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IN SEARCH OF THE GOLDEN APPLES OF EDUCATION FEMALE: PHILOSOPHICAL CONTEXTUALIZATION OF CLASSICAL ANTIQUITY TO THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

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Abstract: The golden pommel is a mythological allegory representing inestimable value, providing immortality, or an insignia of great power, in this work, we understand it as a prominent personality, worthy of note and to be studied further, to elucidate its nuances and highlight its made throughout history. This bibliographic survey traces a brief historical context about female education, or rather, its defenders, mostly great philosophers and renowned writers. We started our presentation by the cradle of democracy, with Plato's thoughts and, conventionally accepted positions, reported by Plutarch, where the first defended greater rights and freedom for women and the second, despite following a middle platonic line of thought (transition phase between the skeptical platonism of the hellenistic period and the neoplatonism of the 3rd century), he described female education as an activity of the domestic scope and for the preparation of children. In antiquity, women had a reproductive function, preferably generating men to strengthen armies. We approach a little of the *vis-familia* still existing in ancient Rome. We arrive at the Middle Ages, with its religious peculiarities, attributing responsibility to Eve for the original sin. We pass by Cristina de Pisan, Maria de Gournay, François Poullain de La Barre, Madame de Rambouillet and Madeleine de Scudéry to reach the Enlightenment, a period that we highlight, Olympe de Gouges, Mary Astell, Daniel Defoe, the Blue Stockings and Mary Wollstonecraft.

Keywords: History. Female education. Philosophers. Feminism.

INTRODUCTION

The female struggle for education cannot stop, especially in a historical period full of advances and setbacks, but we will not focus on our current moment, because, only with a knowledge of the past, we can avoid falling

into the same mistakes already known. The patriarchal system still has strong remnants in the popular mentality, the result of an understanding perpetuated in time, naturally transmitted from one generation to the next, without significant questioning, however, when someone manages to argue and change the rigid paradigms of commonly accepted social standards, this dissonant voice stands out as a landmark, even if in its own time it was not fully recognized. This is exactly the theme of this work, what were the most important voices in order to identify women as worthy of education?

The Golden Snitch is a recurring allegory in mythology and in several ancient tales, its function varies from one tale to another. In this article we will have a historical view of female education, but, to begin with, let us understand that the golden fruit has always been a representation of immortality; fruits of Hera, located in the garden of Hesperides, or, for the Norse, symbolized permanent youth and eternal life for the gods, promoted by the apples of the goddess of poetry, Iduna. We understand that this eternity desired by people can always be evaluated by the Egyptian concept, where immortality is achieved by perpetuating the name and deeds of a historically prominent figure. Thus, our search aims to find who would deserve such titles with reference to the revolutionary search for female education, having their texts survived the time.

Another story about golden apples is that of Atalanta, a virgin who refused to marry, but consented to be married to whoever won her in an unfair race, as she, being fully armed, would pursue her suitor, attacking him to death. Hippomenes, student of the centaur Chiron, fell in love with this virginal huntress, becoming one of the competitors. He received from Aphrodite three golden fruits, to be thrown during the race, done that,

the beautiful young woman stopped to collect such magnificent offerings, causing the defeat in the dispute. But because Hippomenes did not properly thank the goddess, he and his wife were punished to become lions and lionesses. For a long time female education was like ornamental crumbs, thrown in to confuse and deceive women, allowing men to advance in their greater goals.

The golden fruit was also synonymous with the weed apple, thanks to Eris (goddess of discord) disturbing the wedding festivities of Peleus and Thetis with a golden apple, for not having been invited. On this apple was the inscription, KALLISTI (in ancient Greek it would be: ΘΗ ΚΑΛΙΣΤΗ; and in the current language it could be said: για την πιο όμορφη γυναίκα)¹, stoking a competition from the goddesses Hera, Athena and Aphrodite. Zeus assigned Paris of Troy the task of judging, but for interest each deity offered a prize. The goddess of motherhood and marriage, if chosen, would make him a famous and powerful king. The second, the wisest strategist, promised him wisdom greater than that of some gods (not that this was very difficult, as some attitudes of these mythological beings were, at least for us poor mortals, quite reckless). The last one, diva of love, offers the most beautiful woman to become his wife. Aphrodite is the winner and the most beautiful mortal chosen by Paris is Helena, wife of King Menelaus, generating action of the Trojan War. Again women become mere playthings in the hands of gods and men, freedom of choice was not allowed and so, Regardless of the will, marriage becomes a bargaining chip.

