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Egoistic Teaching
Rousseau, the Good Life, and the Teacher's Role

Egoistiskt lärarskap: Rousseau, det goda livet, och lärarrollen

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ABSTRACT

Lärarrollen brukar först och främst ses som en altruistisk företeelse - läraren bör främst hänge sig åt andras behov. Trots att en sådan syn är tongivande idag är den oerhört problematisk. Denna essä ämnar att bidra till forskning om lärarrollen. Genom att använda Rousseaus idéer om det goda livet såsom de framställs i *Emile*, argumenterar jag för att *lärarrollen ska vara egoistisk istället för främst altruistisk*. Detta argument utvecklas genom tre teman: *I, Happiness and Suffering*; *II, Compassion*; *III, The Egoistic Teacher*. I korthet kan de två första teman anses vara förberedande inför det tredje. I det tredje temat, med exempel från litteraturen, konkretiserar jag innebörden av en egoistisk syn på lärarrollen. Genom ett egoistiskt perspektiv ses själva lärarskapet som en förlängning av lärarens själv (*ego*) i det ämne hen lär ut, till studenterna (inom vissa gränser). Denna syn på lärarrollen möjliggör en annan förståelse för det goda livet i läraryrket. Essän för fram tanken om att lärarens främsta fokus bör vara egoistiskt för att kunna leva ett gott liv.

Nyckelord: the good life, Rousseau, teaching, philosophy, altruism, egoism.

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OUTLINING THE PROBLEM

Self-Help Manuals on Teacher Burnout

The following list comes from a blog article entitled “Ways to Avoid Teacher Burnout”:

1. Foster positivity.
2. Create realistic to do lists.
3. Accept that there are things you cannot change.
4. Learn to relax.
5. Watch a funny movie.
6. Try something new.
7. Leave your teaching at school.
8. Get plenty of sleep.
9. Talk to someone positive.
10. Celebrate what it means to be a teacher. (Kelly, 2018)

Lists of injunctions such as this one have become a recurring sight in the public discussion on teacher burnout. They come from a register bearing the intriguing name of ‘self-help’. The latter has become very popular. Self-help manuals proliferate in the form of blogs (e.g. Weis, 2017; Kelly, 2018) and best-selling books (Rankin, 2006; Mielke, 2019). As in the above list, self-help tends to pretend to know how to prevent or to cure burnout. Such lists of advice do not seem so problematic at first sight. At worst, they could be seen as well-marketed empty words. At best, they could be read as harmless common sense.

Although self-help often claims to have the solution to teacher burnout, such lists are an integral part of the problem. In this regard, the tenth injunction[1] in the above list is worth a closer reading:

> Celebrate what it means to be a teacher.
> Think back to why you became a teacher. Always remember that teachers are important and valuable to society. Remember and cherish any time that a student gives you a compliment or writes you a teacher appreciation note. (Kelly, 2018)

Taken seriously, this tenth command says that the teacher’s *why* is to exist for “society” and for “student[s]”. The teacher’s *why* is primarily to work for others’. Alas, the teacher’s life purpose is displaced to others’. Then, this displacement is encouraged by students’ “appreciation” and “compliment[s]” (Kelly, 2018). What is worrying about self-help manuals is that they celebrate the same ‘ethical’ teacher ideals that could actually lead to teacher burnout. Coincidentally, this

[1] Similar messages can easily be found in other self-help sources. See for instance the blog post “Getting Real With Teacher Burnout - 5 Ways to Beat It!” (Weis, 2007). Accordingly, here is one of the five ‘ways’ to beat burnout: “Teach for the Right Reasons. Remember that you are teaching for your students” (Weis, 2007). See also Mielke’s recent book (2019): *The Burnout Cure: Learning to Love Teaching Again*, and Rankin’s popular manual (2006) *First Aid for Teacher Burnout: How You Can Find Peace and Success.*

is precisely what is absent from public debates on teacher burnout: discussing the 'ethical' dimension of the teacher's role.

The Ethical Dimension: on Teacher Altruism

According to the philosopher of education Chris Higgins (2003; 2011), the ethical ideal of teacher altruism should be questioned. His noteworthy work on the ethical[2] dimension of teaching problematizes the taken-for-granted assumption that *teaching should be altruistic*. Meaning that teachers should primarily care for others. A principle that is usually assumed in teachers' success-stories that can be found in self-help literature and in mainstream films (see Higgins' introduction, 2011, pp. 1-18). In 'inspirational teacher films' the good teacher is usually portrayed as an altruistic hero. As in *The Ron Clark Story* (2006) or *Freedom Writers* (2007), to cite but a few. Typically, the altruistic teachers in such films attend a 'tough' classroom, as if teaching was a rescuing mission. The irony is that learning is often depicted as painless and enjoyable for the students, while being costly and painful for the altruistic teachers (see *The Ron Clark Story*, 2006). The discourse that *teaching should be altruistic* is so taken for granted that it remains hard, if not impossible, to imagine a good 'egoistic' teacher.

While caring for others may not be problematic per se, this altruistic assumption can progress into a form of self-sacrifice, which may even lead to teacher burnout (Higgins, 2011). There is a hypothetical altruistic progression, as follows:

i. Teaching is a deeply moral endeavor in which the welfare of other human beings, their current vulnerabilities and their future possibilities, is the teacher's primary concern.
ii. Unfortunately, acting on this concern requires a high degree of selflessness and sacrifice…
iii. Ultimately, then, good teaching is a selfless labour of love… (Higgins 2011, p. 171)

What is striking in this sequence is that the first assumption does not necessarily lead to the second, nor the second to the third — they do not add up. Rather than altruism as such (first statement), it is the altruistic progression that leads to an unsustainable ethic (second and third statements). According to Higgins, "[g]ood teaching requires self-cultivation rather than self-sacrifice" (2003, p. 131). His work suggests that teacher altruism deserves to be further examined in order to better understand its dangers and to propose an alternative.

[2] Higgins refers to it as the "ethics of teaching" (2003; 2011). Here, ethical is meant in the broadest sense, to all questions treating how to live a 'good life' in general.

In this essay, we will depart from the beginning of Higgins' first statement, assuming that "teaching is a moral endeavor" (2011, p. 171). In other words, we depart from the assumption that teaching is an ethical occupation. Altruism as a problematic ethical ideal in teaching, will be referred to as 'primary altruism' (meaning to teach *first and foremost* for others).

Two Enquiries on the Good Life in Teaching

Common issues met by teachers (such as burnout) and the representations of teachers as altruistic heroes (in self-development literature and films) remind us of the necessity of having ethical discussions about the 'good life' in teaching. The pursuit of a good life is a theme that was deemed urgent already in ancient Greek thought. Today, there is still a sense of urgency, always renewed, in the question of the good life in teaching.

The 'good life' is a vague term. Two lines of enquiry will guide us to the formulation of narrower research questions. The first enquiry has been traversing the history of ideas on the good life: *how can I live well with others?* Applied to teaching, this enquiry can be instrumental in order to focus on the complex teacher role and the teacher-students relation. It is a way of emphasizing the relational aspect of teaching, which in turn enables us to problematize altruism. This leads us to a second and narrower enquiry: *how can I work as a teacher and live a good life?* (inspired by Higgins, 2011). The good life does not mean enjoying life outside of work, or doing breathing exercises in the classroom or during the coffee break, as self-help literature might recommend. Rather, it refers to the pursuit of teacher's own good life *in* teaching.

To help us answer these enquiries, I propose to turn to Rousseau's radical and original approach to the good life in education in *Emile, or On Education* (1979). In this essay, *Emile* will be read as a philosophical novel on education for a 'good life'. One of the overall purposes of education is to learn how to live a good life by oneself and with others.

Research Questions and Disposition

In this essay, Rousseau's influential perspective will be used to approach the urgent problem of teacher altruism. His reflections on the good life in education, in *Emile*, can help us ground the teacher's role in egoism rather than primary altruism. Hence, the following research questions:

- How does Rousseau conceive the good life in *Emile*?
- Based on Rousseau's view on the good life, why should teaching be understood as 'egoistic' rather than primarily altruistic?

The main argument developed in this essay is that t*eaching should be egoistic, rather than primarily altruistic*. In order to give some context to this ideas, I will locate Rousseau's thought in relation to influential discourses on the good life, altruism, and egoism (in the *Background*). Thereafter, I will introduce Rousseau's thought in *Emile*. The argument, drawing from Rousseau's ideas of the good life, is gradually developed through three themes.

In *Theme I, Happiness and Suffering*, the discourses that *learning should be painless and enjoyable* and *teaching should be painful* will be questioned. At the same time, Rousseau's notions of happiness and suffering will be introduced, which pave the way for discussing compassion.

In *Theme II, Compassion*, Rousseau's view on emotions (self-love and *amour-propre*) and 'compassion' are presented (E4[3]). Here, I prepare the theoretical ground for the next theme. Then, we will attempt to locate the most essential element in Rousseau's 'egoistic' compassion, with an example from a short-story on solitude and solidarity, *Jonas, the Artist at Work* (Camus, 1991).

In *Theme III, The Egoistic Teacher*, the main argument is developed. Primary altruism is first described and problematized. Then, departing from Rousseau's view of the good life as being oneself (E1), and based on previous themes, egoistic teaching is outlined as an alternative to primary altruism. Furthermore, egoistic teaching allows us to shed light in a different way on the good life in ordinary teacher portrayals. Finally, we will interpret some ordinary teacher portrayals from the novels *Stoner* (Williams, 2006) and *School Blues* (Pennac, 2010) in egoistic terms.

Each theme is accompanied by an introduction and a conclusion. Before going to the grain, I will briefly describe the form of this paper: an essay.

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[3] Rousseau's *Emile* (Bloom's translation, 1979) will be referred to as E, succeeded by the book number.

Form: an Essay

An essay remains the fittest way to answer to the problem of primary altruism and propose an 'egoistic' view of teaching. This essay follows three rhetorical virtues (*docere*; *delectare; movere*) — to teach, to delight, and to move (Cicero, 1942). Although these virtues were first formulated as the features of a good orator by Cicero, 55 years BC (*De Oratore*, 1942), they can also be transposed into general guidelines for 'virtuous' academic writing (Hellspong, 2014, p. 187). Accordingly, this essay is an attempt to teach (*docere*) to the extent that it exposes and produces arguments on what teaching may entail. Further, this essay attempts to be engaging (*movere*) and comprehensible (*delectare*) by proposing various empirical examples to concretize abstract ideas. This essay is a genuine attempt (an *essai*) to tend towards these three guidelines.

BACKGROUND: THE GOOD LIFE, ALTRUISM, AND EGOISM

This section focuses on some historical approaches relevant to locate Rousseau's philosophy (and this essay) in relation to common discourses on the good life, altruism and egoism. First, I will present some of the influential approaches to the 'good life' from Ancient Greece. Second, altruism, and some 'pre-altruistic' discourses, will be described. Third, I will briefly remind of the traditional views on egoism. At the end of each part, I will name some of the correspondences and oppositions with Rousseau's *Emile*.

