsociable and misanthropic, for I prefer the wildest solitude to the company of wicked men who feed only on treachery and hatred” (Rousseau, 2017, p. 89).

38 Fractal (from the Latin *fractus*: fraction, broken) is a term from non-classical geometry, coined in 1975 by the French mathematician Benoît Mandelbrot. The theory posits that objects possess a repetitive pattern in their constituent parts, that is, the property of self-similarity. If the object is divided into parts, each part will resemble the original object. See Mandelbrot (1975).

39 “It was summer. We got up at daybreak. He took me outside of the city on a high hill beneath which ran the Po, whose course was seen along the fertile banks it washes. In the distance the immense chain of the Alps crowned the landscape. The rays of the rising sun already grazed the plains and, projecting on the fields long shadows of trees, the vineyards, and the houses, enriched with countless irregularities of light the most beautiful scene which can strike the human eye. One would have said that nature displayed all its magnificence to our eyes in order to present them with the text for our conversation” (Rousseau, 1979, p. 266).

40 Although, as Shklar (1985) reminds us, the faith expressed by the Vicar in *Emile* was not exactly the same as Rousseau's, but rather the one a young person might hear and follow.

own heart.⁴¹ In a comparative study of Rousseau's *Confessions* and Augustine's *Confessions*, Hartle (*apud* Puente, 2005, p. 64) states that "the place occupied by Divine Providence in the *Confessions* of the Bishop of Hippo is taken by nature in the case of the Genevan thinker." Nevertheless, what is abstracted here is inner nature rather than exterior nature. In the words of the Savoyard Vicar, what is presented is not a religion in the institutional sense, but an inner devotion capable of facilitating human transcendence and the realization of one's essence, such that any other creed or cult could be dispensed with: "You see in my exposition only natural religion. It is very strange that any other is needed" (Rousseau, 1979, p. 295). For, as Rousseau asserts, human organizations and revelations "have only the effect of degrading God by giving Him human passions [...] far from clarifying the notions of the great Being, confuse them; that far from ennobling them, they debase them" (Rousseau, 1979, p. 295). Just as natural man and the state of nature stand in opposition to the debased state of society and the corrupted man, natural religion serves as a counterpoint to existing institutions — the products of that society — and as an alternative means of reconnecting humanity with its origins. For this reason, the Vicar declares: "I therefore closed all books. There is one open to all eyes: it is the book of nature. It is from this great and sublime book that I learn to serve and worship its divine author. No one can be excusable for not reading it, because it speaks to all men a language that is intelligible to all minds" (Rousseau, 1979, p. 306).

A complex and controversial theme,⁴² natural religion appears in *Emile* as one of the introductory lessons in moral questions. Since corrupted society cannot serve as a reference, it is necessary to seek in Nature the examples, didactic resources, and all the elements required for reflection on customs, as well as for the judgment of human actions. Book IV of *Emile*, containing the *Profession of Faith*, seeks to reflect on the age of reason and passions, when the young person finds themselves undergoing a "second birth" and truly "being born to life" (Rousseau, 1979, p. 211). At this moment, the individual, "baptized" by nature, develops sensitive reason, becomes capable of controlling and educating self-love, and can live fully within social life. This serves the purpose of educating, as Dalbosco (2011, p. 184) notes, along a natural path in which it is possible to "strengthen an internal core of resistance in the child against the 'perverse invasion' of society." However, as Gouhier (1970) observes, this education must prevent the child from becoming the man of historical society, in order for him to remain faithful to nature, even within culture.

In educational terms, the gardener is Jean-Jacques, the tutor, who develops throughout the stages of Emile's cognitive process a sensitive reason capable of making him a wise man — a kind of natural man able to live anywhere. This can be seen in two passages from *Emile*: "It is by the effect they sense their cries make that children judge their own senses" (Rousseau, 1979, p. 77); and: "Do not give your pupil any kind of verbal lessons; he ought to receive them only from experience" (Rousseau, 1979, p. 92). Everything thus begins with sensible experiences, with empirical engagement with nature. Rousseau's aim is to cultivate in the child a sensitive rationality, in opposition to the perspective of intellectual, Cartesian reason, which is disconnected from concrete reality. Hence his appreciation of English landscape gardening, in contrast to the geometric and formal rationality of French landscaping. At this point, the metaphor of the garden as a pedagogical space, and of the gardener as a wise educator, becomes particularly significant, as their action is directed toward an educational project that addresses the problem of human formation within a corrupted society (Jimack, 1960), aiming to preserve the child's natural goodness. As *Saint-Preux* tells Julie: "I have

41 As the character Français says in *Rousseau juge de Jean-Jacques*, in the Third Dialogue, "D'où le peintre et l'apologiste de la nature aujourd'hui si défigurée et si calomniée peut-il avoir tiré son modèle, si ce n'est de son propre cœur?" (Rousseau, 1959–1995, p. 936).

