

Government of the Soul and Genesis of the Modern Educational Discourse (1879–1911)

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This article aims to illustrate that the modern educational project, discursively articulated until the end of the nineteenth century, owes much to the ethics that Christianity had earlier systematized, in the context of the disciplined dynamics brought by the Counter-Reformation. A kind of pastoral power remained within the enlightenment-humanist project, and we should discuss its deepening in modernity, a growing technological sophistication to respond, reiterating the same principles and seeking similar results, against a background of increasingly complex interactions due to its extreme massification. To better explain this thesis special attention is paid to the so-called Compayré Moment (1879–1911), a historical phase in which an entire generation of Francophone pedagogues predominantly reflected on the epistemological status of the Sciences of Education and systematized an encyclopaedic knowledge based on an education and teaching with modern characteristics. Hence, the government of the soul or disciplinary training of the will of the pupil was at the core of reform proposals defended by this group of pedagogues.

Introduction

This text attempts to show that the process that triggered the constitution of the modern school was, from the very beginning, related to the possibility—essentially technical—of producing a moral in action. In my opinion, the historical resolution allows the Church and the state to be placed in the same genealogical sequence. Our school model has never actually abandoned the moral technological framework developed against the background of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation; it is still structured on the political administration and disciplinary programmes of the social fabric, in other words, the dynamics which, marked by the permanent goal of creating citizens who are ardent advocates of the values of liberty and progress, continue the Enlightenment project. This twofold lineage led to the schooling of the masses, that the twentieth century consolidated, also like one—and precisely like another—practical expression of the technologies of the government of the soul.

Our school model arises out of the combination of the Christian approach to organizing personal conduct and the forms of government triggered by state bureaucracy.

This strategic association will seem improbable to many, who wage the conflicts present in the different political programmes of the past, but it was absolutely suitable for the goals of the nation-state administrations. Public schooling has always tried to establish in its interior a laic moral, and therefore took possession of the early direction and the practices activated by Christian pedagogy: ‘the state teaching systems are not bearers of a new image of childhood or a new pedagogical project’; ‘quite the opposite, they limit themselves to intensifying the school model put into practice between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries’.¹ The model of an education overseen by the state did not represent more than an upgrade—certainly more articulated in the overriding ambition to constitute itself as a system able to blend the whole nation into the state—of the pastoral school, despite the successive authorities talking, as liberalism marched forward, and with renewed vigour from the moment its republican version was implanted, of the goal to construct a new man, completely different from that which religious obscurantism had generated. The ethics that Christianity had imposed, together with the techniques used for their incorporation into the individual, shifted directly to the logic of enlightenment-humanist power. What we should discuss is the deepening of this process in modernity, a growing technological sophistication to respond, reiterating the same principles and seeking similar results, against a background of increasingly complex interactions marked by extreme massification. But neither the processes to constitute the reflective person nor the equipment with regard to the spiritual discipline of individuals underwent significant change. Both for the reformed Church and for the nation-state, moral perfection was always synonymous with self-regulation. This article pays special attention to the so-called *Compayré Moment* (1879–1911), a historical phase in which an entire generation of Francophone pedagogues predominantly reflected on the epistemological status of the Sciences of Education and systematized an encyclopaedic knowledge based on an education and teaching with modern characteristics. Hence, what will be shown is that, also in those years of change, the government of the soul or disciplinary training of the will of the pupil was at the core of reform proposals defended by this group of pedagogues.

Theoretical Problems

My idea is to continue a theoretical reflection begun by Michel Foucault in his final writings. He defined a field of analysis therein, which allowed permanent crossing of the domains of ethics and politics. The term ‘governmentality’ and the expression ‘technologies of the self’, interoperating with each other and clarifying each other, are what best define the inflexion operated in his last historiographical projects, looking to understand the basis on which modern practices of subjectivation have been built in modernity.² This analytical perspective has many ramifica-

¹ Nóvoa, António. *História da educação*. Lisboa, 1994: 169.

² Foucault, Michel. “La ‘gouvernementalité’.” In *Dits et écrits (1976–1979)*. Paris, 1978: 635–657; Id., “Les techniques de soi.” In *Dits et écrits (1980–1988)*. Paris, 1988: 783–813.

tions in current social research. I am particularly inspired by the critical works of Nikolas Rose, in the fields of power–knowledge that characterize the social affirmation and consolidation of the psychological science, and the way that Thomas Popkewitz questions educational theory and pedagogical research with his works on the self and the other.³ Analysing the discursive devices, through which the actors are represented, classified and standardized, these researchers show us how the dynamics of promotion of subjectivity intertwine profoundly with the goals of government of the populations.