The Good Life in Greek Thought

In the following, I will present a brief overview of some of the most influential, yet competing, approaches on the good life in Greek thought (3rd and 4th century BC). The good life can be best understood with the ancient Greek word: *eudaimonia*. Valued as the highest good, *eudaimonia* is an ethical ideal of 'living well' and of 'happiness' (Helmreich, 2014). It is distinct from an everlasting life, good fortune, and pleasure. Among the first ethical enquiries on the pursuit of good life as *eudaimonia*, one can recall the so-called Socratic question, *How should one live?* (B. Williams, 1985, Chapter 1). According to Plato (2005), the good life should be reached through thinking and self-examination in *vita contemplativa* (in the world of Ideas); but not in the material world. On the other side, his pupil Aristotle (2000) defined *eudaimonia* as an ideal that can also be sought in *vita activa* (in practice). It requires nonetheless tending towards what is good, developing habits and virtues through time and experience.

To name but a few other philosophical schools, Stoicism and Epicureanism had competing views on the good life. Here, the highest form of the good life for Stoics could mean living in *apatheia*, in the passive and safe state of mind, in the absence of disturbing passions. Stoics attempted to live well by practicing what can be interpreted as "spiritual exercises" (Hadot, 2002). On the other hand, Epicurean happiness was a combination of two ideals (Helmreich, 2014). First, *aponia* is the pleasure felt in the absence of physical ills and suffering. Second, *ataraxia*, or mental tranquility, refers to a state of mind free from disturbances. Curiously, all those ethical ideals start with a negative prefix: *a-patheia*, *a-ponia*, *a-taraxia* (Helmreich, 2014, p. 399). Stoics and Epicureans were concerned with negating or minimizing what would hinder us from living well.

The good life in *Emile* can be located in the continuation of these ancient debates. Although there are plenty of correspondences, Emile's good life seems to be close to Aristotle's *eudaimonia* since it can be achieved and pursued in *vita activa* (2000). On the other hand, the comparison with Stoics and Epicureans is relevant when it comes to the use of 'negation' and of exercises (Hadot, 2002).

Altruism, *in a word*

Today, altruism can be described as a concern for the welfare of others. An altruistic act can be described as benevolent, disinterested, and selfless. One would expect a Latin-sounding word like altruism to have been in use for a couple of millennia. Surprisingly, altruism is a very modern invention. *Altruisme* (in French) was coined as late as in 1830 by Auguste Comte (in *Catéchisme positiviste*, 1830/1966). There, it was already relatively close to the way altruism is used today, as opposed to egoism. This being said, the late apparition of the word was preceded by time-honored conversations of altruism *avant la lettre*[4], not least in philosophical and religious discourses.

The earliest hints of altruism can already be found in ancient times. In Greek and Latin, altruism can remind of Aristotle's and Cicero's writings on *philia* (2000) and *amisticia* (1961) — or, 'brotherly love' (Auvray-Assayas, Baladier, Būttgen, & Cassin, 2014). A form of ethical and virtuous relation with pairs, or friends, which is instrumental to living well. Then, there have also been numerous (pre)altruistic religious ideals that can be roughly apprehended under the umbrella of 'neighborly love' (including benevolence and charity) (Auvray-Assayas, et al., 2014), itself anchored in the Judeo-Christian injunction, "love your neighbor as yourself" (Lv, 19:18). It suggests that the idea that altruism is a moral good that was already present 'before altruism'.

Compared to (pre)altruistic discourses, Rousseau's view on compassion follows a radically different logic (E4). Indeed, altruism is based on the division between I and another (I and a friend, I and a neighbor). Conversely, in Rousseau's view of compassion, the "*ego* expands to the *alter ego*[5]" (Spector 2007, p. 40). Altruism cannot operate without this basic separation

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[4] Meaning 'before the letter', before the term altruism was coined.

[5] Spector's quote comes from *Rousseau, ethic and economy. The model of Clarens in the Nouvelle Héloïse* (2007). This article reformulates ethics of economy based on Rousseau's *Nouvelle Héloïse*, including comparisons with *Emile* (Spector, 2007). Though the article treats different themes than this essay, it will still be a valuable source when it comes to understanding the conventional discourses on egoism and making sense of Rousseau's compassion (theme II).

between I and others. Rousseau's view on compassion destabilizes and overcomes this separation, as we shall see in theme II.

Egoism, *in a word*

Egoism comes from the Latin *ego*, meaning: I. The two most common perspectives on egoism are psychological egoism and normative egoism (see Moseley, 2005). First, psychological egoism assumes that the individual primarily acts out of self-interest. This narrow assumption on human nature does not impede the individual from helping others, but only as a self-interested act. Then, normative egoism tends to argue that an individual *ought* to pursue his/her self-interest. Those who defend normative egoism may argue that seeking self-interest is the most rational thing to do, or that it is the best way to harmonize everyone's self-interests (Moseley, 2005). Both approaches reduces individuals to a *homo œconomicus* (Spector, 2007), to the egoistic pursuit of their own self-interests.

Rousseau's approach to the good life (including compassion) is not primarily based on self-interests but on emotions (E4). That is why a common interpretation of Rousseau's compassion is that it overcomes the usual opposition egoism/altruism (for instance, see Spector, 2017). This said, there are also grounds for assuming that Rousseau's compassion can be interpreted as 'egoistic', yet referring to a radically different kind of egoism[6] (see Starobinski, 1959). A sort of egoism that is neither based on self-interest nor on the usual distinction between I and others.

As we shall see further in theme II, Rousseau's perspective opposes the narrow representation of humans as *homo œconomicus* (Spector, 2007), and allows us to re-shape egoism in a radically different manner (as a form of compassionate extension of 'self-love').

[6] Starobinski's seminal article (1959) presents Rousseau as a narcissist, though it does not refer to narcissism in a conventional sense (as self-centeredness, selfishness). In the latter he reads Rousseau's works through the mythological figure of Narcissus. Narcissus metamorphosed into flower after having contemplated at his own beautiful reflection in the Styx river (or his twin-sister's reflection) (Starobinski, 1959). Interestingly, Starobinski reads Rousseau's philosophy as a "*narcissisme sans miroir*" [mirrorless narcissism] (1959, p. 217). A reading that can partly help understand the role of *amour-propre*, compassion, and even solitude, in Rousseau (E4). That is why this article is a major source of inspiration (rather than a strict reference) for this essay. Most importantly, Starobinski's article (1959) suggests that it is possible to read Rousseau's ideas as 'egoistic' — though not in a conventional sense.

ROUSSEAU'S *EMILE*

In this section, I will first ask why one should read *Emile*, before contextualizing Rousseau's thought in relation to progressive education. Second, Rousseau's romantic view of human nature will be introduced. Third, the main characters of *Emile* will be introduced (Emile and Jean-Jacques). Last but not least, I will mention other 'complementary' works written by Rousseau that will also be used in this essay.

Why Read *Emile*?

Emile, or on Education[7] is neither a pedagogical manual, nor a template. It should not be approached too straightforwardly. We cannot read it in the same way we can watch an online video-tutorial that provides tips on 'successful teaching'. One of the main difficulties of this philosophical novel is that it blends philosophy and fiction in the same sentence. *Emile* offers something that could not be found in video-tutorials or self-help manuals which tend to dictate common sense and reproduce popular discourses on teaching, over and over again. Conversely, delving into *Emile* is worthwhile, as it gives us theoretical tools (ideas, reflections, examples) framed in a coherent thought, which can help us reflect upon what is usually taken for granted (such as primary altruism). In this essay, *Emile* permits us to imagine a good 'egoistic teacher'.

Emile has been particularly influential in education, from its publication in 1762, until today (Bertram, 2018). During *le siècle des Lumières*, *Emile* was a critique against the educational methods of the time, notably against child punishment, physical abuse, the teacher's coercive authority, and against the way childhood was perceived[8]. Its author, Jean-Jacques Rousseau is considered to be the founding father of progressive education by some. The precise relation between his discourse and progressive pedagogy is a debated topic. Nonetheless, *Emile* and its countless interpretations has had an influence on both progressive education, as well as on critique of progressive education (see Carr, 2003, Chapter 14). It suggests a history of continuities and discontinuities between the educational principles coming from *Emile* and today's educational practices.

Progressive education is more of a blanket term than a coherent set of principles and practices, and it can take many shapes. Notwithstanding this, it tends to include the following educational

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[7] *Emile ou de l'éducation* (2009).
[8] "The man must be considered in the man and the child in the child" (E2, p. 80).

principles (Mintz, 2012): student-centered education according to the student's progress and maturity; discovery pedagogy; active students; and, learning as enjoyable. Nonetheless, and as Avi I. Mintz argues (2012), there is "a path not taken" in progressive pedagogy (Mintz, 2012, p. 249), which encourages us to go back to *Emile* to re-value some educational ideas.

By taking seriously the project proposed in *Emile* (coherent within *Emile* and with Rousseau's other works), we can focus on his philosophical proposal.

Romantic Nature

In *Emile*, the characters are repeatedly 'thrown into' dramatic situations. Such scenes allow Rousseau to illustrate and to test a theory animated by nature. Nature operates as a kind of Archimedean point that animates all characters and ideas. It is not unproblematic. This being said, the only way to make Rousseau's thought come to life is by accepting his view of nature, at least temporarily. It can be understood as a critique against the religious and philosophical discourses from the Enlightenment.

Before developing Rousseau's romantic 'vision' of nature, we will mention two discourses that it criticized at the time of publication: (i) the original sin and (ii) the mechanistic approach to human nature. First, the Christian notion of original sin supposes that human nature is originally corrupted and sinful, and should be educated or rectified accordingly (Bernardi, 2004). Second, as expressed in Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651/1978), human nature is intrinsically self-interested and greedy, wherein the good of one is a threat to the 'common good'.

Opposite to the original sin, and to the mechanistic approach (as in Hobbes, 1652/1978), Rousseau assumes that "the first movements of nature are always right" (E2, p. 92). Unfortunately, rushed descriptions of Rousseau's philosophy would often end up in a binary opposition: nature is 'good' and society is 'bad'. This shortcut can lead to misunderstandings[9]. Rousseau's idea of the natural state is good insofar as it is a solitary and innocent state (E4; see also Bernardi, 2004, p. 470). The point is not to go back to, or to remain in, the fiction of a solitary natural state, but rather to learn how to live well with others (in society) through education.

[9] Contrary to a common misunderstanding, nature in Rousseau's view does not correspond to the myth of the 'noble savage', which can be found elsewhere (see Fenelon, 1738, for instance).

Emile and Jean-Jacques

As its title indicates, the main project of *Emile or on Education* is to educate Emile (to enable him to live a good life). A naïve reader would first wonder from which planet Emile comes. Emile has no parent, no school, no teacher, no friend. Emile is best described in this quote: "he is not a savage to be relegated to the desert. He is a savage made to inhabit cities" (E3:205; see theme II). The layout of the five books reflects Emile's progress. It is a *Bildungsroman*, meaning a story in which one follows the main protagonist's development over time. From being an infant (E1), to a young child (E2; E3), a teenager (E4), a young man and a citizen (E5).