One last reference, in this brief article, is the great weapon of Perun, god of lightning, thunder, war, fidelity and supreme deity of Slavic mythology, it is said that by throwing his golden apples at the sky he produced unparalleled destruction. Ancient knowledge

1 Meaning: For the most beautiful (SCHWELLER, 2014, p. X) and in the current: for the most beautiful.

is interesting, its wisdom is difficult to understand, today, despite not knowing very well why, glowing balls are seen before large volcanic eruptions, which in turn are accompanied by powerful electrical discharges along the large columns of ash, certainly nature's greatest modifying power, totally altering the landscape. This is our quest, for those who had the ability to redefine rigid female standards, bringing to the surface, from the depths of the mind, riches and strength for a new beginning.

We will use texts by Plato, Bouten (2019), Ariès and Duby (1989 and 1990), among other theorists in this qualitative bibliographic survey. We will now begin our brief historical context of female education. Both men and women are part of this list of prominent thinkers, we will identify more deeply those who have made a difference over time.

FEMALE EDUCATION OVER TIME

Historical periods are marked by the breaking of paradigms that characterized this moment, in favor of a new idea capable of refuting, or innovating, these thoughts that had already crystallized in the popular mind. Strangely, contrary to what was imagined, history is changeable, through ideologies and archaeological discoveries capable of updating a once unquestionable concept. Next, we will present a chronological evolution of the human view of women, emphasizing educational issues. It is believed to have covered the main vectors of this theme, logically some statements can be refuted or several exceptions can be listed, but we intend to present the most beautiful and precious fruits of our tree of knowledge.

In the early days of Greek society, the Homeric period, we have family consolidation, with a rudimentary formation of patriarchy. The woman had the support figure, occupied

herself with weaving and domestic duties, while the man prepared for war and stood out the one who managed to convince the others in oral debates (as Odysseus says).², a typical representation of masculinity, an ideal revered as a standard). The female role was directly linked to marriage, let's see:

In her broad task of promoting the maintenance of the home, the wife was equally committed to the continuity of the lineage: she needed to generate heirs who would guarantee the permanence of the property under the family domain. The immediate purpose of marriage, in collective terms, was based on providing new members to the social body and maintaining its dynamics, which generated the need for publicity, to avoid socially reprehensible practices, such as incest or bigamy. Marriage provided men with absolute rights over a woman's body and sexuality, demanding from her a fidelity that he did not offer (OUTEIRO, 2018, p. 138-139).

Thus, since very early in the formation of European thought, the feminine question was submitted to the masculine domain, without a counterpart of equal weight. Property was assigned to men and their male offspring must prosper for goods and war, both protecting what they already had, as well as a way to expand domains, imposing themselves on other peoples.

In the 5th book of Plato's Republic, Socrates argues in defense of female education, among other things, he compares a hairy person and a bald person, saying these characteristics are not a hindrance to the shoemaker's trade. In the same way, a woman must not be prevented from performing a certain function simply because of her sex, even in the military

2 Odysseus [Ὀδυσσεύς] or Ulysses (Latin name): he is a key character for the Greek victory in the Iliad and the main protagonist of the Odyssey (works attributed to Homer), the King of the Greek island of Ithaca [Ἰθάκη] had the gift of oratory, probably granted by Athena (or Minerva, for the Romans, goddess of wisdom, arts and strategic warfare), she managed to manipulate words to make the most of situations, being almost insurmountable in a debate.

3 Middle Platonism: transition phase between the skeptical Platonism of the Hellenistic period (323 to 33 BC) and Neoplatonism (3rd century), questioned the paradox of nothing being able to be definitively affirmed (wouldn't this position be incontestable?), tried to ground an ethics virtuous enough to promote happiness and meet human needs.

functions of defense of the polis, and must be adequately trained, if they demonstrate aptitude for such office. The fundamental point is that different people, regardless of gender, through their capabilities, can perform any activity.

For Jacob Bouten (2019, p. 11), Plato's ideas were directly confronted by the counterpoint of Plutarch, a philosopher (Middle Platonist³), a biographer and considered a historian, concerned with the moral issues of society, having reported that the family is a female priority and not the State. Therefore, in this line of thought, the instructions must be implemented in the house itself, by the people who perform their domestic duties. These two points of view were perpetuated over time, being the main guidelines for feminism and anti-feminism. And even so, the ideas originated in the male world, let's see this reflection:

Although the problem of the social status of women was the subject of some speculation and discussion in early antiquity, no female writer emerged to participate in them and the position of the female sex was determined exclusively by male opinion. This circumstance alone proves conclusively that the prevailing opinion was, that woman, by this very condition, was an inferior creature. Not even they were invited to make known their own wishes on a matter so vital that concerned them. His participation in the movement belongs to later times. On the whole, Rome's educators paid little attention to the problem of women's education and instruction. Quintilian, foremost among them, completely ignores the point, and Roman literature makes no contribution of real importance" (BOUTEN, 2019, p. 12, our translation)

Thus, the creation of women was forged for a large part of the social evolution of humanity. They were on the margins of knowledge, never having given them, at least, the right to choose, as many prefer their domestic conditions and others expect something more from their lives. The dispute between these two sides of the same coin has not yet been pacified in modern times, many women still have greater aspirations about their existence and, due to this condition or cultural impositions, are hindered from achieving their dreams. On the other hand, a large part is convinced that home is their stronghold and would like everything to stay that way indefinitely.

There is, according to Pinheiro (2013, p. 49), some evidence of matriarchal experiences in Ancient Greece, such as the Amazons, or certain personalities (having highlighted Clytemnestra⁴, Helena⁵, Jocasta⁶ or Aretê⁷), but these were exceptions to rules, as the pattern continued to be patriarchal dominance. Woman is, for Plutarch, philosophically as capable as man, however, she is “[...] like the moon, she has no light of her own. Furthermore, the close presence of man, the sun, does not allow it to shine by itself” (PINHEIRO, 2013, p. 54).

Let us return to the question of the educational role in antiquity, for Ariès and Duby (1989, p. 28), some people helped to support the children of important families, mainly because education was a monopoly activity of the nobles. A nursing mother must not only feed the newborn (both male and female), but also be responsible for

4 Clytemnestra (Κλυταιμνήστρα): killed her husband Agamemnon, because he sacrificed his daughter, Iphigenia, to appease the wind of the goddess Artemis and leave with his fleet for the Trojan War.

5 Helena (Ελένη): the most beautiful of mortals, daughter of Leda (Queen of Sparta) and fruit of the seduction of Zeus (in the form of a swan or goose), there is some doubt whether she was kidnapped by Paris (who already had a divine promise), or has willingly run away with it.

6 Jocasta (Ιοκάστη or Έπικάστη): daughter of Menecus and the consort of Laius (king of Thebes), after the death of her first husband, she unknowingly married her own son, Oedipus, as a reward for the young man having freed her. region of the terrible sphinx.

7 Aretê (ἀρετή): the queen of the Feaces, descended from Peribeia and Poseidon, became the wife of her uncle Alcinoos, represents the feminine ideal with grace, kindness, wisdom and presence. “The Feaces are a mythical people presented in Cantos V - VII of the Odyssey as a model society in terms of values and behavior in dealing with men and women” (VIEGAS, 2017, p. 16).

the education until puberty, assisted by a pedagogue (called a nurturer or propheus, a type of foster parent). Thus a vice-family was configured, the children of this wet nurse were her milk brothers, a position of certain importance. When a girl got married, her nurse accompanied her, together with her mother, to the nuptial bed to give the last recommendations before the first conjugal night. The tutor (or nurturer) exercised a rigid education at the time,

We understand a little of the family in fact, where the only person responsible for running the house was the father, giving his deliberations to his wife, the slaves and servants in the morning. Some, when they recognized suitable wives, allowed them to exercise control over household chores and even responsibility for the key to the safe, in order to properly coordinate expenses. Even when they did not have these attributions, by medical recommendation, the wives must at least have the role of overseeing and checking the tasks for the proper running of the house (ARIÈS; DUBY, 1989, p. 82). The questions of the Roman polis were more severe, see:

Throughout preceding generations, at the end of the Republic and the beginning of the Empire, the wives of public men were treated as peripheral beings who contributed nothing – or very little – to the public role of their husbands. The conduct of these “little creatures” and their relationships with their husbands were not of great interest to the exclusively male world of politicians. They could undermine their man’s character through sensuality; they might even inspire

him with heroic imprudence for true love; they often proved to be powerful sources of courage and good advice in difficult times, but the marital relationship in itself weighed little on the political scene. What we called the “emancipation” of women in high society circles in early Roman Rome was essentially a freedom born of disdain. The “little creatures” could do whatever they wanted as long as they didn’t interfere with the serious game of male politics. Divorce was quick: although it could, depending on the circumstances, trigger a savage revenge against the woman or the lover, adultery in no way affected the public position of the husband (ARIÈS; DUBY, 1989, p. 257-258).