It is through the perspectives emerging from this critical position that I believe we should begin to look at the universe of ideas and practices that involve pupils in modernity. The theoretical starting point is that I do not predate the historical forms created for social recognition. If, in its Foucaultian version, genealogy can be a radical form of unveiling the systematizations linked to what the object of the human being was over a long period, in a sequential exposition of regimes of truth, as well as technological modes under which people are made to live, then the description that I believe should be made corresponds to the establishment of discursive practices that relate, through education and the different forms of school learning, the being with the truth. We should therefore try to establish the conditions and possibilities of intervention of a sector of educational actors, relating the processes through which the subjectivity of the pupils began to be historically thought of in accordance with the combinatory schemes that would transform into their natural skin. It is objective to outline a long historical invariant that in the twentieth century widely propagated the principle that the school institution—in its formal regulations and its learning rituals—could install itself in the intimacy of the pupil and promote his/her permanent self-inspection. For modern pedagogues, man is this creature whose ontology is historical and we only have access to him through his constant toil of invention, stabilization, implantation and propagation. Therefore, the term ‘subjectivation’ in the educational field takes us to a regime of practices and techniques absolutely heterogeneous and adjacent, even though today these same activities can be looked on as manifestations of what is evident and undeniable, of what can never be brought into question.

Nikolas Rose looks upon the modern school indistinctly either as a human technology⁴ or a moral technology,⁵ but always in a continuous straight line along with the clinical practices of psychological observation of children, and also with the prison, the factory and the army. Educational aims are hence structurally associated with social dynamics as wide-ranging as those of social adjustment, of punishment, of productivity and of victory. As such, children also began to be one of the main targets of the individualization programmes carried out by the experts of the private, the

³ Rose, Nikolas. *Inventing Ourselves. Psychology, Power and Personhood*. Cambridge, 1996; Popkewitz, Thomas S. *Struggling for the soul. The politics of schooling and the construction of the teacher*. New York, 1998.

⁴ Rose, *Inventing our selves. Psychology, power and personhood*: 121.

⁵ Rose, Nikolas. *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought*. Cambridge, 1999: 223.

psychologists and the pedagogues. As for Ian Hunter,⁶ he localized the emergence of the elementary school in the framework of the development of the topographic morals of the populations that were a danger or in imminent danger; the technologies that are educational, and geared towards the mass training of children, are still looked upon by this historian as a mere improvisation on the major theme of moral regulation. This origin and historical position allow public schooling to be situated, and the consequent ‘generalization of a pedagogy to childhood relation’,⁷ another institutional link developed by the modern state in order to undertake its chief objective of an essentially disciplinary nature. The state teaching systems were therefore constituted in accordance with the rule of governmentality: the moral training of the young population was carried out with a view to the more general goal of increasing the strength and prosperity of the state, while claiming to strive for the well-being of each citizen.

The technology of schooling was not invented *ab initio*, nor was it implanted through the monotonous implementation of hegemonic ‘will to govern’: the technology schooling—like that of social insurance, child welfare, criminal justice and much more—is hybrid, heterogeneous, traversed by a variety of programmatic aspirations and professional obligations, a complex and mobile resultant to the relations amongst persons, things and forces ... The popular schoolroom that was invented in the nineteenth century. This was an assemblage of pedagogic knowledges, moralizing aspirations, buildings of a certain design, classrooms organized to produce certain types of visibility, techniques such as the timetable for organizing bodies in space and in time, regimes of supervision, little mental exercises in the classroom, playgrounds to allow the observation and moralization of children in some more approaching their natural habitat and much more, assembled and infused with the aim of the government of capacities and habits.⁸

School and Pastoral Power

The most remote framework for the emergence of the modern school ‘was provided by the institutions and practices of Christian pastoral guidance’.⁹ Analysed from this viewpoint, the public schooling system and dissemination of schooling of the masses did not correspond to the expression of purely educational principles. It emerged, rather, from demands placed on the new state administrations and was backed up by the technologies of government of the Christian souls and those predating them. Along the same line of reasoning, we are led to believe that popular education translated a general purpose of conditioning populations in order to obtain masses of citizens that displayed forms of behaviour extremely marked by self-inspection. Discussing school has always been to discuss a policy of conscience, and exactly of

⁶ Hunter, Ian. “Assembling the school.” In *Foucault and Political reason. Liberalism, Neo-liberalism and Rationalities of Government*, edited by Andrew Barry, Thomas Osborne and Nicolas Rose. Chicago, 1996: 143.

⁷ Nóvoa, António. *Do mestre-escola ao professor do ensino primário: Subsídios para a história da profissão docente em Portugal (séculos XVI–XX)*. Lisboa, 1986: 10.

⁸ Rose, *Powers of Freedom*: 53–54.

⁹ Hunter, “Assembling the school:” 149.

invention ‘of a form of secular political pastorate which couples individualization and totalization’.¹⁰ Hence, even this extremely remote framework had little similarity to repressive practices that generated a superficial bond like fear and passive obedience. In truth a large amount of identitary interplay led to positive forms of identification and to an internally accomplished moral fulfilment.

