

Comparison between rousseau and plato

Philosophy



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I think Rousseau's most effective criticism of Plato's is on the importance of family. Both philosophers have opposing views on this issue; however I tend to agree with Rousseau's view on family mostly because it is more reasonable than Plato's. Rousseau also seemed more concerned that people enjoy life whereas Plato seemed too tied down with the idea of making the world just, that he forgot about individual happiness. According to Plato there should be no such thing as family. Instead we should all be men born of the earth.

Everyone according to Plato should think themselves to be everyone else's brother or sister. He thinks that children should be removed from the mother upon birth so no attachment is made between mother and child. In speaking of people's "education and rearing" Plato writes: "If by being well educated they become sensible men, they will easily see to all this and everything else we are now leaving out—that the possession of women, marriage, and procreation of children must as far as possible be arranged according to the proverb that friends have all things in common. (423e)

Again he reiterates the idea of having all things in common when he writes: "All these women are to belong to all these men in common, and no woman is to live privately with any man. And the children, in their turn, will be common, and neither will a parent know his own offspring, nor a child his parent." (457d) Rousseau firmly disagrees with Plato's view on family. He thinks that having strong family values is the key to becoming a good citizen. Since Rousseau is all about taking the natural approach to education, his view on family values make sense. Family is quite obviously in accordance with the laws of nature.

A mother gives birth to her child and according to Rousseau it is only natural for the mother to nurse the child herself. That is the first natural bond that takes place within the family thus it is necessary in forming a close family unit. This is seen on page forty-six when he writes: " But let mothers deign to nurse their children, morals will reform themselves, nature" s sentiments will be awakened in every heart, the state will be repeopled. " If you stop here this goes completely against Plato" s belief that only certain women are made to be nurses and therefore only those women should nurse children.

But Rousseau goes on to say: " Thus, from the correction of this single abuse would soon result a general reform; nature would soon have reclaimed all its rights. Let women once again become mothers, men will soon become fathers and husbands again. " Maybe Rousseau exaggerates this idea that by mothers nursing their children family values will be set in place. But to an extent I think this is true, because it is the first way a mother can care for her child, and by having someone else do it for her she is giving up this sacred bond a mother should have with her child.

Rousseau says: " We are born weak, we need strength; we are born totally unprovided, we need aid; we are born stupid we need judgment. Everything we do not have at birth and which we need when we are grown is given us by education. " (pg. 38) This education no matter how you look at it starts in the home, and with the family. If a child is to grow someone needs to be there to guide them. And without a proper family a child will never be educated properly. Rousseau" s theory on family is much more realistic than Plato" s.

Without having family values or even knowing who your real family is how is one supposed to learn to love and care for one another? If we lived as Plato would like we would not know what it means to have a close family because everyone would literally be considered your family. There is no way that you would develop the same feeling of love as you would by living in a family as most know it today. Or family in the sense that Rousseau writes about. Plato was more concerned with the city being just than the individual, so in that context his wanting to eradicate the natural family makes sense.

But his education follows that everyone be a professional at one trade. In my opinion that is no way to live life. To spend your whole life perfecting one thing, and never experiencing what it is to love. Rousseau took a much different approach believing that education was accomplished through centering on each person individually. The way a child is raised quite obviously affects who they are when they grow up. If they grow up in a family with strong values children learn if nothing else how to love and respect others. By learning these values ideally they will one day pass the lessons along to a family of their own.