

Kenneth Wain., 2015. *Between Truth and Freedom. Rousseau and our contemporary political and educational culture.* Routledge: London.

In this very recent publication Kenneth Wain continues his lifelong engagement with the philosophy of education, this time turning his attention to the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The interesting feature about Wain's text is its sustained and successful attempt at showing how Rousseau's interest in education is closely intertwined with other moral, social and political issues. In addition, readers will also enjoy the way Wain positions Rousseau both in relation to the writings of Richard Rorty and Michel Foucault, as well as the context of postmodernity which can be said to characterise the contemporary world.

As a point of departure, Wain shows how, together with Marx and Nietzsche, it was the modern liberal bourgeois that constituted the object of Rousseau's ire; they are characterised as urbanites, engaged in business, materialistic and most likely atheist. It was, however, their morality that particularly incensed him, because its valorisation of the freedom to choose was merely a mask for selfishness. Modern bourgeois society generated a proliferation of moralities that created a fragmented and disorderly society and this explains why Rousseau advocated a return to the morally ordered pre-Enlightenment world.

In the pre-Enlightenment world, just as the natural world evidences a certain order and hierarchy to it, so too the moral, social and political worlds all display an order to them. For Rousseau, there is a continuum between the natural, social, moral and political worlds with God as the creator of the natural world, the Paterfamilias as the figure who monitors and controls the family and the Legislator as the figure who creates the laws of the state. The goal of education in all this was, as Wain argues, not to advocate a return to nature (as Rousseau has been frequently read) but rather as a preparation for life in society.

However, the emphasis on an ordered society is in tension with another value that Rousseau places a premium on, namely freedom. While the earlier pre-Enlightenment thinkers had articulated an orderly society by hierarchically position members within specific roles, the members of this society were not free insofar as one was born into a specific role and would remain there throughout her/her life. Enlightenment philosophers dismantled this metaphysically inspired world view and championed freedom in opposition to society. Rousseau strongly rejected this opposition and considered the possibility of freedom only against the background of an ordered society. It was

possible to become oneself, to become authentic by finding ones place in the natural and social worlds. Education plays a crucial role in that it is the corrective to the twin negative influences of being excessively passionate as well as the tendency to live for the approval of others.

For an educated reading public interested in philosophy, *Between Truth and Freedom* should definitely be included in their reading list. Its primary virtue lies in the way it weaves together a number of themes (educational, moral, social and political) to present a mosaic of both contemporary intellectual debates as well as Wain's critical engagement with them.