During this period, women became almost an ornament or a mere bargaining chip between nobles, they were even reproached for being able to harm the judgment of prominent politicians. The family social hierarchy was designed so that any idea of another man would be more important than that of his wife, which would only be useful in times of crisis, when his companions were away, as the downfall of a public person can be contagious and affect anyone in your vicinity.

From the Roman tradition (where a father had maximum power over the family) combined with the thinking of the Germanic people (that the woman must coordinate the home and the man take care of political issues and social organization) arose the Middle Ages, but in both in societies, children did not have status and their existence depended on paternal acceptance, therefore, “if it was a girl or born with a physical problem, it could be rejected. Her destiny, if she survived, was to supply the brothels of Rome and the slave system” (COSTA, 2002, sp). In this respect, being born a woman was as bad and hopeless as having a congenital malformation.

The Romans used to have good religious tolerance and at the beginning of the fourth century, Constantine I, then one of the emperors of an already decadent Rome,

admitted the Christian cult, starting to use the cross on his shields and, later, even on coins. This first step in the rise of Christianity would change the history of the world and affect several elements in favor of a predilection for the sexual binary gender system as the only acceptable standard. For Yalom (2002, p. 63), homosexual marriages had increased a lot until 342 AD, when radicalism established the banning of such an act. In addition to an ideology resurfacing, using as a biblical example an Eve created from Adam’s rib (which must confer equality, neither above nor below the other sex), soon an idea subverts this harmonic parity:

The version that followed – of the creation of Eve from Adam’s rib – was the basis of the argument from the Ancient Age that woman is intrinsically inferior to man and dependent on him for her very existence. Even the word *icha*, in Hebrew, or woman – from man (man in English) suggests this position of inferiority.

Eva’s story, therefore, goes from bad to worse. She accepts the serpent’s advice to eat the fruit of the Tree of Good and Evil, would tell God’s commandments and still induces Adam to temptation, leading him to eat the forbidden fruit. These attitudes had definitive consequences – for both sexes: God punished Eve, inflicting the sufferings of motherhood on all women, and Adam, imposing the burden of work on all men. Furthermore, he decrees that the female will forever be subordinate to the male [...]. Like most legendary stories, this one seeks to explain a cultural phenomenon that has been championed for many years and which seemed to be God’s will (YALOM, 2002, p. 22).

With this understanding of original sin, there is a fixation on the inferiority of women, supported, according to church ideas, by the words of a unique God of Christianity. However, this inferiority dates back to much earlier periods, as the first woman, Pandora,

in Greek mythology, was also responsible for unleashing all evils on the world (GONSALVES, 2017, p. 15). As women were “weaker and more inclined to sin, they must be brought under control” (ARIÈS; DUBY, 1990, p. 88), that is, watched over, corrected, or even killed, whether wife, daughter, sister, among others. Other female figures under their patriarchal responsibility, would be submissive to the male judgment to protect the world from the sinful danger that once corrupted the divinely established harmony. For Reuter (2014), the woman was relegated to a kind of half-being (to analyze Mary Wollstonecraft’s words), always dependent, imprisoned to the home, and without rights.

Was the chastity of women sacred? In a way, but not for everyone. How was a forced rape punished? Around the 7th century, a free woman being raped could generate the death penalty for the impulsive corruptor, but if the victim was a slave, the sentence was reduced to the payment of her value. However, these precepts were not universal, as the Franks, if they raped a free woman, would have to pay a total of 62.5 loose, but Calos Magino (already in the 9th century), probably because the number of occurrences had increased (or questions inflationary factors made the previous value insignificant), the fine increased to 200 loose (ARIÈS; DUBY, 1989, p. 453).

In this contest of the importance of chastity, added to the medieval educational factor, between the 5th and 10th centuries little evolution was seen in the direction of female education, which was predominantly monastic. The thought of separating men and women in single-gender religious institutions was the first step towards protecting female virtue. The convents were the destination of several young women to be educated for a period and others, to be penalized for the most diverse errors, were condemned to a life

8 Epistle to the God of Love.

of cloister, almost a life imprisonment. Some women stood out in this environment. “The church boasted, among its abbesses, some excellent examples of female intellects (such as Santa Hilda and Santa Modivenna), in general, the position of women among the Anglo-Saxons indicated a spirit of generous chivalry” (BOUTEN, 2019, p. 14, our translation).