The modern school attempted, certainly based on that remote Christian framework of pastoral power, to form the personality of the pupil based on positive forms of identification and interior work. If the educational gesture supposed the acceptance of the principle of transformation of the educated subject, this identitary mechanism seemed to feed off the feeling of emulating the figure of the teacher. Such practices, which we can situate as being at the origin of the introspective forms of control, seem to be the most productive in the sense of full incorporation of the values of responsibility, virtue and honesty. The school institution would never abandon the goal of prioritizing the strength of the *habitat* over the strength of will in each pupil: each individual should be able to separate, on his/her own, every kind of impulse and stimulus, associating them either with good or bad, with normal or abnormal.

In the discussion that he establishes around the affirmation of Protestant ethics throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Max Weber¹¹ describes the extensive development of these kinds of spiritual exercises. The essential issue tackled is that of *Menschentum*, a term that is associated with the principle of variability of attributes of humanity, and more precisely with a classification of modes through which human beings make historically possible certain forms of rational government, both of themselves and of others. Weber was interested in understanding the themes of a methodological conduct of life, characteristics of Protestant asceticism. This Christian confession is understood by Weber as trying, in the premodern epoch, to spiritualize the Church and also all society through ethical discipline. Its purpose was, therefore, profound dissemination, in other words individualized, of the Christian message. Ordinary members of a congregation, each one faithful in his/her own way to the various Protestant sects, should no longer be dominated by an *ethos* of purely religious motivation. We will have to record, notes Weber, the historical emergence of a maxim ‘undoubtedly new: [that of] considering compliance with duty in the framework of temporal activity as the highest moral action’. He was at the opposite extreme of Catholic tradition, which accepted as the only forms of thanking God either the moral commandments, as the single universal programme, or monastic asceticism, an existential form taken from the world. Indeed, the concept of *Beruf*, created by Luther to translate the tasks imposed by God, did not recognize forms of moral supremacy other than those that were exclusively for ‘fulfilment of duties in the world that arise from the place of the individual in social life and which hence become

¹⁰ Gordon, Colin. “Governmental rationality. An introduction.” In *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, edited by G. Burchell, C. Gordon and Miller. London, 1991: 9.

¹¹ Weber, Max [1905]. *A ética Protestante e o espírito do capitalismo*. Lisboa, 1990 [Original edition: *Die Protestantischen Sekten und der Geist des Kapitalismus*].

his “vocation”¹². The salvation of the soul was the crux around which Protestantism made human life and actions revolve.

In stating that good actions are the result of a consequent method, at the limit is to admit that all human life can be rationalized. The fundamental thesis of Max Weber reminds us that Protestant asceticism, in contrast with what a less attentive observer may note, caused a hyperconscience, which in turn created a new order of the rational kind at the heart of each individual. This is also the reason why the theory of predestination, as a systematization of the subject with a view to the formation of a kind of spiritual aristocracy, was thoroughly inscribed at the centre of the Protestant disciplinary device. And this excess of ethical reason was, at the end of the day, an extremely well systematized technique to dethrone and replace instinctive pleasure, to govern the emotions, in an organized disregard for all manifestations of a culture of the sensorial-contemplative type. The Protestant ascetic ideal, although an expression confirming what Weber characterized as ‘subjective religiousness’, always had an extremely critical opinion on ‘sensuality and feeling’, stating that these were nothing more than illusions, ‘were not valid for salvation’ and only contributed to the ‘deific superstition of man’.¹³

The school institution acted in the development of our material civilization—an expression that the historian Fernand Braudel also takes from Weber—because it intensified the disciplinary logic that, in their way, both the Christian confessions helped to rationalize. All these considerations serve not so much to distinguish them but rather to help to better understand the aims and undertaking effectively assimilated by the schools of Christian extraction. Clearly in Catholicism the systematization of ethical culture led to the formulation of a more authoritarian model, because it involved the institutional figure of the confessor or the director of the soul, whereas in the puritanical example it was the believer himself who freely took the initiative for his own virtues and sins, all carried out as if self-reflection and self-knowledge were the prerogative of his second rational-nature. Yet, on different levels, both traditions shaped a power of the pastoral kind tending towards the control of the individual, although in truth the Protestant version would be—owing to its appeal to the techniques of moral problematization and self-examination, with a view to the creation of individuals able to govern themselves—better suited to the ideal of the autonomous person that the liberal school made universal.

The genesis of the model of the schooling of the masses was also unquestionably linked to the frameworks of moral technology developed by the dynamics of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. This change was immediately undertaken in direct institutional form. It is known that the first popular European schools were created by the Church in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as instruments of intensification and deepening of the pastoral management of consciences. David Hamilton¹⁴ states that they were designed even at that time as a machine of social

¹² *Ibid.*: 56.

¹³ *Ibid.*: 101.