Emile's education is entrusted to only one character during twenty-five years: to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's doppelgänger, Jean-Jacques. The latter barely qualifies as a 'character'. He has no life of his own, he only exists for Emile and he is certainly not a teacher. He is however in charge of Emile from his early childhood, from his first steps, to his first love and first travels (E1-E5). During the first part of his education, the manipulative Jean-Jacques supervises and observes him from a distance. He mainly protects Emile from corrupting influences (during Emile's "negative education", see E2, p. 93). Gradually, Jean-Jacques' role evolves as Emile grows up, to the point of having some conversations with Emile that resemble formal lectures (E5). It suggests an evolution and a certain ambiguity in Jean-Jacques' role.

Rousseau's Works in this Essay

Apart from Rousseau's *Emile*, three complementary works by Rousseau are included in this essay, mainly to accentuate some elements that are expressed in, and coherent with, *Emile*: (i) *Emile and Sophie or the Solitaries* (ESS); (ii) *Discourse on Inequality* (DOI); (iii) *Reveries of the Solitary Walker* (SW)[10].

First, *Emile*'s sequel (EES), unfinished and published posthumously, consists in two letters that Emile addresses to Jean-Jacques, when heartbroken and in exile. It is relevant in this essay since it includes some retrospective reflections on education and the good life from Emile's point of view. Second, Rousseau's discourse (DOI) is particularly helpful in order to discuss self-love and *amour-propre* (see theme II), which are defined more precisely there than in *Emile*[11] (E4).

[10] These complementary sources will be cited by their respective initials, ESS; DOI; SW, as indicated in the text.

[11] Despite the variations between how the terms self-love, *amour-propre,* and 'compassion' are used in DOI and in *Emile*, I use them as employed in *Emile* (E4), and quote DOI only to define the terms more precisely.

Third, Rousseau's semi-autobiographical writing (SW) will be a valuable source in this essay. It will be used in theme III in order to interpret the good life in *Stoner* (Williams, 2006).

Rousseau's *Emile* remains, however, the main reference to tackle the problem of primary altruism, and to outline an egoistic teacher in the three following themes: *(I) suffering and happiness*; *(II) compassion*; *(III) the egoistic teacher.*

THEME I HAPPINESS AND SUFFERING

The discourses that *learning should be painless and enjoyable* and that *teaching should be painful* should be questioned. In this theme, I will introduce Rousseau's ideas on happiness and suffering in education in order to destabilize these discourses, while laying the theoretical ground for discussing compassion in theme II.

This theme is divided into three parts. First, I will illustrate the discourse that *learning should be painless and enjoyable* with an empirical example from a film on altruistic teaching: *The Ron Clark Story* (2006). Second, I will contrast the latter discourse with Rousseau's ideas on happiness and suffering in education, which includes habituating to suffering and suffering in learning. Here, I follow Mintz's interpretation of happiness and suffering in *Emile* (see 2012; see also Jonas, 2010). Last but not least, I will briefly discuss the dichotomy between *learning as painless* and *teaching as painful* in altruistic teaching.

1. *Learning as painless and enjoyable*

The film *The Ron Clark Story* (2006) is the kind of teacher-film that spectators in search for pedagogic methods that 'really work' would cherish. This film is a success-story about a substitute teacher doing wonders in a 'tough' classroom in Harlem (New York). His ultimate purpose is to make sure that the students succeed in passing the final year exam.

Ron Clark's students had no interest in grammar or in listening quietly to their teacher's voice. During a grammar lesson, he makes his students stay focused and quiet via an uncommon method. He starts by making "a deal" with his students: "If you are quiet and you listen, every 15 seconds I shall drink a chocolate milk. If you can do it, you may get to see me puke" (*The Ron Clark Story*, 2006). The teacher's trick keeps students entertained during the lesson. He even pretends to vomit in front of the class, which makes students burst into laughter.

Despite being unrealistic, this scene is symptomatic of Ron Clark's teaching style. Further, for example, he would sing a rap song mentioning all the American presidents' names, the "president's rap" (*The Ron Clark Story*, 2006). Eventually, all the students would join him in choir. When students get good grades at a test, he would distribute candies to them, and then ask students to give themselves a round of applause. Ultimately, this type of learning enables students to pass their final exam. The teacher's mission is crowned with success.

In my interpretation, the discourses that *learning should be painless and enjoyable*, and that *teaching should be painful* are both patently present in this film. There is an important distinction between using a form of happiness ('painless and enjoyable learning') as an *instrument* and setting the good life (which includes happiness) as the *end* of education. Ron Clark designs painless and enjoyable lessons as an instrument that is supposed to enable learning. Conversely, in Rousseau's *Emile*, the purpose of education is to live a good life, which includes a completely different stance on happiness and suffering.

2. Happiness

The conception of happiness, included in the good life, is viable and possible to reach: "I want [Emile] to be happy not once but always, if it is possible" (E4, pp. 326-327).

In *Emile*, happiness is twofold. It corresponds both to the pursuit of an equilibrium and to subjective experiences of joy (Mintz, 2012, p. 154). On the one hand, and most importantly, happiness is a search for a balance: "…the closer to his natural condition he stayed, the smaller is the difference between his faculties and his desires" (E2, p. 81). Jean-Jacques' role is to guide Emile to the pursuit of this mature equilibrium between what he *can* do by himself and what he *wishes* to do. On the other hand, this pursuit of happiness is compatible with simple and innocent pleasures. Rousseau tends to associate it with a romantic view of childhood as a state of innocence, isolated from negative influences (from society) (E2, p. 93). To sum up, Emile seeks happiness by seeking an ideal balance between his desires and faculties, and is simply happy when enjoying the moment.

In the previous empirical example, Ron Clark (2006) attempts to please his students, and to habituate them to being pleased, of enjoying themselves. According to Rousseau, pleasing children can only soften them and foster their unhappiness,

> Do you know the surest means of making your child miserable? It is to accustom him to getting everything; since his desires grow constantly due to the ease of satisfying them…; he will want the star he sees shining; he will want everything he sees. (E2, p. 87)

In other words, students who ask for the moon would be furious when realizing that their whim is left unfulfilled. Pleasing children, as if they were capricious customers, provokes an unbalance "between faculties and desires" (E2, p. 81). Systematically pleasing them would

increase their desires, endlessly, without strengthening their faculties. Rather than enjoying painless lessons, suffering is at the heart of Emile's education.

3. Suffering

According to Rousseau, "suffering is the first thing [Emile] has to learn, and the thing he will most need to know" (E2, p. 77). Pain (or suffering) is a condition that makes Emile's education educational (E1; Jonas, 2010; Mintz, 2012). So, taking pain away from education would be self-destructive, making education un-educational. In all evidence, all sufferings are not educational. Hence we need to examine how Rousseau defined suffering in relation to Emile's education. Distinctions can be made between three different types of pain (as in Mintz, 2012). First, habituating to pain as a part of life (especially the physical pain in the early years). Second, suffering as instrumental to learning. Emile has to learn to endure pain (to live well) in order to enable him to feel compassion. Compassion is the third type of pain, suffering at others' suffering, (Jonas, 2010; Mintz, 2012) which we will come back to in the next theme.

Habituating to Suffering, or Plunging Emile into the Styx River

The myth of Thetis plunging Achilles (as an infant) into the Styx river operates as an analogy for the educational need to habituate to suffering. According to the Greek mythology, the Styx river could make infants invulnerable, it could strengthen them to endure life (E1, p. 47). Thetis holds Achilles by the heel, making him quasi-invulnerable, as his heel was not plunged into the river. After this ritual, Achilles became a war hero and died a heroic death when a poisoned arrow hit his heel during an epic battle (Mintz, 2012, p. 255). Jean-Jacques, alike Thetis, lets Emile endure painful experiences that would strengthen Emile. Experiences, in plural, since one symbolic plunging would not be enough.

Jean-Jacques makes suffering into a recurring experience. The idea is to make Emile "used to" the painful accidents that are undeniably part of life, which in its turn can lead to strengthen him and developing good habits (E2, p. 131). To get used to minor physical pains in order to familiarize himself with sufferings in life, such as more serious injuries or diseases[12] (E5, p. 433). That is why Emile joyfully climbs up and down the cliff, runs around, and at times he

[12] Jean-Jacques would later recount those episodes to Emile (E5, p. 443): "You have enjoyed all the goods nature gave you. Of the ills to which it subjects you and from which I could protect you, you have felt only those which could harden you against other ills. You have never suffered except to avoid greater ones".

falls down. Yet, the slight falls can make him stronger, and prepare him to deal with greater sufferings,

> Let us always arm man against unexpected accidents. In the morning let Emile run barefoot in all seasons, in his room, on the stairs, in the garden... I shall take care only that glass be removed. (E2, p. 139)

Jean-Jacques would only take the glass shards away, to avoid the pains that Emile could not bear, while arming him to all kinds of accidental sufferings. When adult, Emile faces a great deal of emotional suffering (in the sequel, ESS). However he would express his appreciation of the education to pain that he received. He writes to Jean-Jacques: "Never did I more strongly feel the power of Education than at this dreadful moment" (ESS, p. 204). Suggesting that the early habit of suffering minor pains helped him overcome this moment of profound despair. Confirming, retrospectively, the central value of suffering in education. Emile did not become an invincible God but a human being disposed to live well, even when facing adversity. This is, in part, because he had been initiated to the experience of pain.

Suffering in Learning

At one point in the story, Emile (as a teenager) did not see the use of learning about orientation[13]. It simply seemed pointless to him to learn about the stars and the sun in order to orientate oneself. Jean-Jacques did not try to entertain him or to make learning easy. His method was significantly more painful. Indeed, the next day he invited Emile for an early walk in a nearby forest. Once outside the house: "we roam the fields; we get lost; we no longer know where we are" (E3, p. 180). Realizing that they were lost, Emile became desperate. He even cried out of exhaustion, thirst, and hunger. It is at this very instant that Jean-Jacques started an informal lesson. He formulated a few questions that led Emile to find his way back home in relation to the position of the sun. Thus teaching Emile some orientation skills, which allowed him to find the way back (E3, pp. 180-186). Obviously, the point of this lesson is not to make children starve or cry before starting the lesson. However, it still remains insightful on the instrumental use of suffering in learning, as Emile is most disposed to learning when he "no longer know[s]" where he is (E3, p. 180).

[13] It is referred to as a lesson in "astronomy" (E3, p. 181) and in "geography" (E3, p. 180).