Gradually, the instruction of girls from noble families began to be done at home, under the assistance of a tutor. This evolution became more popular until the 15th century (BOUTEN, 2019, p. 15). In this period, due to the death of her husband by the plague while accompanying Charles VI in 1389, we have the first female writer to survive from her texts – Cristina de Pisan. Born in Venice (Italy), at a young age she went to live in Paris (around 1367) with her father Tommaso da Pizzano (physician and astrologer), who was dedicating himself to the role of adviser to Charles V. like a princess, educated by her father and able to enjoy the beautiful library in the Louvre Palace, she was unable to study deeply in her childhood, as the activities of her sex prevented her, women must be trained in sewing, embroidery and spinning. With the death of Calos V, his father’s position at court was complicated and he was already indebted when he died in 1387 (SONSINO, 2019, p. 3-4). After the death of Étienne, her husband, she devoted herself to study, transcriptions and writing. Cristina’s texts were well received at the courts. With these activities she was able to support herself with a sick mother and children. Ana Luisa Sonsino complements this biography as follows:

Christine’s fortune would change again around 1400, when she produced the first works that would make her famous and known beyond the French courts. Already in 1399, with his poem “Epître au dieu d’Amour⁸”, began to show her concern with the image of the woman who was

becoming popular in French society. Her position was completely consolidated not long after, following her intervention in the Romance da Rosa quarrel, apparently the first known French literary debate. The Romance, written initially by Guillaume de Lorris, c. 1236, consisted of a courtly love poem that enjoyed enormous success in Europe at the time, despite having remained unfinished. Half a century later, the writing of the poem was resumed by Jean de Meun, who, resorting to a misogynistic satire, subverted the original meaning of the work, transforming it into a hostile reasoning to love, marriage and everything that was related with “the woman”. In 1401, Jean de Montreuil, secretary of state and preboste of Lille, composed a brief treatise praising Jean de Meun’s addition, and both spread it in Parisian literary circles. It was in response to this treatise that Christine drafted the first of several letters that she would write about this issue, which would continue until Jean Gerson, chancellor of the University of Paris, ended the dispute in 1402. Despite the aggression and disqualification she suffered during this period, Christine had in this literary dispute the possibility to be known by a wider public and to increase her contacts with other intellectuals. She thus began her literary battle in defense of women, around which she would center an important part of her work, which ends with *Le ditié a Jehanne d’Arc*⁹, in 1429. Between December 1404 and April 1405 he wrote the *Libro de la cité des dames*¹⁰, a gynecotopia that is, at the same time, a genealogy of women and a speech in their defense. Then, between spring and November of the same year, she composed the first didactic work for a female audience written by a woman, the *Livro des trois vertus*¹¹, which he imagined multiplied and spread around the world, reaching women of all social conditions. This second book was a kind of guide to follow so that any woman could access the “cité des dames”, the citadel where the misogyny prevailing at the time could neither reach nor hurt them

(2019, p. 5).

With the discussions that followed, we entered more deeply into the Renaissance, a time when classical scholarship was highly valued. A rediscovery of reason allows men to accept philosophizing about women’s rights and duties, understanding the existing disparity with the male universe. Several works were written during the sixteenth century that touched on a fierce debate between feminist and antifeminist thought, the theme was embraced by women of the aristocracy, because in this period the convents no longer admitted them, because there was a fear that a free spirit and active mind, could lead to heresy (BOUTEN, 2019, p. 20). Jacob Bouten adds:

Under Luther’s influence, several lay schools for girls sprang up in Germany, and the first Reformation thus attempted to fill the gap left by the Renaissance in women’s education. Unfortunately, the political condition of France at the end of the 16th century was very unfavorable to educational reform due to the violence of the religious wars, it was only after the Edict of Nantes that several Huguenot schools emerged (2019, p. 21, translation and emphasis was added in this stretch).

The Edict of Nantes granted rights and benefits to Calvinist Protestants, known by French Catholics, pejoratively, as Huguenots, who instead of combating the term, assumed it as a form of resistance. During this series of conflicts, literally a civil war, many Huguenots left France in search of safer places. The conflict was exhausting for the people and led to a difficult beginning of the 17th century for female education, but from the rubble, another voice emerges demanding rights for women, with Marie de Gournay Le Jars.