¹⁴ Hamilton, David. *Towards a Theory of Schooling*. London, 1989: 25 and 47.

self-regulation. In their organizational architecture the different Christian schools adopted systematic forms (rationalized) of continuous connection between the principles of order, efficiency and moral intensification. They always worked towards removing the pupils' previous habits, leading them towards a natural perfection, as was stated in the language of the time. The authentic 'explosion of the will to learn'—first in the Protestant zones such as Prussia and Austria, then in the Catholic regions—that would lead to 'the emergence of a cultural universe dominated by writing' and would establish 'a civilization based on schooling', occurred effectively under the supervision of the Church and the religious congregations until at least the mid-eighteenth century, stresses Nóvoa.¹⁵ The same thing happened in Portugal—albeit without the direct influence of Protestantism—where the Catholic authorities had been, since medieval times, the only element that bound together the entire school fabric. The school model that was imposed in this epoch undertook huge ruptures with the past. School structures tended towards a certain uniformity.

Rationalization of Conduct in the Context of the Definition of the Education Sciences

I continue my reflection with two questions asked by Gabriel Compayré in 1885: is there a science of education or not, and is its object different from the rest of the social sciences that were establishing themselves at the time? The author of *Cours de pédagogie théorique et pratique* immediately came up with an answer: 'nobody disputes the viability of an educational science today'. Thus, Compayré made a distinction between pedagogy—which would be the theory of education—and education, which constitutes the practice of pedagogy. 'There is indeed a science of education, a practical and applied science, whose principles, laws and vitality are documented by a large number of publications.' From the methodological conceptual perspective, pedagogy aspired to make itself legitimate solely as an applied psychology. The science of education took as its rules the maxims that derived from the laws of mental organization (i.e. the work developed by the psychological science). This is the fundamental reason underpinning this marriage: 'psychology is the source of all applied sciences that are related to the moral faculties of man; pedagogy contains all the parts of the soul and must use always psychology'.¹⁶

Moreover, we see how an apparently innocent sentence, because it is centred only on the aspect of the epistemological framework of a discipline, allows one clearly to understand the forms of specific social regulation. From the beginning, pedagogy, or the science of education, took on the ambition to act on the spirit and the body of children and the young. It arose, historically, as another version of bio-power. Its method would consist only in observing the facts of the physical and moral life of man. Its biggest problem was making each subject visible and able to be manipulated. This task was only imagined possible if undertaken through systematic dissection of

¹⁵ Nóvoa, António. *História da educação*. Lisboa, 1994: 167.

¹⁶ Compayré, Gabriel. *Cours de pédagogie théorique et pratique*. Paris, 1885: 10–13.

the spirituality of the educated subject: the general laws and respective inductive reflection of pedagogy would focus on obtaining the rational construction of intimate facts, in order to establish fully the map of the human soul.

From the very start, speaking about the object of the new science was to speak about the possibility of a laic moral. From Compayré I will move on to another author, Henri Marion, bearing in mind the article ‘Pédagogie’ that he wrote in the first version of the influential *Dictionnaire de pédagogie et d’instruction primaire*. Marion began by reproducing Littré’s classic definition, according to which pedagogy is the moral education of children, and all his considerations derive from this standpoint. The entirely ethical substance obliged him to discuss the position of discipline in the general spectrum of the sciences. Marion had no doubts that this prevented it from being classified in the exact sciences, which based their reasoning on sequences of pure and complex notions. Pedagogy was not similar to the physical and natural sciences, because it could never purport to attain laws of absolute necessity and infallibility. However, this ambiguity, or, rather, this positional uncertainty did not pose a problem for Marion. It was instead a reality that pedagogy shared ‘with the whole family of the moral sciences, whatever they may be’.¹⁷ The pedagogical discipline should be categorized as a third sector of the scientific field—that of knowledge that helps to free man through the path of reason. Its chief objective is to show that all human life can be rationalized and, thus, make the creation of a state of hyperconscience in each educated subject.

The effort linked to the initial debate around the sciences of education assumed the possibility of, through them, constituting a morality independent from any religious or metaphysical fact. ‘The question’, Ferdinand Buisson pointed out, ‘is knowing whether it is possible to create a disposition in the child’s soul through a purely laic moral education, i.e. a moral that solely acquires its strength, prestige and authority through the moral idea itself; this is the conviction upon which the French Republic is grounded’.¹⁸ The principles of the catechism of progressive science were now viewed as an effective device of social regulation. Henri Marion, in the programme of his *Cours d’Instruction Morale pour les Écoles Normales Primaires*, made exhaustive lists of individual duties at the start of the huge Moral Practice Section. Also, when he wanted to define the space of this terrain, he allowed only for what he called the ‘main forms of self-respect: individual virtues (moderation, prudence, courage, respect for the truth and the given word, personal dignity, etc.)’.¹⁹ Just one step separated that point from the affirmation, as Compayré stated,²⁰ that education of the conscience is interconnected with education of all the faculties of the soul. The action should fortify

¹⁷ Marion, Henri. “Pédagogie.” In *Dictionnaire de pédagogie et d’instruction primaire*, dir. Ferdinand Buisson. Paris, 1887: 2238.