4. *Learning as painless and enjoyable* and *teaching as painful*

We shall briefly review the discourses of *learning as painless and enjoyable* and *teaching as painful*. They accentuate an ironic facet of Ron Clark's teaching style (*The Ron Clark Story*, 2006). Indeed, Ron Clark's efforts (2006) to make learning painless and enjoyable appear to be painful for the teacher himself. As if the painful efforts were displaced from the students' role to the teacher's. Altruistic teaching seems to displace suffering from the student's role to the teacher's, hence attempting to empty learning from all that is not painless. To the ironic point of emptying education of an element that can make it educational: suffering. Moreover, the teacher does not need to inflict unnecessary pains upon oneself motivated by un-educational premises. While imagining *teaching as painless* is vain, it does not mean that any suffering is justified. So, *teaching can be painful*, at times, but it should not be painful for the sake of making learning painless for students (which is not educational).

Theme I: Discussion and Conclusion

It might sound odd today to hear that making learning fun ('painless and enjoyable') is un-educational. However, the educational value and use of suffering in learning has been present in the history of ideas since ancient times. Already in the Socratic dialogues, the pursuit of the good life included its lot of educational suffering at the image of the aporetic state (*aporia*) (Plato, 2005). A state of doubt that is close to what Emile experiences in this painful lesson of orientation, at the moment "when we no longer know where we are" (E3, p. 180). In brief: instead of making learning enjoyable for the students, the teacher's role is to plunge them (metaphorically) into the Styx river.

The third type of suffering in Rousseau's Emile, suffering others' suffering ('compassion') will be introduced in the next theme.

THEME II COMPASSION

This section completes Rousseau's view of suffering with the idea of compassion (suffering at others' suffering). Theme II is a transitory step in this essay, from theme I (happiness and suffering) to theme III (the egoistic teacher). In this present theme, I prepare the theoretical ground that will help us discuss egoistic teaching in the next theme. Rousseau's view on the good life is the main topic of this theme to better understand the teacher's role in the next theme.

When outlining the problem, earlier, we acknowledged that teaching is an ethical project, and that primary altruism is an unviable ethical ideal (see also Higgins 2011). In this theme, I propose a more viable ethic than primary altruism, by turning to Rousseau's view on compassion (as egoistic). In the first part, I define two key ideas to understand compassion: self-love and *amour-propre* (E4; DOI). In the second part, I propose an interpretation of compassion as 'egoistic', insofar as it is an extension of a self-love towards others (E4). In the third part, I give an example of a painful lesson on emotional detachment in *Emile* (E5). In the fourth and final part of this theme, Rousseau's view on compassion is read through Camus' short story, *Jonas, the Artist at Work* (1991). This comparative reading will distinguish what is essential to compassion.

1. Self-love and *amour-propre*

The distinction between *amour de soi* (self-love) and *amour-propre*[14] is decisive in order to understand his view on the good life in general, and on compassion[15] in particular (E4). To start with, they can be introduced as two sources of emotions: firstly, self-love; secondly, *amour-propre*. Note that the order of their appearances is key for interpreting them.

Firstly, self-love is best described in Rousseau's words:

> The source of our passions, the origin and the principle of all the others, the only one born with man and which never leaves him so long as he lives is self-love — a primitive, innate passion, which is anterior to every other, and of which all others are in a sense only modifications. (E4, pp. 212-3)

We may add that in a solitary state the first innocent emotions (from self-love) are "inclined to benevolence" (E4, p. 213). Namely, still in a solitary state of innocence, "we have to love

[14] I follow Bloom's in-text translation (E4): *amour de soi* as "self-love"; *amour-propre* as *amour-propre*. Translating *amour-propre* as "pride" (in Scott's translation of DOI, p. 145) would reduce its ambivalence and its strangeness.
[15] "Pity" [pitié] in the original text (E4). 'Compassion' is the most common translation mainly due to the condescending tone associated with 'pity' today, which would contradict Rousseau's philosophy (Jonas, 2010; Mintz, 2012).

ourselves to preserve ourselves" and "we love what preserves us" (E4, p. 213). For example, Emile in his early years is naturally attached to the couple of persons he has met (for instance, his nurse, E4, p.213) as long as they attempt to preserve him. Self-love is "anterior" to all other emotions, "a child's first sentiment is to love himself" (E4, p. 213). Most interestingly, *amour-propre* and compassion come later: they are "modifications" of self-love (E4, p. 213).

Secondly, while self-love is the original source of benevolence, *amour-propre* is the source of all harmful and proud feelings: "to attach more importance to himself than to anyone else" (note XV, DOI, p. 147). *Amour-propre* is a later source of ardent emotions such as envy, rivalry, and greed (E4). *Amour-propre* appears when Emile starts 'comparing' himself with others:

> … in the genuine state of nature, [*amour-propre*] does not exist. For since every individual man regards himself as the sole spectator to observe him, as the sole being in the universe to take an interest in him, as the sole judge of his own merit, it is not possible that a sentiment that derives its source from comparisons he is not capable of making could spring up in his soul. (DOI, p. 147)

When Emile is isolated he cannot compare himself with anybody else — but himself. In a way, he is his "sole spectator" (DOI). It prevents his *amour-propre* from appearing too soon for his own good. The appearance of *amour-propre* is, however, inevitable. Indeed, Emile "is not made to remain always solitary", as "he is made to live with men" (E4, p. 327). Since comparison arises after some time, in contact with others, it is neither possible nor desirable to prevent *amour-propre* from appearing.

Nevertheless, self-love should not be simplified as being 'good', and *amour-propre* as 'bad'. They are both parts of life. So, the point is not to worship one and defeat the other. Thus, Jean-Jacques teaches Emile to tame and channel his *amour-propre*, and to extend his self-love to others (to be compassionate).

2. Egoistic Compassion

Here, I outline Rousseau's view on compassion in two parts. First, by introducing compassion as an extension of self-love. Second, by interpreting Rousseau's compassion as egoistic.

First, compassion can be described as the movement of extending one's self-love to others,

> … when the strength of an expansive soul makes me identify myself with my fellow, and I feel that I am, so to speak, in him, it is in order not to suffer that I do not want him to suffer. I am interested in him for love of myself and the reason for the precept is in nature itself, which inspires in me the desire of my well-being in whatever place I feel my existence. (E4, p. 225)

When extending ‘my’ self-love to others (as an “expansive soul”), I suffer at others’ suffering[16]. Interestingly enough, I do not feel compassion primarily for the sake of others (like primary altruism). Primarily, “it is in order not to suffer that I do not want him to suffer”. Concerns for others’ suffering are extended concerns for my own well-being. So, it is out of an expansive self-love (“love of myself”; “desire of my well-being”) that I feel compassion for others. One should add that this compassion is not passive but “active” (E4, p. 251). Emile acts upon his compassionate feelings. For instance, “if he sees a discord reigning among his comrades, he seeks to reconcile them” (E4, p. 251). Rousseau describes Emile’s compassion as a modification of self-love, a solidary and active passion (E4).

Second, compassion is egoistic. It is a form of egoism based on self-love (benevolent emotions) rather than interests, thus radically different from the traditional ways of using the term of ‘egoism’. Rousseau often insists on the primacy of one’s self: “our first duties are to ourselves; our primary sentiments are centered on ourselves; all natural movements relate to the first instance to our preservation and our well-being” (E2, p. 97). Emile is naturally concerned with himself, concerned with his good life. Once he extends this self-concern to others, he is compassionate as others’ absence of suffering means that he will not suffer. Compassion is egoistic insofar as it departs from *I* (ego), it is primarily concerned with oneself and one’s good life[17].

In short, compassion has been presented as an egoistic movement — as an extension of self-love to others (see *theme III* on egoistic teaching).

3. A Painful Lesson on Detachment

Based on a particularly painful lesson, my hope is to show how Emile, once an adult, has to learn to master his emotions (from self-love and *amour-propre*), partly by learning to detach himself from others. This upcoming ‘lesson’ is not an example to imitate in a classroom, but rather a reflection that calls for being renewed.

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[16] To be more precise: others’ suffering refers here to a suffering that is not educational. Emile is not supposed to console a capricious child, but help those who suffer ‘unjust’ pains that demand compassion. It becomes problematic when it comes to picking which pains are unjust and which pains are valuable (Mintz, 2012).

[17] Although this is not specified in here, this compassionate movement (expansive self-love), needs to be delimited in time and place in order to be viable. We will come back to the ‘limits’ of compassion shortly (see theme II: discussion and conclusion).

At this point in time, Emile is an adult, yet his education is not over (E5). Sophie and he have just met, they are in love. In the midst of literary passages on first love, Jean-Jacques pauses their romance to ask a dreadful question to Emile: "[w]hat would you do if you were informed that Sophie is dead?" (E5, p. 442). Emile collapses, he breaks into tears. Jean-Jacques reproaches Emile for crying after having heard the (hypothetical) news. Then, Jean-Jacques gives him a lecture on mastering emotions. One of the main messages of the lecture is that "[o]ne has a hold on the passions only by means of the passions. It is by their empire that their tyranny must be combated" (E4, p. 327). This description emphasizes the inner emotional struggle that one should try to tame in order to live well.

Curiously, Jean-Jacques tells Emile that he should learn to somehow detach himself from others: "[l]earn to lose what can be taken from you; learn to abandon everything" and "to put yourself above events and to detach your heart" (E5, p. 446). After the lecture, Jean-Jacques 'invites' Emile to travel in order to learn to live without Sophie and to better rejoin her at his return. He has to learn to temporarily "detach" himself from her — a brief exile. This lesson prepares him for remaining the master of his emotions in times of crisis: losing everything and everyone, and still being able to live well[18].

All in all, this scene adds some nuances to the seemingly binary opposition of self-love and *amour-propre.* Emile learns how to detach himself from sources of *amour-propre*, even those he holds close to his heart. In my interpretation, it hints to the fact that Emile also needs to be detached from others (from sources that can stimulate his *amour-propre*) at times to better extend his self-love (his compassion). When he detaches himself, he tries to separate from all of his "spectator[s]" but himself (DOI, p. 147). He does not (and cannot) go back a solitary state of childhood innocence, but he learns to recreate a solitary state in society.

Now, let us turn to a literary example, a short novel on solitude and solidarity, in order to develop this idea on the need for detachment, or solitude, as well as to help us reduce Rousseau's view on compassion to its most essential features.

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[18] Emile does not travel alone, still he learns to detach himself from others. It could be seen as an initiation. For these first travels, Jean-Jacques acts as a guide (not a 'spectator') to teach Emile to encourage him to 'detach' himself on his own further on (as in the sequel, ESS). It can enable Emile to detach himself from others when needed after his education, at the image of his voluntary exile in the sequel, *Emile and Sophie or the Solitaries*. Shortly after the exile that ensued his depression, Emile confirms the positive effects of this detachment: "I became, after the first shock was over, fully master of myself" thanks to his education (ESS, p. 204).

4. Solitude or Solidarity in *Jonas, the Artist at Work*

Solitary/Solidary

Jonas, the Artist at Work (1991) tells the story of an artist, a painter whose life oscillates between solitude and solidarity. Albert Camus, although usually remembered as a writer, introduced himself as an "artist" like his character, Jonas (1958; 1991). Camus presented the role of the artist as someone who cannot stay in a bubble to create, as someone who has a responsibility towards him/herself and towards the world (1958).

