

Rousseau (1712-1778)

- Active composer and music theorist, pioneer of modern autobiography, novelist and botanist
- An important figure in the history of philosophy because of his contributions to political philosophy, moral psychology and his influence on later thinkers
- Important influence on, and anticipator of, the Romantic Movement

Major Works

- *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts*
- *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*
- *Social Contract*
- *Emile or on Education*
- *Julie, or the New Heloise* – a novel
- *Confessions* – his autobiography

Rousseau's Philosophy

- Concerned with finding a way of preserving human freedom. Two routes to achieving and protecting freedom
 - Constructing political institutions that allow for the coexistence of free and equal citizens in a community where they themselves are sovereign
 - A project for child development and education that fosters autonomy
- *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*
 - Claimed that human beings are good by nature but are rendered corrupt by society
 - Imagines a multi-stage evolution of humanity from the most primitive condition to something like a modern complex society
 1. Humans live basically solitary lives since they do not need one another to provide for their material needs: humans are naturally good
 2. Human Populations grow – simple unstable forms of co-operation evolve around activities like hunting
 3. Growth in material interdependence among human beings (division of labor) and emergence of inequality
- Moral psychology developed in *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* and in *Emile*
 - *Amour de soi* (self love) - Attributes to all creatures an instinctual drive towards self-preservation
 - *Pitié* – directs us to attend and to relieve the suffering of others
 - *Amour propre* (love of self) comes with interdependence - central interest of each human being the need to be recognized by other as having value and to be treated with respect

- Political Theory
 - Argues that the existence of all states is based on a ‘social contract’
 - Members of the state surrender their individual rights to the ‘general will’
 - Three types of will
 1. Private wills – own selfish interests as natural individuals
 2. Identity of citizen – wills the collective will as his own
 3. Corporate will of a subset of the populace as a whole
 - Need for a legislator - function of inspiring a sense of collective identity and manipulating the “desires” of his charges - giving them the illusion of free choice
- *Emile* & Education
 - Described a new form of education which was based on fostering the natural abilities of each child instead of trying to force all children into a single mold

Romanticism

- Romantic writers and poets made a genuine break with the rational orderly thinking of the 18th century Enlightenment
 - Tended to express those aspects of human experience suppressed by the Enlightenment’s overriding spirit of ‘rationalism’
 - Exalted inspiration rather than reason
 - Emotion and imagination were of prime importance
 - Also interested in the contraries and darkness in the human soul, with evil, death, the demonic, and the irrational

Rousseau’s autobiography anticipator of the Romantic Movement

- *Confessions* – written between 1765 and 1770 published posthumously in 1781
 - Covered the first 53 years of his life
 - Aware of how radical an undertaking it was:
 - Believed that emotion was the core of his being and the source of his inspiration.
 - Flawed as an autobiography – dates are off and sequences sometimes out of order
 - Provides an account of the experiences that shaped his influential philosophy
 - Parts of he own education are clearly present in his account of the ideal education in *Emile or, On Education*
- *Julie or the New Heloise*
 - Centered on a love triangle between Julie, her tutor Saint-Preux and her husband Wolmar
 - Wished to invent out of fantasy characters he could love
 - Demonstrated that private and domestic life was full of tension and power
 - Important supplementary source for the interpretation of Rousseau’s social philosophy