¹⁸ Buisson, Ferdinand. “Morale.” In *Nouveau dictionnaire de pédagogie et d’instruction primaire*, dir. Ferdinand Buisson. Paris, 1911: 1348–1549.

¹⁹ Marion, Henri. “Psychologie.” In *Dictionnaire de pédagogie et d’instruction primaire*, dir. Ferdinand Buisson. Paris, 1882: 1768.

²⁰ Compayré, *Cours de pédagogie théorique et pratique*: 92.

the psychological reflection aimed at ensuring that the individual has the capacity for self-governing. There seemed to be no doubt that the formation of a moral spirit was, fundamentally, ‘a *technique*, the technique of human action in society’.²¹

The reason–responsibility conceptual pair is inscribed as the essence of this logic of development of a scientific reasoning of practical vocations.²² At the basis of the moral conscience, we would find the first element. Reason was viewed as ‘the spirit itself, considered in its own constitution, its innate requirements, its universal and eternal needs’.²³ It responded as such to the need to find a common basis for all men and, at the same time, to define thinking and civilization as natural elements. Here the idea was established that the ethical commandments were realities but realities that supposed a clarified acceptance of the citizens. Education was hence justified as the operation able to take children and the young and incorporate the social rules through the path of intelligence and rational knowledge. It was as if a commandment, in order to exist and grow in the spirits, had first to be known. For the pedagogues at the end of the nineteenth century, responsibility thus supposed ‘a moral education that had enlightened the conscience and developed the idea of good and duty’, a task of constant mentalization of the obligatory laws. They established a direct association with the most important political concept of modernity, the concept of freedom. Responsibility supposed it entirely. The pedagogical discourse thus affirmed that the human condition was to submit oneself voluntarily to the commandments of law. ‘Responsibility’, pointed out Compayré, ‘can define the character of an intelligent and free self, who, in knowing what he does and being able to act in way other than what is usual, must face the consequences of his own acts’.²⁴ The pedagogical reflections aimed to associate, if not unify, what common sense would have led one to understand as corresponding to contradictory realities or paradoxical hypotheses.

The sociologist Durkheim also consecrated many pages of a doctrinal nature, justifying the fusion of opposites, starting invariably from the absolute value of scientific reason and the conscience of the moral. He insisted on the principle that any educational project, to present itself as modern, would have to translate ‘personal autonomy’ into ‘mastering of the self’. Durkheim intended to justify the thesis that only subjectivation of the rules of the moral would provide a secure basis for a healthy social life. He therefore had to unify the great binary oppositions that any educational relation contains. Freedom and authority, constraint and consent, devotion and sacrifice, and reason and conscience were for him terrains that could not be separated under any circumstances. His long article ‘*Éducation*’ closes with a paragraph that

²¹ Buisson, “Morale:” 1350.

²² Nóvoa, António. “La raison et la responsabilité. Une science du ‘gouvernement des âmes’.” In *Science(s) de l’éducation 19e–20esiècle. Champ professionnel et champ disciplinaire*, dir. Rita Hofstetter and Bernard Schneuwly. Bern, 2002: 243–263.

²³ Marion, Henri. “Raison.” In *Dictionnaire de pédagogie et d’instruction primaire*, dir. Ferdinand Buisson. Paris, 1887: 2529.

²⁴ Compayré, Gabriel. “Responsabilité.” In *Dictionnaire de pédagogie et d’instruction primaire*, dir. Ferdinand Buisson. Paris, 1882: 1855–1856.

summarizes the whole power–knowledge programme and the promotion of the regimes of self-government that the twentieth-century school would effectively make universal. I reproduce it in its entirety:

We have sometime opposed freedom and authority as if these two factors of education contradicted and restricted each other. But this is a false opposition. In fact these two terms are far from being opposite, intertwining with each other. Freedom is the offspring of well-understood authority. To be free is not to do what one wants, it is to be the master of oneself, to act through reason and to do one's duty. It is in fact exactly in bestowing the child with self-discipline that the authority of the teacher should be used. The teacher's authority is nothing more than an aspect of authority of duty and of reason. The child has to be trained to recognize progressively the authority in the educator's word; this is the condition that leads to a later discovery of authority in his own conscience and his own personal judgment.²⁵

The Faculties of the Soul and Psychological Individualization of the Pupil

The notion of a modern educational relation establishes a causal connection between particularized knowledge of trends, habits, desires or emotions of pupils and the moulding of their moral sensibilities. It was the attempt to make this socializing technology of a disciplinary character viable that was the genesis of the discovery of the pupil and his/her differentiated treatment from the last quarter of the nineteenth century onwards. If the individual personality had become the central element of the intellectual culture of the time, from politics to economics, even to art, it was also necessary that the educator begin to account for the germ of individuality that was within each child. Instead of treating the school population in a uniform and invariable form, the modern teacher should vary his/her methodologies 'according to the individual temperaments and the evolution of each intelligence', noted Durkheim in his other article '*Pédagogie*'.²⁶