This story can be read as a literary contribution to the enquiry: *how can I live well with others?* Jonas attempts to live well though he is constantly torn by what we can call the 'solitary/solidary paradox' (Camus, 1991). On the one hand, painting is a solitary activity that requires him to withdraw from others at times. On the other hand, he has responsibilities towards others: his family, his friend (Rateau), and the 'world'. The paradoxical tensions grow as Jonas gains in popularity. The community of artists requires him to show solidarity "to take an active part in exposing most revolting injustices" (Camus, 1991, p. 133). They implore him to talk publicly about the 'oppressed', to sign petitions, to make donations, to take a position on the world miseries and wars. The community of artists wants him to *show* solidarity, rather than to *be* solidary. This community of artists, as portrayed in the short-story (Camus, 1991), seems to be driven by a logic of appearances (which is another way of saying: by their *amour-propre*).

Yet, Jonas has to pick his fights. He simply does not have the time to meet all of his solicitors or to defend all injustices while working,

> People said, "now that he's a success. He doesn't see anyone any more."…he had a liking for all. But life is short, time races by, and his own energy had limits. It was hard to paint the world and men and, at the same time, to live with them. (Camus, 1991, p. 135).

His "own energy had limits". When reaching a state of (solidary) exhaustion he decides to retire to his (solitary) painting. Jonas is deceived by this corrupting society. Especially with the community of artists that seems mostly envious and only concerned by appearances, reputation, and trends (feelings derived from their *amour-propre*). Instead of condemning this corrupting society, giving up, Jonas seeks a compromise. To do so, he tries to remain isolated while staying close to those he loves. Jonas builds his own workspace at home: "[h]alfway up the walls he built a flooring to get a sort of narrow, but high and deep, loft" (Camus 1991, p. 151). A compromise to work while still hearing, with delight, the laughter of his wife and children.

The underlying paradox culminates towards the end. Jonas cannot paint any longer and he merely meditates in front of the canvas. He is by himself, in "the silence of the desert or of the tomb, he listened to his own heart" (Camus, 1991, p. 153). Finally, Jonas falls, out of exhaustion. The last lines give a name to the paradox that has inhabited Jonas all along, when his friend goes up to his loft to see what he had been painting,

> Rateau was looking at the canvas, completely blank, in the center of which Jonas had merely written in very small letters a word that could be made out, but without any certainty as to whether it should be read solitary or solidary. (Camus, 1991, pp. 157-8)

The solitary/solidary paradox is formulated as a riddle. In a way they represent opposite forces of a paradox. It hints that it is impossible, or undesirable, to be absolutely solidary or in complete solitude for too long. It raises questions on the ambiguous relations between being solitary and solidary. When are we ever solitary? When are we ever solidary?

Still, this short-story (Camus, 1991) answers the question *how can I be solidary in a corrupting society?* It replies to it by stressing the need for solitude to be solidary. Camus phrased it more explicitly in this quote:

> There are no more deserts. There are no more islands. Yet there is a need for them. In order to understand the world, one has to turn away from it on occasion; in order to serve men better, one has to hold them at a distance for a time. (Camus, 1955, p. 96).

Jonas' painting loft can be seen as an attempt to build his own "desert" or "island", as a quiet shelter, which is close to his family, and far from the noise of a corrupting society. He needs to be solitary: "at a distance" from others and the world, only "for a time". The solitary moments helps him to reflect and to finding himself so as to better be able to rejoin others and the world.

Compassion and the Solitary/Solidary Paradox

Both Camus and Rousseau articulated and understood the need for being in a solitary state in order to live well. Let us try to reduce compassion (DOI; E4; E5) to its most essential element through Camus' lenses (1955; 1991). In his quest for living well with others, Jonas needs moments of solitude, not only to work but to detach himself from the world and to meditate. In silence, Jonas can "[listen] to his own heart" (Camus, 1991, p. 153), as if it enables him to recollect or revive his self-love.

In his solitary and innocent state Emile has no "spectator" but himself (DOI, p. 147; see Starobinski, 1959). But can he ever regain his childhood innocence after the appearance of *amour-propre*? Since he is a moral being, there is no way, and no benefit, of going back to a

childhood state. Yet, there is still a need for temporarily unfastening his heart from those he loves. When Jean-Jacques forces Emile to detach himself from Sophie to better be able to rejoin her, it helps put some distance between himself and the one he loves for some time. It means detaching himself, ideally, from all his "spectator[s]" who could stimulate his *amour-propre* (DOI, p. 147; as in Emile's exile in ESS). It reflects a temporary need for detachment, a need for solitude.

In the end, both Camus (1955; 1991) and Rousseau (DOI; E4; E5) recognize living well as an inner emotional struggle that requires one to be solitary, to detach oneself from all external influences (even those we love, even those we extend our self-love to). In short: there is no solidary without solitude, and there is no compassion without self-love.

Theme II: Discussion and Conclusion

One should note that there are some Stoic echoes throughout this theme, as well as in Rousseau's description of human emotions (DOI; E4; E5). The painful lesson Emile received can also be interpreted as an initiation into the Stoic spiritual "exercises" that can be instrumental to "learn to live" (Hadot, 2002, pp. 50-1; see also Mintz, 2012, p. 260). Evidently, Emile should be able to do it *by himself*, taking Jean-Jacques out of the picture frame, to make it a (solitary) Stoic exercise. Furthermore, to exercise oneself to tame passions coming from *amour-propre* partly reminds of *apatheia*; a passive state of mind free of disturbing passions (Hadot, 2002).

Rousseau's compassion has been the object of countless studies, and this essay is by no means exhaustive, let alone complete. One aspect I wish to stress is the need for delimiting the extension of the self (compassion). These limits are more visible in Spector's article on Rousseau's economic ethics (2007). Even though it is not her main topic, the agricultural domain of Clarens in Rousseau's *Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse*, could be read as an example of such limits (Spector, 2007). In the latter novel, the characters' compassion seems to be de-limited to specific places: the household and its servants, the farm and its workers, the village and its inhabitants (Spector, 2007). The 'limits' will be developed more thoroughly in the next theme on a similar topic, on 'egoistic' teaching.

To conclude this theme, we have seen that Rousseau's compassion (E4) could be seen as 'egoistic' (extending self-love). Via the reading of Camus' short-story on the solitary/solidary paradox, *Jonas, the Artist at Work* (1991), I argued that the most essential feature of Rousseau's compassion was self-love — there is no compassion without self-love. The insights on the good life and egoistic compassion met in this theme will allow us to embark on the third and final theme, 'the egoistic teacher'.

THEME III THE EGOISTIC TEACHER

In the following section I develop the main argument of this essay: *teaching should be egoistic, rather than primarily altruistic*. I will do so in four steps. First, I will describe three elements of teacher altruism, illustrated by empirical examples of primarily altruistic teachers. Second, I will turn to Rousseau to describe the good life as being oneself (E1), which allows us to interpret primary altruism as a form of alienation. Third, still within Rousseau's perspective, I will outline an 'egoistic' teacher based on the portrayals of teachers from two novels: *Stoner* (Williams, 2006) and *School Blues* (Pennac, 2010). Fourth, I will conclude by giving a summary of the three themes.

1. Outlining Primary Altruism in Teaching

Before presenting two empirical examples of primarily altruistic teachers, let us explore what primary altruism means.

Primary Altruism in Teaching: Three Elements

Primary altruism is a complex phenomenon. It seems to be overwhelmingly represented in 'inspirational' teacher films, as well as in self-help manuals (see Higgins' introduction, 2011, pp. 1-18). I propose to examine it more closely with the help of a quote that comes from the *Code Soleil*, a deontological manual for teachers first published in 1923 by SNI, a French teacher syndicate:

> *What makes the educator noble is that he gives his entire self to the pupils*; is that, without weighing in too subtle balances of what he owes them or what they owe him, *he spends himself for them without counting*; is that he is not a distributor of knowledge or recipes but *an apostle of work, of truth, of altruism, of justice*. (Soleil, 1955, p. 36; my emphasis and translation[19])

This quote makes visible the three elements of primary altruism: (1) teaching as offering oneself to the students; (2) spending oneself 'without counting'; (3) and the desire to accomplish an altruistic mission. First, and most importantly, the altruistic teacher refers to the ideal of self-offering: "giv[ing] his[/her] entire self to the pupils". It means being eager to sacrifice oneself, wholly, for others. By giving the priority to others *before* oneself, teaching is *primarily* altruistic. Second, the noble teacher "spends himself for them without counting".

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[19] SNI: *Syndicat National des Instituteurs*. This deontological manual was widely used in *École Normales*. Here is the original quote: "Ce qui fait la noblesse de l'éducateur, c'est qu'il se donne tout entier à ses élèves; c'est que, sans peser en des balances trop subtiles ce qu'il leur doit et ce qu'on lui doit, il se dépense pour eux sans compter; c'est qu'il n'est pas distributeur de connaissances et de recettes, mais un apôtre du travail, de la vérité, de l'altruisme, de la justice" (Soleil, 1955, p. 36).

The amount of efforts the teacher puts into his/her work (including extra hours, evening meetings, personal sacrifices) is not a primary concern. It matters so little that one does not even need to keep score or think about what is in his/her own self-interests[20]. Third, the "noble" teacher is an "apostle of work" and "of altruism" (Soleil, 1955, p. 36). Like religious apostles, the altruistic teacher is sent on a sort of noble mission with a purpose higher than just pursuing one's own good life: to improve the lives of others.

The three elements can be used to describe the primarily altruistic teacher's traits, though they can overlap one another or coexist with other personality traits. These three elements can be found in teacher characters from 'inspirational teacher films', as in the following empirical examples.

Primarily Altruistic Teachers

The upcoming empirical examples of teacher characters are usually acclaimed as heroes by large audiences: Ron Clark (in *The Ron Clark Story*, 2006) and Elin Gruwell (in *Freedom Writers*, 2007). Their characters are relatively typical, or stereotypical, of how 'good teachers' have been represented in mainstream Hollywood films (Higgins, 2011, pp. 1-18). Instead of glorifying these portrayals, let us observe how altruism takes shape.

Ron Clark embarks, voluntarily, on a rescue mission by moving from his small hometown to a 'tough' classroom in a 'rough' neighborhood (Harlem, New York; 2006). In his hometown he had a supportive and welcoming school direction who had offered him a permanent contract, yet everything seemed too easy. He decided to leave them behind:

> New York public schools are desperate for good teachers… Every year I tell my students to go for what they want in life: *Dream big, take risks*. It's time I start living up to my words. (*The Ron Clark Story*, 2006)

The choice of leaving his hometown for Harlem is motivated by his ideals. Furthermore, Ron Clark will go as far as prioritizing his work over his own health. When he is diagnosed with pneumonia, he decides to keep on teaching for as long as possible, until he passes out in the middle of a lesson. Then, he is forced to stay at home and rest. Even then, he continues teaching by recording his lectures on video-tapes. Nothing can stop him in his mission to make his students pass the final year test.