42 "It was this section of *Emile* that was primarily responsible for the censorship the book faced and for the misfortunes Rousseau suffered as a consequence" (Dent, 1996, p. 187).

always believed that the good is nothing but the beautiful put into action, that one is intimately linked to the other, and that both have a common source in well-ordered nature" (Rousseau, 2006, p. 67). In other words, morality, aesthetics, politics, and pedagogy are fused into a single art, whose principal artist in this novel is the character Julie, the gardener.

Within this metaphor, the art of gardens is merely the virtuous task of ensuring continuity between nature and culture. The transition is smooth if the educator succeeds in creating an environment that, unlike traditional systems, does not reproduce restrictive and authoritarian doctrines, such as those of the Jesuits, or traditional forms of education as they historically developed; rather, it does so — whether at home, in the countryside, or in the school setting — in a pleasant manner that respects natural tendencies, as occurs in the art of the English garden. In *The Adventures of Telemachus*, the reading book for Emile and Sophie, the author notes that the tutor Mentor, after pacifying the war between the king of Salento and his neighbors, began to restructure the city, commenting that: "Mentor, as if he were a skillful gardener pruning the useless branches of fruit trees, sought in this way to eliminate the ostentation that corrupts customs, reducing all things to a noble and sober simplicity" (Fénelon, 2006, p. 145). This evokes the education of Emile, which, in addition to being moral and political, is also an aesthetic education. Rousseau states: "My principal aim in teaching him to feel and love beauty in all its forms is to fix his affections and tastes there, so that his natural appetites are not altered" (Rousseau, 1959–1995, p. 677). Thus, a negative education is conceived that prevents the emergence of vices, as Rousseau explains to Christophe de Beaumont in a letter: "Shut the door to vice, and the human heart will always be good. Based on this principle, I established negative education as the best, or indeed, the only good one" (Rousseau, 1959–1995, p. 945). Correspondingly, a negative aesthetics is conceived that does not alter natural taste and that projects the garden as a textuality speaking to the heart. To decipher it, one must prepare vision, hearing, and sensibility in order to understand the combination of elements composing it and the effects it can exert upon the soul. This hermeneutic experience is best guided by sensitive gardeners and caring educators.

Therefore, just as negative education consists in safeguarding the heart from vice and the mind from error, as Rousseau asserts (Rousseau, 1959–1995, p. 112–113), a negative aesthetic education must avoid approaches that distort nature as it is. Emile's entire education follows this logic and can be understood as a grand educational reverie against the deformation, disfigurement, and corruption of natural elements — from physical-organic nature to human nature. Gradually, this educational method awakens the child to sensations, which are the primary materials of knowledge; it cultivates the senses and bodily exercises in their relation to things; and, ultimately, it awakens the mind to the light of wisdom, when one comes to understand that external appearances reflect the dispositions of the heart.

Furthermore, the image of such an environment and the contextualization of Emile within an educational walk may lead to the belief that, in Rousseau's perspective of natural, negative, sensual, and aesthetic education, total freedom, casuistry, and spontaneity prevail — qualities through which Emile would learn nothing directly, but only through himself. This interpretation gave rise to the so-called non-directive pedagogical movement, based on the idea of the child's natural desire to learn and on the absence of rules and directive pedagogical actions. Theorists such as Neill⁴³ or Rogers⁴⁴ may have drawn inspiration from Rousseau's thought, but they misinterpret the non-directive approach — that is, the almost unconditional freedom of the child and the diminished role of the educator — as something inherent to Rousseau's pedagogy.