It was child psychology that would respond to the need to ascertain the three faculties of the laic soul—'sensitivity', 'will' and 'intelligence'—because it was obliged to acknowledge the diversity of individual characters. Henri Marion provides again an appropriate definition of the discipline: 'psychology means science of the soul: the field of psychology changes according to the way one understands the soul and according to whether one accepts that there can be a scientific knowledge of it'.²⁷

The first faculty was the one given most importance and was even viewed as the common basis for all phenomena of the moral. It would be through intelligence that the educator should begin.

²⁵ Durkheim, Émile. "Éducation." In *Nouveau dictionnaire de pédagogie et d'instruction primaire*, dir. Ferdinand Buisson. Paris, 1911: 536.

²⁶ Durkheim, Émile. "Pédagogie." In *Nouveau dictionnaire de pédagogie et d'instruction primaire*, dir. Ferdinand Buisson. Paris, 1911: 1541.

²⁷ Marion, Henri. "Psychologie." In *Dictionnaire de pédagogie et d'instruction primaire*, dir. Ferdinand Buisson. Paris, 1882: 1761.

The faculty of intelligence was given priority as it was viewed as the common basis for all phenomena of the moral and it is this faculty that the educator should focus on first. The more the powers of intelligence are developed the more enlightened the perception of consciousness of duty becomes. In a well-organized intelligence, all the other segments of the soul would also have a defined position. The objective was to show that the intellectual work of the memory would strengthen individual identity: 'each new fact of conscience is a new element of the idea of the self'.²⁸ Therefore the part of intelligence that would have as its object the child personality, would be worked on through school education through the strengthening of psychological reflection. This was the only way, indeed, to ensure possession and government of the self. Therefore, the part of intelligence that would have as its object the child's personality would be worked on through the strengthening of psychological reflection, which was viewed as the only way to ensure government of the self. The psychopedagogical discourse claimed it possible to introduce a naturalist teaching methodology. All the logic on which school work was structured—the constant repetition of processes allied to a progression in learning through levels of growing complexity and abstraction—arose with the reproduction of the rules observable in nature itself, aiming also to enable the pupil to 'find' him/herself. As such, it was demonstrated that reason would be inscribed in the world of natural things. Compayré explained: 'pedagogical action in the field of the faculties of the soul should come as close as possible to the order of nature; in this way an evolution is favoured that leads from the concrete to the abstract, from instinctive life to reflective life; in this way the faculties of the soul gain their own activity, a dynamism and an energy that will allow them to increasingly develop by themselves throughout the life; therefore, school education can be succeeded in all ages by a personal education, by a self-education'.²⁹

The faculty of sensibility would be dealt with through identical processes to rational progression. It was explained, for example, that one could not demand that a student love his country without first informing him of its existence and its historical importance for life in society. But, in contrast with the previous faculty, here the problem was not only in developing and enlarging it. For highly noble feelings to take root it was supposed that opposing faculties be simultaneously regulated, monitored, moderated and contained, or even prohibited. While it was easy to celebrate the creative force of the imagination, patent in many cultural creations that school promoted, it was also imperative to stamp out the dangers, errors and pernicious illusions that were often hidden within the child. It was important that the child understood that reason should prevail over the heart, that it was the unrestrained fantasies of the heart that could divert one from the path of truth. The world of impulse therefore became, in these terms, defined as purely fictional, while that of reason was identified entirely with the principle of reality. Hence, throughout the school cycle, as

²⁸ Compayré, Gabriel. "Raison." In *Dictionnaire de pédagogie et d'instruction primaire*, dir. Ferdinand Buisson. Paris, 1882: 1555.

²⁹ Compayré, Gabriel. "Facultés de l'âme." In *Dictionnaire de pédagogie et d'instruction primaire*, dir. Ferdinand Buisson. Paris, 1882: 986.

the years passed, first in the spirit of the child and then in the young adolescent, there would be a natural process of the passage of the lesser modalities from (i) ‘self-love’, presented as selfish, to another kind of inclination defined as (ii) ‘altruistic’—and illustrated with cases of patriotism and sacrifice for one’s neighbour or even for humanity. The process ended with the eruption of a (iii) ‘purely abstract love’ for the values of truth, beauty and good. The major question of popular education would therefore be the gradual and consolidated substitution of the sensation with the idea. ‘The development of sensibility’, proclaimed Compayré, ‘is intimately linked to the progress of intelligence’.³⁰ There was no virtue other than that which tended towards a love of virtue itself. The fancy of the ardent imagination of children and the young would be contained through forms of positive knowledge, judicious reflection and healthy examples.