Maria de Gournay questioned the

9 AHoliness of Joan of Arc.

10 The city of ladies.

11 Regarding the three virtues.

superiority or inferiority between genders, saying that there was no significant discrepancy with the exception of physical strength. She became a great friend of Montaigne, who considered her as a daughter by marriage. Marie de Gournay was aware that her thoughts were like a small tree, which would only be leafy enough to protect future generations with its shade. Like many philosophers and writers of this time, she also received a benefit, with a lifetime characteristic, from some noble (in her case it was from Maria de Medici). Most of his works were well accepted by the public, with the exception of the Pamphlet written in defense of the Jesuits in 1610 (*Adieu de l'Amé du Roy de France et de Navarre Henry le Grand, avec la Défense des Pères Jésuites*) and some treatises on language and literature. The defense of the Jesuits took place at a difficult time, as they had a radical speech against Henry IV, who after being assassinated, the religious order was blamed by some, but historians find this accusation unfounded, so Mary was right in defending him. Treaties of her, on the other hand, presented a defense of the cultured and traditional language, having been satirized by more modernist writers, criticizing their positions as outdated. These opponents took advantage of this moment to make misogynistic statements against women, in addition to demoralizing their works (NOISET, 1993). therefore Mary was right to defend them. Treaties of her, on the other hand, presented a defense of the cultured and traditional language, having been satirized by more modernist writers, criticizing their positions as outdated. These opponents took advantage of this moment to make misogynistic statements against the woman, in addition to demoralizing her works (NOISET, 1993). therefore Mary was right to defend them. Treaties of her, on the other hand, presented a defense of the cultured and traditional language, having

been satirized by more modernist writers, criticizing their positions as outdated. These opponents took advantage of this moment to make misogynistic statements against the woman, in addition to demoralizing her works (NOISET, 1993).

At the end of the 17th century, François Poullain de La Barre defended the female cause, also stating that both genders were equally capable of performing the same activities, for him, they could be whatever they wanted, from judges, preachers to even generals. Being influenced by Descartes' rational thinking and precisely by this rationalism, Poullain identified education as a gap in the female universe (BOUTEN, 2019, p. 28-29). Around this period, the religious Fénelon and later the philosopher Rousseau also addressed female education, with an aspect more in line with Plutarch's thinking, referring to women as responsible for dominating the home. So with the development of society, opinions seem to have been placed on an ancient balance, always when one side stands out, the other tries to refute the idea considered inappropriate. Concomitantly with this, literary salons became the stronghold of female knowledge, defending a platonic love:

Of far greater direct importance for the growth of opinions was that social movement which began at the beginning of the seventeenth century, of which woman herself was the creator, and through which she almost leapt to the seat of social influence: the salon movement. We have seen that it was in the sixteenth century that women made their triumphal entry into society and began to dominate the world of conversation and literature. The chivalrous adoration of earlier centuries had degenerated without doing anything permanent to raise women's esteem. But in the sixteenth century, a new form of courtship was introduced in Italy and Spain, used by intelligent women as a means of gaining ascendancy over men.

The theory of love developed by Plato, with

its metaphysical conception of passion, which in the days of the Greek philosopher had fallen on deaf ears, was put into practice two thousand years later under the auspices of the great Renaissance. According to the views of Plato's circle, love came to be recognized as the chief inspirer of virtue and noble deeds. The Platonic ideal, therefore, was from the beginning a refining influence, a corrective to crudity and materialism, and an incentive to the purest idealism. The theory of spiritualized love recognized love of physical beauty as only the first rung on the ladder of Beauty connecting Earth with Heaven; at each new stage, however, the ideal transfigures and purifies itself, until all that is earthly sinks into nothingness, the Soul becomes supreme, and all else disappears. This view was adopted by the intellectual leaders of the Italian Renaissance, Dante and Petrarch, and the leading clerics, in whose speculations the highest and purest form of passion became the love of God. The spirit of Platonism thus mingled with that of religious mysticism, which even surpassed Plato in its condemnation of that earthly love which the latter had recognized. The Florentine Academy, however, adopted the Platonic view, making human love one of the stages leading to the ideal of eternal beauty; and refining it until it became the chaste passion of self-sacrifice to the beloved object, of which the passion of Michel Angelo and Vittoria Colonna furnishes an example.

The Italian Wars of the late 15th century brought Louis XII (French King) and his entourage to Genoa. One of the highly cultured ladies of that city, Tommassina Spinola, made a deep impression on the king. She was married and virtuous, so the royal lover had to control her passion and content himself with that platonic friendship that made the lady "La dame de ses pensées"¹² and gave him nothing but the purest and most disinterested friendship. Many parallel cases occurred among the king's followers, and women found that her influence over her Platonic lovers was far greater and more lasting than that exerted over her husband

in marriage. There was in this new form of courtship, which in literature often took on a pastoral form; an element of idealism that placed the weaker sex on a pedestal by placing the adored far beyond the reach of the lover, who only aspired more faithfully by not having his passion satisfied. In this lay the dormant power of womanhood, which could be successfully transformed into a means of improving one's position in society; and once the women realized this, they made the most of the opportunity (BOUTEN, 2019, p. 30-31).