[20] Discarding other logics, such as normative egoism (see *Background*).

Similarly, Elin Gruwell in *Freedom Writers* (2007) starts teachings in an environment that is new to her: a 'tough' classroom, in a 'rough' neighborhood (once again). This time, the neighborhood is in Los Angeles and marked by gang wars. Still, she is eager to work in this particular school. Inspired by the "civil rights movement", she chose to become a teacher rather than a public defender (*Freedom Writers,* 2007). She believes that "by the time you're defending a kid in a courtroom the battle's already lost. I think the real fighting should happen here in the classroom" (*Freedom Writers,* 2007). Here, the teacher's rescue mission seems to save the students from evils (from inequities, gangs, crime, and so forth). In order to succeed in this mission, she has to combine full-time teaching with two part-time jobs. Partly working as a concierge in order to finance a school field trip. Partly working in a shopping mall in order to buy books for her students with an employee-discount. She sacrifices considerable amounts of energy, time, and money to accomplish her 'noble' mission.

In short, these characters illustrate the three elements of altruism in teaching. First, and foremost, teaching is represented as *primarily* altruistic: giving themselves entirely to others. Second, the altruistic teachers spend themselves without counting, hence offering their own money, time, and health, even outside of working hours. Third, the altruistic teachers would probably claim that all the sacrifices were justified by their rescue missions.

Now, let us turn to Rousseau's idea of the good life (E1) to show why primary altruism is problematic.

2. The Good Life in *Emile*

Rousseau described the good life as being *one*self, as opposed to being self-less (the latter being an alienating life). I will further review this idea of the good life, which will be instrumental both to interpret primary altruism as self-less (alienating), and then turn to egoistic teaching as a possibility for being entirely oneself (for living well).

Being Oneself

The opposition between the good life and an alienated life (between being oneself and being selfless), is best formulated in the first pages of *Emile*,

> Natural man is entirely for himself. He is numerical unity, the absolute whole which is relative only to itself or its kind. Civil man is only a fractional unity dependent on the denominator; his value is determined by his relation to the whole, which is the social body. Good social institutions are those that best know how to denature man, take his absolute existence from him in order to give him a relative one and transport the *I* into

> the common unity, with the result that each individual believes himself no longer one but part of the unity and no longer feels except within the whole. (E1, pp. 39-40)

Rousseau opposes “natural man” and “civil man”. On the one hand, natural man is oneself because he is *by* himself. In a state of solitary innocence, he can be “entirely” one and oneself. Emile too, in his first years, lives isolated from society in a state of prolonged innocence (E1-E3; DOI). On the other hand, civil man is always “relative” to others, to the collective he belongs to (E1, pp. 39-40). Meaning denatured, fractioned, alienated. Civil man has lost himself and *his* self. His singularity, his *I*, has been emptied and replaced by others’ opinions (E1, p. 40). Hence, cultivating feeling deriving from *amour-propre*.

At the end of Emile’s education, he should neither be a natural man nor a civil man. In all evidence, we need others to live well, remaining in a solitary state like natural man would not be a good life. Emile should not be raised to become a civil man either: he is not destined to be “a Frenchman” or “a bourgeois” (E1, p. 40). Educating him to belong to any pre-established identity means raising him to “be nothing” (E1, p. 40).

Emile “is a savage made to inhabit cities” (E3, p. 205). His education has to isolate him at first, as a natural man (DOI). Then to gradually pull himself out of an innocent childhood state, to live with others. Paradoxically, educating him to live with others requires denaturing him. Though education denatures him, it does not fragment him, and he still has to remain “one” and “entirely for himself” (E1, pp. 39-40). To pursue a good life, “[Emile] ought to cut out his own road to happiness, following no one else’s tracks” (E4, p. 223). And to do so even in a corrupting society. Simply put: living well means being oneself, being singular.

Primary Altruism as Alienation

The altruistic teacher would ideally give his/her “entire self to the pupils” (Soleil, 1955, p. 36). Conversely, in Rousseau’s view of the good life, Emile should remain “one” and “entirely for himself” (E1, pp. 39-40). By working primarily for others’ pursuits of a good life, the altruistic teacher sacrifices the mere possibility of being oneself, thus the possibility of living well. The teacher’s own *I* (ego) is displaced. Since their mission requires the teacher’s sacrifice of him/her-self, the altruistic teacher becomes “alien[21]” to him/her-self, estranged to who they are

[21] “Alien” (E4, p. 230) is a translation of *étranger* (‘estranged’, unknwown) in Rousseau’s original text (2009). It accentuates the uncanny element of this description of civil men. As if, civil man, or the primary altruistic teacher, would not recognize him/herself in a mirror (cf. Starobinski, 1959).

(E4, p. 230). In short, through Rousseau's approach to the good life as being oneself (E1), primary altruism can be interpreted as a form of alienation. Hence the need for a more viable and more egoistic approach to teaching.

3. Egoistic teaching

In a way, Rousseau urges us to be more 'egoistic' than civil men (E1), than primarily altruistic teachers. Obviously, this is *not* the usual approach to egoism as the pursuit of self-interests (cf. *homo œconomicus*' egoism; Spector, 2007). What do I mean by egoistic teaching? I will describe it in three ideas: (i) egoistic teaching is *compassionate*; (ii) the egoistic teacher extends towards others *in a subject*; (iii) egoistic teaching requires *limits*. Note that egoistic teaching is an abstract approach that will become clearer with the help of the upcoming empirical examples.

First, egoistic teaching is *compassionate* (i). Rousseau's view of compassion is an extension of self-love, which can be read as egoistic (E4; theme II). This egoistic movement of compassion (extending one's self-love to others) can be applied to the teacher's role. Here, contrarily to primary altruism, the egoistic teacher does not teach for the students' sake in the first place. The egoistic teacher's own pursuit of the good life remains his/her primary concern as the egoistic teacher's own self-love tends towards the welfare of all (E4; E5), including the students' welfare. Living well is thus the egoistic teacher's primary concern, and this is an expansive and compassionate concern.

Second, egoistic teaching can be seen as the teacher's extension towards others, *in a subject* such as 'history' (ii). This approach of teaching both includes, and departs from, the teacher's own self that extends toward others in a subject. The approach is close to how one would share his/her passion for 'history' with someone else. Except that here the teacher 'shares' it via an extension of oneself (the teacher's passion, feelings, or genuine interest, for a subject) towards others. The crucial role of the subject will be illustrated and developed in the upcoming empirical examples. Egoistic teaching (as extending oneself *in a subject*) suggests that there is no possibility of teaching and living well without being oneself[22] (E1).

[22] I should perhaps insist on the technical differences between Rousseau's view on compassion (theme II) and egoistic teaching. Evidently, the relation between the two deserves further development. Yet one can say that the conceptualization of egoistic teaching is modelled after Rousseau's view of compassion (E4). To apply it to teaching, I simply emphasize the role of the subject (e.g. history) and the need for limits (in time and space).

Third, egoistic teaching needs *limits* (iii). It should be delimited to at least a time or a place. Not like Che Guevara who "tremble[s] with indignation at *every* injustice" (my emphasis; cited in Latner, 2005, p. 112). One cannot possibly extend oneself to the whole of mankind, in the whole world, at all times. It would lead to a form of self-sacrifice. It might sound obvious, to the extent that it opposes altruistic teachers who will to spend their entire selves without counting. As an egoistic teacher I should extend myself in a subject "… in whatever place I feel my existence" (E4, p. 225). Meaning within concrete limits: a time and a place. The place of egoistic teaching could be a classroom, and its time could be the duration of a lesson. It suggests that the limits of teaching (*where* and *when*) are necessary conditions for the teacher's own pursuit of a good life.

To sum up, the egoistic teacher is a *compassionate* teacher who extends *in a subject* towards others, *within limits*. Egoistic teaching is a relevant perspective insofar as it is a viable alternative to primarily altruistic teaching, and that it allows us to shed another light on the teacher's pursuit of a good life.

In order to concretize this abstract approach (egoistic teaching), I will develop two portrayals of teaching based on the novels *Stoner* (Williams, 2006) and *School Blues* (Pennac, 2010). These two novels tell rather ordinary stories about teaching in a semi-fictional, semi-autobiographical genre. The teachers depicted in these novels are not meant to be 'exemplary' teachers. Indeed, both novels portray ordinary teachers (rather than heroic and successful) who have singular personalities (rather than being primarily altruistic).

Solitary/Solidary Love, in *Stoner*

William Stoner may rank among the most unremarkable characters of fiction (Williams, 2006). He grows up, lives, loves, suffers, dies, just like any mortal would do. For the most part, his life is hopelessly ordinary. He grows up as a farmer boy, in the end of the 19th century, and goes to the university of Missouri to graduate in agricultural studies, though he ends up working as a professor. He suffers greatly throughout the novel (due to a hostile colleague, heartbreaks, cancer). At the antipodes of the altruistic teachers we met earlier, he represents a sort of quiet personality that would usually go unnoticed. One is entitled to ask: "why should I read about

this loser?[23]" (Almond, 2014). Mainly because his unremarkable life is so remarkably portrayed. It includes brilliant literary passages on his love for literature, and on the good life of teaching.

Stoner in Love

As a student, Stoner had a clear purpose in mind: to study agriculture and then come back to his family farm. Once there, he falls in love with literature. A defining moment that leads him to stay at the university to become a professor in medieval literature (Williams, 2006). The moment he falls in love with the subject is described with the same codes as a romantic encounter. It starts with a gaze, then a funny feeling in the stomach, and someone else is 'there'. With the significant difference that, here, the encounter is neither erotic nor between two individuals of flesh and bone.

The love encounter seems to be between the words of Shakespeare (a subject, literature) and Stoner (a student). The teacher, Sloane, turns to Stoner: "Mr. Shakespeare speaks to you across three hundred years, Mr. Stoner; do you hear him?" (Williams, 2006, p. 59). Gradually, this encounter changed Stoner. It made him hear and see things in a different light[24]. After this 'love encounter' with Shakespeare's poetry something changes in Stoner. Namely, the manner in which he perceives himself and others change. Stoner feels everything anew and with curiosity: he hears "his breath" as if it was the first time, sees the things that surround him ("the pale sky") (Williams, 2006, p. 509-60). He sees other humans around him, as if it was for the first time. Interestingly enough, he also feels "very distant from them and very close to [others]" (2006, p. 60), which announces a paradox that he will meet as a teacher.

Stoner's Expansive Love for Literature

In his first years as a teacher, Stoner felt a gap " between what he felt for his subject and what he delivered in the classroom" (Williams, 2006, p. 339). When did Stoner become a teacher? It took him a considerable amount of time (ten years of teaching) before he could extend his love

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[23] This question was asked by an unconvinced member of the audience during an open lecture on the novel (see Almond's book review, 2014).