The task to instil the moral became delicate rather than difficult when applied to the third faculty—the will. The school attempted, in another approximation to nature, that will overcome desire. Desire was identified as a solicitation exterior to the subject, while will was assumed to be the result of free resolution. But even so, will could be structured against child spontaneity, given that this was where the distinctive and independent mark of each child resided, which had to be preserved. Elie Pécaut tackled this delicate problem head on. He had no hesitation in stating that ‘obedience is the first and indispensable condition of all education’. He even translated the educational relation into ‘spiritual constraint, moral domination, absolute empire—noble and sacred in its aims—of the science on ignorance, or, to sum up, of strength over weakness’. Moreover, this clear conscience regarding the orthopaedics of souls did not impede Pécaut from also dealing with the question of autonomy and free will. Pécaut carefully described the two educational paradigms present at the time. The first, which he labelled theocratic, was based on the principle that all human nature was evil, and therefore a person could not be left to his/her own vices. Every combined effort, from instruction to education, from the moral to opinion, from custom to the reiterated use of force, had proved historically insufficient before the gigantic task of ‘reducing to absolute impotence the spontaneity of man—which is an error and a corruption—and thus *deprive man of self-government*, giving him up to unfailing hands, under the dignified stewardship of faith, and the power of those whose earthly authority comes from a divine origin’.³¹ The authoritarian spirit, grounded on ancient tradition, had looked for support for the civilizing task outside the child, and in so doing, was to be absolutely condemned. The error had been in not wanting to face the fact that nothing could save man apart from man himself. The second model—inspired by Rousseau and spawning from the Enlightenment and Progress—believing in the original goodness of human nature, attempted, on the contrary, to stimulate and strengthen all the instincts of independence and rights inherent to the realization of the person. This was the great promise. In fact, Pécaut considered that the most

³⁰ Compayré, *Cours de pédagogie théorique et pratique*: 183.

³¹ Pécaut, Élie. “Obéissance.” In *Dictionnaire de pédagogie et d’instruction primaire*, dir. Ferdinand Buisson. Paris, 1887: 2121–2123 (emphasis added).

important cog in the civilizing task of humanization of the child was to count on the child itself. The crux was to achieve a consented and docile obedience that did not collide with the personal energy of each subject. Truth, justice, goodness, duty and sacrifice would be taught as corresponding to a law inscribed in the very conscience of the child.

The Disciplinary Device Designed by Modern Pedagogy

In taking on board the idealization of the child and the educational relation, disciplinary practices would undergo a complete mutation. The refusal of repressive modalities in the school context would be, however, the last measure tending to impose as natural the civilizing idea that an outside stimulus would correspond to a voluntary movement within. Modern standardization arose, in fact, from the great idea of spontaneous discipline. Modern pedagogues came to agreement on this point: ‘the system that best suits a child is that in which he learns self control’.³² This principle can be translated into various maxims. First, and from the intellectual perspective, the pupil would be led to value study and reflect on him/herself. This led to constant appeals for personal, free and voluntary work. Second, with regard to the moral aspect, the old system, completely alien to the pupil, of material reward–corporal punishment, would be exchanged for strategies of direct responsibility: the pupils would comply with the several school cycles, hearing that experiences of good and evil and pain and joy would always be natural consequences of their individual acts. Each pupil would be taught that the only reward he/she could obtain would be the satisfaction of his/her most elevated inclinations. In truth, modern pedagogy would suggest that school guarantees that each individual would be able to win over him/herself upon completion of his/her studies.

It should also be noted that the authoritarian model was identified by these pedagogues as essentially linked to the regulatory formulae inspired directly by military discipline and criminal-type logic. The punitive and compensatory prerogatives that the schoolmaster had used, since Classic Antiquity, were applied largely to sanction or punish lack of knowledge. These only focused on instruction and not education of the pupil. In its absurd materiality, violence applied to the child began to be looked on by this progressive generation as artificial and without any value for conduct. The liberal dynamics of government of the self demanded, in the educational field, a much more complex set of practices that acted on the group of behavioural dispositions and not only on fear. But the determination to end corporal punishment and humiliation did not mean a restriction or economizing of means. On the contrary, it was a process of amplification and diversification, leading discipline as far as possible, i.e. exactly to the point when it was no longer necessary. Compayré confessed so clearly: ‘its aim, in any case, is to become needless’.³³

³² Buisson, Ferdinand. “Discipline.” In *Dictionnaire de pédagogie et d’instruction primaire*, dir. Ferdinand Buisson. Paris, 1882: 716.

³³ Compayré, *Cours de pédagogie théorique et pratique*: 457.