At this time, men were introduced to gallantry, a less barbaric attitude towards women. Not that this has changed the sexual impulses and the desire to usury over the female body on the part of the gentlemen, who started this new legacy at this point. Some texts were written with the purpose of "correcting French customs and morals and glorifying this form of love that is a mixture of the cult of chivalry and Platonic passion" (BOUTEN, 2019, p. 32, our translation). A hope began to dawn on the horizon, that of equality between men and women, where the first must respect and seek the second for friendly conversations and pleasant words. Thus emerged the French salons of the 17th century, promoting an improvement in contemporary taste, defending female morals and rhetoric. One of the first salons to be extolled was the school (later the hotel) of Madame de Rambouillet, where literary taste was improved, foreignness was reduced, and obscenities or impoliteness were curbed. Another was Miss de Scudéry's salon, which had a more balanced view and preached greater equality, where the man did not defer to tyrannize the woman and neither did she enslave him, trying to curb uncontrolled passions, in favor of a rationalism of love, leading to you a lot of criticism.

However, already in the middle of the 18th century, there was a moral decline in the

12 The lady of your thoughts.

salons, where debauchery gained ground and gaming tables were increasingly dominant. Lust replaced platonic love, making woman a throwback to old pre-renaissance patterns of coquetry. Literary salons, during the Enlightenment, were in a kind of afterlife with few madams preserving and trying to rebuild rational and cultural issues in favor of female education.

The last prominent French figure on our list is Marie Gouze, better known by her pseudonym Olympe de Gouges, a political and theater writer who sought more women's rights, advocated abolitionism, and encouraged patriotism (ROVERE, 2019, p. 147). She had circulated through the already decadent French salons, but she managed to extract intellectual contacts from these environments. Every free woman, writer and worker (involved in her own ventures) was treated by the other ladies of society (and some men interested in reducing such economic competition or devaluing ideas that were uncomfortable for them) as a courtesan financed by clients. Even more so having put himself at the head of an itinerant theater company. She used her theater plays to propagate her ideals, he defended them vigorously even to politicians in public assemblies. His extensive work in volume was composed predominantly of small texts, without great grammatical rigor, as some were dictated directly to the typographer. In his Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Citizen¹³ (GOUGES in ROVERE, 2019, p. 253-271) asked government officials, among other priorities, for female education, confronting and complementing in a very comprehensive way the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen¹⁴.

Let's turn to England, where the first feminist was Mary Astell, her works did not have a great effect at the end of the 17th century,

13 Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Citizen of 1791.

14 Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen of 1789.

her statements resemble those of Maria de Gournay, without a repercussion among the nobility of equal weight, many of her writings were lost to time, however "at one time, Mary Astell's plans came very close to experimental consolidation. His intellectual devotee, Lady Elizabeth Hastings, took an interest in them and declared herself willing to provide the necessary funds" (BOUTEN, 2019, p. 98, our translation), but Bishop Burnet dissuaded this investment from the wealthy Lady Hastings, arguing this type of convent school must be the responsibility of the church.

Among other figures, Daniel Defoe himself (generally remembered only for Robinson Crusoe) also proposed an academy for women. The issue of female education began to be discussed by philosophers and thinkers, such as the encyclopedists, even debating among themselves, since most of them also questioned Rousseau for the sexist statements in the 5th book of *Émile, or, on education*. In the same period, the Blue Stockings circle or society (literally blue stockings, has the sense of being somewhat derogatory, know-it-all or, in a more complimentary context, erudite), a type of guild founded by women who considered the evils and the misery of the world are the responsibility of human government.

Some names in the Blue Stockings circle, according to Bouten (2019, p. 99-128), were Ms. Hannah More, Mrs. Montague, Mrs. Chapone, Mrs. Carter, Ms. EJ Climenson, Mrs. Vesey, Mrs. Boscawen, Mrs. Thrale, Mrs. Order, Ms. Reynolds and Ms. Fanny Burney (after the marriage, Madame d'Arblay), in addition to having a close relationship with Mr. Samuel Johnson, practically an inspiration, as he had founded a circle with many intellectuals in this period. All of them dealt with female education in their own ways, with actions, philanthropy and texts, however they were

not, for the most part, radical and many of the ideas were in line with women's domestic domain and the need for education to ensure their initial transmission to descendants., that is, to educate, mainly the moral aspect, their offspring.