[24] Williams (2006, pp. 59-60): "William Stoner realized that for several moments he had been holding his breath. He expelled it gently, minutely aware of his clothing moving upon his body as his breath went out of his lungs. Without looking at anyone he turned and walked out of the room […] He looked around him, at the bare gnarled branches of the trees that curled and twisted against the pale sky. Students, hurrying across the campus to their classes, brushed against him; he heard the mutter of their voices and the click of their heels upon the stone paths, and saw their faces, flushed by the cold, bent downward against a slight breeze. He looked at them curiously, as if he had not seen them before, and felt very distant from them and very close to them".

for literature to others. Stoner became a teacher when he learned to tame his own passionate love for literature and to extend the this love to his students.

Right before becoming a teacher, he found himself in awkward positions. On the one hand, he was so carried away by his own love for literature that he started to give lectures without following his own notes: “he became forgetful of his inadequacy, of himself, and even of the students before him” (Williams, 2006, p. 340). On the other hand, the more he got carried away, the more the students’ own love for the subject began to appear in their papers. Stoner felt “saddened and heartened” after the lectures, as he could not remember what he had said (2006, p. 342). So, the liberating feeling of getting lost in a subject he loved went hand in hand with an apprehension. The apprehension of potentially betraying Shakespeare, of being inept, and potentially untrue to his subject.

Only after ten years of teaching did he become a teacher,

> He spoke more confidently and felt a warm hard severity gather within him. He suspected that he was beginning, ten years late, to discover who he was; and the figure he saw was both more and less than he had once imagined it to be. He felt himself at last beginning to be a teacher, which was simply a man to whom his book is true, to whom is given a dignity of art that has little to do with his foolishness or weakness or inadequacy as a man. It was a knowledge of which he could not speak, but one which changed him, once he had it, so that no one could mistake its presence. (Williams, 2006, pp. 342-3)

We can sense the gap mentioned earlier between his love for the subject and his ability to extend it to the students, and how this gap grew narrower over time. Indeed, as Stoner matured as a teacher, he gained in confidence, he detached his teaching from the “inadequacy” of who he was outside of his work. In the light of egoistic teaching, the most important element in this quote is that Stoner becomes a teacher when he “discover[s] who he was” (Williams, 2006, pp. 342-3). He becomes a teacher when realizing who he is, when realizing his own love for literature and his ability to extend it towards (‘share it with’) the students.

Stoner’s love for literature (Williams, 2006) can be read as solitary/solidary (see Camus, 1991). Stoner teaches when he extends his solitary/solidary love. *Solitary*, inasmuch as his love encounter with Shakespeare’s poem, which grew into a passion, is his singular love, which will be like a vital force guiding his own teaching — it is part of his singular personality, his *I* (ego) (Williams, 2006). *Solidary*, partly because his love for literature is shared by an entire community of ‘literature-lovers’ that was already there before he was born and that will remain after his death; partly because he attempts to extend this love for a subject to others (within the

limits of the classroom) (Williams, 2006). Though they are mainly indissociable, Stoner's solitary/solidary love remains a key for understanding the good life of teaching.

Solitary Stoner and the Solitary Walker

In this section, we will explore the good life as the retrospective realization and joyful emotion of having been oneself. This section is based on Stoner's last words (Williams, 2006), compared with Rousseau's solitary walker[25] (SW).

On his deathbed, Stoner finds an inner tranquility,

> A kind of joy came upon him, as if borne in on a summer breeze. He dimly recalled that he had been thinking of failure --as if it mattered. It seemed to him now that such thoughts were mean, unworthy of what his life had been… There was a softness around him, and a languor crept upon his limbs. A sense of his own identity came upon him with a sudden force, and he felt the power of it. He was himself, and he knew what he had been. (Williams, 2006, p. 811)

There are two facets that are worth separating in this rich quote: first, the references to trivial things; second, the good life as being oneself. First, there are references to trivial worries, such as "thinking of failure" that he deems "unworthy of what his life had been" (J. Williams, 2006, p. 811). It can be read as being similar to the trivial things that Rousseau's civil man (E1) and the altruistic teachers mistake as life-purposes, such as being more successful than others. Here, as in Rousseau, such ideas are discarded as not worthy, unfit to a good life (E1). It therefore goes against the altruistic teachers' loud obsession for success and horror of failure. Stoner whispers to us that there is more to life than success-based pleasures for the vain purpose of having lived a 'successful life' or having failed to be successful (Williams, 2006, p. 811).

Second, and more worthy of attention, Stoner feels joyful at the moment when he is struck by a realization, when "he was himself, and he knew what he had been" (Williams, 2006, p. 811). This retrospective realization of having lived well, in accordance with oneself and not only out of others' expectations, is itself accompanied by a moment of joy, or tranquility. The latter is further developed in the tenth walk of Rousseau's *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, which will be compared with Stoner's last thoughts.

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[25] The good life in SW can be read as a completement, and a continuation, to Rousseau's previously mentioned discussion on the good life as "being oneself" (E1).

The resemblance between Stoner's last breaths and the solitary walker's tenth walk are striking when they sketch an ideal of the good life (Williams, 2006). Compare Stoner's realization above with the following solitary walker's quote:

> There is not a day when I do not remember with joy and loving emotion that one short time in my life when I was myself, completely myself, unmixed and unimpeded, and when I can genuinely claim to have lived. (SW, 2004, pp. 503)

Once again, we can read a "claim to have lived" when being "myself, completely myself, unmixed and unimpeded". As in *Stoner* (2006) it is a retrospective and nostalgic claim. Yet this realization is accompanied by "joy" too (SW, 503). Although the solitary walker refers to a cherished memory of a love story, it remains the story of an encounter. As we saw earlier, a student's encounter with a subject can come close to a love encounter, even if is a different kind of love (see above, *Stoner in love*). It also outlines solitude as a life filled with encounters (with poems, lovers, etc.) that can shape one's self (SW).

Although Stoner feels the joy of having been oneself on his deathbed (Williams, 2006), this reflection does not need to be limited to 'famous-last-words', to the purgatory. There is nothing stopping one from asking such questions earlier and on a shorter time span, less dramatically. Coincidentally, both *Stoner* (2006) and *Reveries of the Solitary Walker* (SW) encourage its readers to ask themselves retrospective questions[26].

Stoner and the solitary walker retrospectively realized with joy that they had lived. This is not a heroic happy ending, and yet "how many of us can say the same of ourselves?" (Almond, 2014). Each quote on the good life from this section can be taken personally (read 'egoistically'). Let us try to formulate these views of the good life in more teaching-related contexts. The solitary walker claims: "I have spent seventy years on earth and I have lived for seven of them" (SW, p. 503). Still referring to the good life as the retrospective realization of 'having been oneself'.

As we saw earlier Stoner started to become a teacher after ten years, not to mention later problems that prevented him from teaching as he intended to (due to his nemesis) (Williams, 2006). Paraphrasing the solitary walker (SW), Stoner could have claimed: 'I have spent four decades at the university and I have taught [one] of them'. The teacher's good life may be the

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[26] The good life in Stoner (Williams, 2006) and the solitary walker (SW) can be compared to a form of *ataraxia* — a state of inner tranquility free of disturbance (Hadot, 2002).

ability of answering with tranquility and a nostalgic joy to the question: *when did I really teach?* Or, *when did my love for the subject match my ability to extend it to the students?* The answer, according to Stoner and the solitary walker, would be a composed claim. A claim radically different from the primarily altruistic teacher who would loudly state: 'I offered my entire self to others'.

To live and teach remains a demanding and complex journey of compromises. A journey that might involve, as in *Stoner* (2006), moments of despair and of happiness — of awkwardness at first, and (hopefully) of inner tranquility at last. In short: the good life of teaching could be summed up in a claim. Not a loud one, but a nostalgic whisper: "I was myself… I have lived" (SW, p. 503).

Equally insightful yet in a different manner, *School Blues* (Pennac, 2010) can also be read as a reflection on the good life of 'egoistic' teaching.

Presence/Present, in *School Blues*

School Blues (2010) on teaching is insightful when discussing the teacher's presence and the present time of teaching, which go hand in hand. Drawing from egoistic teaching, we will discuss the teacher's expansive presence/present in a subject.

In *School Blues*[27] (2010), Daniel Pennac recounts that he used to be a *cancre* (a dunce) at school. According to Pennac's definition, a dunce is…

> … a student who doesn't follow the straight and narrow path of normal schooling; he moves slowly and sideways, far behind the students ahead of him on the path to academic success. (2010, p. 11)

Despite starting his first school years as a dunce, Pennac gradually morphed into a dedicated student. Ultimately, he became a teacher (and a novelist). In *School Blues* (2010), Pennac draws some realistic portrayals of the teachers who made possible this metamorphosis (from dunce to dedicated student, to teacher) and includes his own portrayal as a teacher.

The Teacher's Presence

One can find a realistic description of the teacher's presence in *School Blues*:

> You can immediately tell if a teacher fully inhabits his classroom. Students sense it from the first minute of the school year, it's something we've all experienced: the teacher has just walked in, he is fully present, this

[27] *Chagrin d'école* (2007) is also a semi-fictional, semi-autobiographical novel, like *Stoner* (Williams, 2006).

> is clear from the way he looks at his students, the way he greets them, the way he sits down, the way he takes ownership of his desk. He hasn't spread himself too thin, fearful of the students' reactions; his body language is open; from the word go, he's on the case; he is present, he can distinguish every single face, for him the class exists. (Pennac 2010, p. 192)

Seen through the prism of egoism, the teacher's presence can be seen as primary and expansive. First, the teacher enters the room, "fully present". Then, the teacher turns to the students, "for him[/her] the class exists". The teacher enters the room and is genuinely and simply 'there'. The teacher's presence extends within limits, as in the above quote, the time of a lesson, in the classroom[28] (Pennac 2010, p. 192).

Although it might sound obvious to require the teacher's entire presence for teaching, it is relevant to stress this aspect as it radically opposes primarily altruistic teaching. Indeed, as we saw earlier, the altruistic teacher "gives his[/her] entire self to the pupils", and does so by "spending [him/herself] without counting" and primarily for the students (Soleil, 1955, p. 36). Conversely, in *School Blues*, the teacher's presence requires the teacher to remain present within certain limits, in order to start teaching. It requires the teacher's presence prior to the students'. In short, it is the teacher's entire presence (rather than self-sacrifice) that enables teaching.

Further, Pennac (2010) emphasizes that the teacher's presence makes possible the time of education (or the present). In teaching something else happens. The teacher's presence and present time of teaching are notions so close that it is almost impossible to separate them, they can therefore be put together to consider the teacher's presence/present.

Presence/Present in a Subject

The word 'school', according to its Greek etymology, means "free time" (Masschelein & Simons[29], 2013, pp. 9-10; 39). Meaning that education is about suspending time, or freeing time. A time liberated from non-educational discourses (such as political and religious discourses) to enable the time of teaching. Then, what is the time of education, and how can we make 'free time'? To make sense of the time of education, we can recall three words that

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[28] Pennac would describe the limits of this presence: "When I'm with them or marking their homework, I'm not somewhere else"… "But, when I'm somewhere else, I'm not with them" (2007, p. 98). It stresses the need to delimit (egoistic) teaching to a certain time and place to be viable.