Discipline could not live without a careful and complete staging of the open spaces. The statement is extremely subtle and loaded with historical substance: ‘There is no other way to accustom the spirit to freedom than to imprison it in continuous and enforced sensations’.³⁴ In these terms the new disciplinary apparatus aimed to create objective structures of behaviour, but through a practical positioning that attended above all to the involuntary situation and the multi-directional movements in the various places where the action took place. This was the point on which the essential of the discourse of educational innovation became centred at the end of the nineteenth century. In the article ‘Education’, that he wrote for his *Dictionnaire*,³⁵ Buisson fully embraced this framework of ‘psi’ origin. For Buisson, the faculties of the soul and the very freedom of the child were developed by the most powerful instrument that education had at its disposal, the *habitus*. Virtues and vices would be positions running through any spirit: will was, however, the exclusive offspring of habit. Buisson and his contemporaries argued that the effect of regularity, repetition and discipline, through pedagogical strategies such as duly staggered timetables in weekly cycles, would shape, over time, the whole framework of existence. The learning of the curricular content would run in parallel with the task of acquisition of moral values, whose everyday repetition would turn into voluntary energy. Conforming to duty would feel like a ‘perpetual and pleasing imprisonment’.³⁶ At the end of schooling, the habit of doing good would have become second nature. It would be identified with subjectivity itself.³⁷

It is no exaggeration to say that the discovery of the child in last the century derived directly from this project of power. Gaillard, also in the *Dictionnaire de pédagogie*, endeavoured to show the advantages of a differentiated study of individual characters. It was not by chance that his article was titled ‘School Discipline’. After stating that the psychological science had proved that it was impossible for two soulmates to exist, Gaillard made knowledge depend on the individual diversity of a panoptic vigilance of the pupil—in the classroom, in the playground, along the route that the child took home, and why not inside the home—thus proving that, one by one and separately, all the pupils could be governed. His portrait should be read as a remote expression of the methods that would bring about the modern disciplinary practices, which leads to systematic and in-depth observation to remove the need to act directly on the bodies or the consciences.

Pupils cannot all be treated in the same way. Some of them oppose our efforts with an indifference that seems insurmountable; others react with a exasperating indolence; for many it is a question of breaking their pride; some are crude and apathetic, and it is therefore necessary to stimulate them at all times in order to arouse their attention; the shy ones

³⁴ *Ibid.*: 97.

³⁵ Buisson, Ferdinand. “Éducation.” In *Dictionnaire de pédagogie et d’instruction primaire*, dir. Ferdinand Buisson. Paris, 1882: 805–811.

³⁶ *Ibid.*: 809.

³⁷ Carrau, L. “Habitude.” In *Dictionnaire de pédagogie et d’instruction primaire*, dir. Ferdinand Buisson. Paris, 1880: 948.

require encouragement, the active and impetuous ones should be calmed down all the time. Some are led on by their colleagues and don't have any initiative, while others command and turn into little despots.... The scope of the individual characters that teachers face is extremely wide, as is extremely high the number of proper procedures that they must employ to guide and try to modify their pupils. The personal characteristics will be better known if the pupils are observed, not only in the classroom, but also in the playgrounds and other spaces, given that, when free from all constraints, they show their true selves; The teacher will know them better as well through contacts made with their families. The teacher will accept the children as they truly are and will make a bigger effort to turn them into what they should be. All school discipline must train the pupils to win over themselves.³⁸

Conclusion

It was through the adaptation of practices common to religious supervision and management of the pastoral type, in other words the attempt to identify oneself with a being of superior quality, that the public school managed to inscribe the principle of personal fulfilment right at the core of the disciplinary objective of the liberal states. We can say that this was the foundation of the active political principle, so characteristic of our civilization, that preaches that self-observation leads directly to self-regulation, that the disciplinary training developed in the walls of the classroom continues throughout adult life. In its particular circumstances and in its successive steps, the school institution began to equip individuals with increasingly specialized forms of ethical reflection, presenting them as attributes of citizenship, and as such contributed largely to the universalization of the model of the reflective person. It was a continuation of the work of subjectivation developed by the Christian authorities when they decided to pressure the individual once and for all to cross the threshold of interrogation.

We know that the discourses around the moral problem and the corresponding creation of disciplinary technologies have accelerated significantly and become ever more complex in modernity. Pedagogy also wanted to translate this political programme, while claiming for itself the status of positive science. The discursive formation drawn up from the last quarter of the nineteenth century gave us without doubt the idea that freedom would be the great accelerator of authority and discipline. The psychopedagogical considerations concerning the internal structure of the soul and the play of contrasts that would demarcate the child–youth passions were nothing more than the transfer, to the educational field, of the interests and investments of governmentalized subjectivation. Indeed, for this first group of pedagogues it was already very clear that each singularity was becoming viewed as a point of passage directed towards principles and forces of power. A permanent striving would characterize modernity—to govern without governing through the amplification of power to its furthest limits (i.e. the choices of autonomous subjects in their decisions).

³⁸ Gaillard, J. "Discipline scolaire." In *Dictionnaire de pédagogie et d'instruction primaire*, dir. Ferdinand Buisson. Paris, 1982: 719.