Our last golden snitch in this work is Mary Wollstonecraft, an English philosopher and writer, who was also opposed to the slave system and stood out for her texts in defense of female education. Her first work was *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters: With Reflections on Female Conduct, in the More Important Duties of Life*¹⁵, quickly saying what it came from, it was a manual of conduct (textual style in vogue during the Enlightenment), intended to guide the raising of girls (WOLLSTONECRAFT, 2016a). Her ideas matured greatly, becoming a governess, writing other books, translating various works for her publisher, and writing articles for the *Analytical Review* magazine, but she began to be noticed when, in a fit of indignation, she wrote, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men, in a Letter to the Right Honorable Edmund Burke*¹⁶(WOLLSTONECRAFT, 2020), when in defense of his friend and mentor, the Reverend Richard Price, he wrote a harsh letter against Burke's criticism of the French Revolution and a speech by Price. Afterwards, he wrote his most famous work, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman with Strictures on Moral and Political Subjects*, WOLLSTONECRAFT, 2016b, in which he establishes the problem of inequality between the sexes, develops the argument, refuting male and female positions towards greater equality, ending up establishing education as the best solution to this problem (PENNELL, 2007). Jacob Bouten, already in the first pages of his text, comments:

The claim of education as a natural right was first made in its full meaning by Mary

15 *Thoughts on raising daughters: with reflections on female conduct in life's most important duties.*

16 *Claiming the rights of men, in a letter to a certain Honorable Edmund Burke.*

Wollstonecraft, to whom belongs the undivided honor of being the first woman in Europe to apply Rousseau's famous theory of the Rights of Man to her own sex, leading her to support the principle of gender equality (2019, p. 7, our translation).

Certainly, Mary Wollstonecraft is our most prominent podium, far beyond just being remembered as the mother of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (author of *Frankenstein*), her story puts her at least two or three hundred years ahead of her time. The author of *The Reclaiming of Woman's Rights*, she is finally beginning to earn her well-deserved status as an Enlightenment philosopher.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Logically, many other golden apples can be raised throughout the Contemporary Age, mainly with the propagation of Feminist thought and the other revolutions that made education closer to many of the proposals seen in this brief article. But as in the scales of dishes, there is always the risk of one idea starting to stand out against the other, I am referring to the two lines of thought studied in this work, those of Plato and Plutarch, who every now and then try to disregard the achievements of the other. The fundamental issue is, in my view, freedom, the right to choose that all women must be able to make in order to lead their lives. We can no longer polarize these two thoughts, there is a fallacy, imputed in the general mind, preaching that one of these ideologies must prevail over the other, but this is not a true necessity. Both can coexist harmoniously, without dispute or conflict, both can be understood as expressions of different aspirations for different people, when a woman decides to venture into the business world, fighting for recognition and salary equal to that of a man, she is right. On

the other hand, if she prefers a life together with someone who allows her a domestic life, that is also okay, as long as both in this relationship are in agreement and that the woman is not physically or psychologically subjugated by this person. Freedom is fundamental as long as human rights are respected.

With regard to the golden fruit of female education, mirrored and focused in this article, by women who raised their voices, or feathers, with emancipatory writings of what was once considered only the “weaker sex”, their freedom of writing can no longer be taken away. and thoughts, nor by religion, patriarchy or any other later invented ideology. Let us reflect on the text of Evelyne Berriot-Salvadore:

Thus, by becoming aware of the intellectual dispossession of which they are victims, women authors measure how formidable education can be. In some texts, then, an apparently paradoxical argument appears: the male monopoly of knowledge, far from being a sign of superiority, would be a sign of weakness... It is for fear of meeting very worthy competitors that men keep women trapped in the dark of ignorance. Now, education is emancipatory, it relieves woman of her “miserable” condition – “Because her happiness depends on her mind” – and, above all, it frees her from the contempt she often has for herself: it is through instruction and nourishment of her mind that she discovers her human nature (BERRIOT-SALVADORE, 1983, p. 58, our translation).

Emancipatory thought must, in our view, overcome mere disputes between feminism and anti-feminism, in favor of freedom of action and greater rights. Those who prefer to remain in the restricted domestic activities, be the fruit of resistant shells (their homes) and solid constitutions. For those who only desire freedom, they can be beautiful and tender dehiscent berries. As for those who aspire to something more in life, they have seeds (thoughts) capable of developing in any

environment they want to stay. The choice of which path to take is up to each one, through their aspirations and, for all, education allows them to act with wisdom and dignity.

The feminist movement was instrumental in tipping the scales towards women’s rights, which today can demonstrate their capabilities in all sectors of society. Something unthinkable in antiquity, but these figures revealed that the future must be considered with equality.

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