[29] Masschelein and Simons' insightful study, *In Defence of the School: A Public Issue* (2013, p. 9) emphasizes the need to 'reinvent' the time of education: "Reinventing the school comes down to finding concrete ways in today's world to provide 'free time' and to gather young people around a 'common thing', that is something appearing in the world that is made available to a new generation".

meant ‘time’ in ancient Greek: *chronos* (i); *kairos* (ii); *aiôn* (iii). They can be used as three ways to understand the suspension of time of education. The time of education could be read as *kairos* in *Emile* and *aiôn* in *School Blues* (2010).

Out of these three models of time, *chronos* (i) is the most familiar to our modern ears. Time as *chronos* refers to time as something we can measure, calculate, spend, or make economically effective (Alliez, 2014). The ‘time’ that frames the duration of activities, like a school or a factory schedule. The latter is practically thrown away from *Emile*’s ideal education. Time as *kairos* (ii) refers to the right moment (Løvlie, 2002). The time of education in *Emile* can be associated with *kairos*[30]. *Kairos* can mean waiting for the right moment to educate (E3-E4); and, more interestingly, teachers and students can get caught up in an unexpected educational moment (Løvlie, 2002). I wish to interpret the time of education in *School Blues* as *aiôn* (iii). In the Homeric sense (Alliez, 2014, p. 24), *aiôn* means lifespan, or lifetime.

Aiôn, a Lifetime in Fifty-Five Minutes

In the following passage, Pennac describes both the teacher’s extending presence/present and the time of education as *aiôn*,

> In their presence – in their subjects – I gave birth to myself: a me who was a mathematician, a me who was an historian, a me who was a philosopher, a me who, in the space of an hour, forgot myself a bit, tucked myself between brackets, got rid of the me who, before encountering these teachers, had stopped me from feeling I was really there. (2010, p. 192)

This gripping quote describes the time of education as *aiôn*[31]. It all starts with the teachers’ presence. To be more precise, it is not only the teachers’ physical presence that is felt but rather “their presence – in their subjects”. The teacher’s self in a subject (“me who was a historian”) extends towards the student’s, going at their encounter. And, ideally, a sort of “encountering” happens. It is not a simple encounter between a teacher and a student, but rather a teacher*’s presence in a subject* that calls for the student to come alive in this subject “in the space of an hour”. Then, ideally, a part of the student’s self needs to be “tucked… between brackets” (Pennac, 2010, p 192). While the students momentarily detach themselves

[30] Ambiguously, Rousseau claimed that the “the most important rule of education” was “not to gain time but to lose it” (E2, p. 141).

[31] One can also find a poetic description of *aiôn* in *Emile*’s sequel (ESS). When Emile overcomes his depression, he describes his first emotional step to a tranquility (ESS, pp. 215-216): “I endeavoured to put myself entirely in the situation of a man who begins to live. I reminded myself that in reality we never do more than begin, and that our existence is nothing more than a succession of present moments, each of which, while it passes, is the first. We die and are born every moment of our lives…”.

from past and future concerns during a lesson, they can be present in the subject much like the teacher.

Learning can be experienced as living a lifespan *in* a subject: "a lifetime in literature" (Pennac, 2010, p. 94). A lesson that starts by being born in a subject: "I gave birth to myself: a me who was a mathematician" (Pennac, 2010, p. 192). In the next class (if receptive), the student gives birth to him/herself as an athlete, and lived another life, and so forth. Each lesson becomes like "a bubble in time" (Pennac, 2010, p. 95).

What does it tell us about teaching? Here, the teacher's "job" is to make students feel alive in a subject: "to make them grammatically alive during fifty-five minutes" (Pennac, 2010, p. 95). Curiously, two radically different notions of time coexist in Pennac's quote "a lifetime in literature" (*aiôn*) and "fifty-five minutes" (*chronos*) (2010, p. 95). However, these two perceptions of time are not necessarily conflictive. On the contrary *chronos* seems to be a much needed limit for *aiôn*. The time of education (*aiôn*) can occur in a strict timetable, a lifespan within a lesson, an entire generation in less than an hour (*aiôn* in *chronos*). Accordingly, each lesson can become a lifespan in the teacher's subject: fifty-minutes of birth, life, death as a mathematician — until the next lesson.

Egoistic teaching allows us to understand a short lesson as a 'lifetime presence/present in a subject'. It could be exhausting for the teachers to make students feel alive in a subject multiple times each day, in an overstretched schedule (ditto for the students). On the brighter side, it can also be exhilarating to live different lifetimes (*aiôn*) in as many subjects, and as many breaks from the apparent monotony of the timetable (*chronos*).

Conclusion and Summary

Throughout this essay, drawing from Rousseau's *Emile*, we have established that primarily altruistic teaching is not viable. Earlier, we had already noticed that altruistic teaching could lead to unnecessary pains for the teachers who tried to make learning painless (which is furthermore un-educational) (theme I). Then, based on Rousseau's idea of the good life as being entirely oneself (E1), primary altruism has been interpreted as a form of alienation (giving his/her entire self to others, without counting, in a rescue mission) (theme III).

Egoistic teaching, in contrast, is a viable alternative to primary altruism. Preliminary passages on Rousseau's compassion as an extension of self-love (theme II), and conception of living well as being oneself (theme III), contributed to outline the approach of egoistic teaching. This approach enables us to talk about the teaching as a self-expansive activity — in a subject — that tend towards students, within limits. Needless to insist on the fact that this form of egoism is extremely far from the conventional views on egoism mentioned earlier, which are embodied by the *homo œconomicus*' pursuit of self-interests (Spector, 2007). Egoistic teaching is an approach that opens up the possibility of teaching and living well as being 'oneself' (E1; SW).

This essay can, provisionally, answer the enquiry *how can I work as a teacher and live a good life?* Based on Rousseau's view of the good life (E1; SW) and on realistic portrayals of ordinary teachers, we could reply that *teaching should be egoistic rather than primarily altruistic*. Furthermore egoism has allowed us to explore the possibilities of living well in teaching through ordinary teacher portrayals in *Stoner* (Williams, 2006) and *School Blues* (Pennac, 2010), in terms of teacher's solitary/solidary love, teacher's presence/present, and time of education as *aiôn*.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Teacher's Primary Concern

This essay departed from, and confirmed, Higgins' concerns about the dangers of altruistic teaching and on the need to address teaching in terms of "self-cultivation rather than self-sacrifice" (2003, p. 131). The good life in teaching was not formulated as self-cultivation in this essay, but rather in 'egoistic' terms. Still, the intentions are similar. Namely, to re-value the teacher's pursuit of the good life out of approaches that are *not* altruistic.

Further, this essay also explored the possibility that the teacher's primary concern should be her/himself (notably in theme III), which can help us re-consider Higgins' hypothetical progression of teacher altruism (2011, p. 171). First, let us recall it,

> i. Teaching is a deeply moral endeavor in which the welfare of other human beings, their current vulnerabilities and their future possibilities, is the teacher's primary concern.
> ii. Unfortunately, acting on this concern requires a high degree of selflessness and sacrifice…
> iii. Ultimately, then, good teaching is a selfless labour of love… (Higgins 2011, p. 171)

According to Higgins (2011) it is not the first statement (i) but the altruistic progression into statements (ii) and (iii), which are problematic (as mentioned earlier; *Outlining the Problem*).

Now, in the light of egoistic teaching, we may take a few steps back, and divide the first statement (i) in two independent parts:

> a. Teaching is a deeply moral endeavor…
> b. … in which the welfare of other human beings, their current vulnerabilities and their future possibilities, is the teacher's primary concern. (my annotations; Higgins, 2011, p. 171)

Let us only keep the beginning of Higgins' first statement (i), which recognizes that teaching is ethical: (a) "a deeply moral endeavor" (2011, p. 171). The second part of the statement, however, (b) suggests that the "primary concern" of teachers should be others' welfare (Higgins, 2011, p. 171). In other words, that the teacher's primary concern is altruistic.

According to the egoistic approach, however, the teacher's primary concern should not be others, but his/her own good life. Then, let us paraphrase this progression, not as an altruistic one but as an *egoistic* progression this time:

1. "Teaching is a deeply moral endeavor" (Higgins 2011:171);
2. As a teacher, my primary (and compassionate) concern, is to live well.
3. My teaching and pursuit of the good life extend to students, in a subject, and within limits.

Egoism allows us to place the teacher's good life, for instance by "being oneself" (E1; SW), as his/her *primary* concern (*2*). This primary concern is compassionate and extends to others. In this light, teaching can be seen as extending in a subject (e.g. literature), within limits (*3*).

This essay may contribute to research on the teacher's role insofar as it suggests that the teacher's primary concern should be egoistic. It would be relevant for further research to study egoistic teaching, or other non-altruistic approaches, through Rousseau's and/or other philosophical perspectives.

Self-Help Commands

Self-help manuals and this essay have something in common. They share a common concern for the pursuit of a 'good life'. However they also differ. What are the differences, then, between a self-help manual and this essay?

Self-help 'tips', or 'ways', might seem well-intentioned and harmless. However, the so-called 'tips' use the imperative mood extensively. A 'tip' is still an injunction, and can be described as a commandment in disguise. Let us compare, for instance, a commandment with a self-help 'tip':

- "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Lv, 19:18);
- "Celebrate what it means to be a teacher" (Kelly, 2018).

These orders are strikingly similar in form and content. Regarding the content, they both urge us to be altruistic. They correspond to the pre-altruistic discourse of neighborly love and to the discourse of primary altruism in teaching.

It is not surprising for a quote from Holy Scriptures to use injunctions on the imperative mood. Indeed, they pre-suppose a higher and divine authority. On the other hand, it is more troubling for self-help manuals. As if a well-meaning oracle had ordered self-help injunctions: *obey my commands, take a deep breath!* A blind reliance on injunctions would be worrying, regardless of what is ordered (self-offering or self-care). Self-help manuals echo common sense and shouts it out as commands.

In between the lines, self-help manuals claim with pride that 'the recipe for a successful life lies in obeying opinions and common sense'. Indeed, self-help imperative mood carries the

ideal of an alienated life (E1, pp. 39-40). A life devoted to obeying others' voices, of conforming to what others deem is in the individual's best interests (*homo œconomicus*; Spector 2007). Self-help orders strengthen the "chains of opinion" (E5, p. 472) that restrain us from 'breathing' for ourselves.

The ideal conveyed in this essay (*essai*) is radically different. This essay's ideal is more philosophical. It resides in the *pursuit* of the good life, emphasizing the importance of the enquiry: *how can I work as a teacher and live a good life?* It remains as urgent to 'hear' these solitary/solidary conversations on how to live well, as to keep on renewing them.

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