43 Alexander Sutherland Neill (1883–1973), Scottish educator and founder of Summerhill School.

44 Carl Rogers (1902–1987), American psychologist.

As Rousseau states in the *Confessions*, his plan was to develop a treatise on the psychology of learning, which he would call sensitive morality or the materialism of the wise. If conceived as a compilation, *The New Heloise*, *Emile*, and the *Moral Letters* would constitute this larger work, whose ultimate outcome would be the development of reason. This is not, however, a purely intellectual or logical-mathematical reason, nor, to adopt Horkheimer's (2015) terms, a reason manifested in objective, subjective, or instrumental form.⁴⁵ Its mode of manifestation is sensitive or perceptive, as it seeks to unfold natural potentialities that develop through external stimuli — sensory stimuli from the physical world — perceived by the body and its environment. These stimuli exert an influence on morality capable of promoting human perfectibility toward self-improvement. As Rousseau (1979, p. 125) states: "Since everything which enters into the human understanding comes there through the senses, man's first reason is a reason of the senses; this sensual reason serves as the basis of intellectual reason. Our first masters of philosophy are our feet, our hands, our eyes."

Thus, the transition from "sensitive reason" to "intellectual reason" must be accomplished, as Rousseau develops in *Emile*, through interactions with what he calls the three masters: nature, things, and men. Through nature, there is the expansion of the biopsychic process and the development of internal faculties; through things, empirical learning with objects; and through men, the development of human relationships for the learning of moral precepts. This progression is sensitive, psychological, and moral, permeated by the aesthetic experience of nature as a hermeneutic possibility, that enables access to the intellectual level. Authentic experience of knowledge (Gadamer, 2007) is realized through the virtue of the gardener (Paiva, 2009), enabling a form of hermeneutics of nature through which the presupposition of originality can be apprehended, guiding both the reconfiguration of the human being within a corrupted society and the reconfiguration of society itself. As in the *Elysée*, reason must serve as the foundation for guiding this process, without neglecting consciousness as its ultimate guide, even if its traces are concealed. Without this, there is neither virtue nor the recovery of originality in the human soul, as envisioned in Rousseau's project of reconfiguring humanity.

Moreover, since wisdom — understood as preparation for living well in society, promoting good human relations, and seeking happiness — can only be achieved through the development of sensitive reason, the secret lies in nature. Only through the appropriate use of natural elements is it possible for art, science, and, by extension, all human actions to exist and develop for human benefit and for the very sense of humanization. If all this is possible within the dimension of *natura facti*, then Julie's garden can be understood as an example of virtuous action in favor of both nature and humanity, since it is through the virtue of its creation that the development of sensibility — or, more precisely, sensitive reason — becomes possible. As a self-contained natural space distinct from other forms of art, the garden may thus be regarded as a sophisticated form of sensitive expression and a mimetic exercise of human experience with nature. Mothe and Lis (1984, p. 33), in *Michel le jardinier au jardin de J. J. Rousseau*, go so far as to state, emphatically and poetically: "By instituting, through botany, democracy among plants, Rousseau would have signed a new vegetal contract." They continue: "He would have shown that all plants are free and equal in rights, from the orchid to the humble cryptogram. He would also have opened the door to a socialization of nature that we now call ecology."

Such effusive praise is not necessary; nevertheless, it may be said that the lesson Rousseau leaves is that the art of gardens constitutes the actual shaping of sensibility where it exists only as

⁴⁵ In the book *Eclipse of Reason*, Max Horkheimer (2015) revisits the same discussion he had with Adorno, namely, the search for the reason humanity entered a state of barbarism rather than one of humanization. In the text, particularly in the first chapter, he discusses the ways in which reason has manifested throughout history, characterizing it as objective reason, subjective reason, and instrumental reason.

potential, paraphrasing the Spanish philosopher Savater⁴⁶ on education. This is consistent with the fact that gardening in Rousseau's philosophy acquires a pedagogical dimension. At the opening of *Emilio*, when advising the provident mother to cultivate and water the young plant, Rousseau states: "Form an enclosure around your child's soul at an early date" (Rousseau, 1979, p. 38). Here may lie the answer to those who ask, as Hatzenberger (2015) does, why the Elysée is a hidden and locked garden.⁴⁷ The likely explanation is that this garden must be protected from external harm, yet remain accessible to those who wish to enter it. In this sense, the garden becomes the paradigm of human formation as conceived by Rousseau in *Emile*, in which the entire educational process must anticipate the work of gardening in order to develop sensibility in the hearts and minds of students, and, consequently, sensitive reason.

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46 Savater (2005, p. 33) states that "education is the actual shaping of the human where it exists only as a potential."

47 "This place, although very near the house, is so well hidden by the covered alley that separates it from it that it cannot be seen from anywhere. The thick foliage that surrounds it does not allow the view to penetrate and it is always carefully kept locked" (Rousseau, 2006, p. 409-410).

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