John T. Scott: *Rousseau's God: Theology, Religion, and the Natural Goodness of Man*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2023. Pp. x, 262.)

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Jean-Jacques Rousseau famously declared that his writings were united by the principle that man is naturally good and becomes evil only through living in society. In *Rousseau's God*, John T. Scott explores the relationship between this principle of natural goodness and Rousseau's theological and religious thought. Scott identifies two criteria against which Rousseau's religious ideas should be evaluated: truth and utility. These criteria may sometimes converge, but they will not always do so. Nowhere, Scott claims, "is the tension between truth and utility more problematic than in Rousseau's writings on theology and religion" (20). One of Scott's central arguments is that, unlike the principle of natural goodness, many of the theological and religious views that Rousseau expressed "are offered by him as less *true*, than *useful*" (4).

The first main chapter of the book outlines the criteria of truth and utility in some detail, thereby supplying the theoretical framework for what follows. The subsequent seven chapters set forth careful reconstructions of Rousseau's ideas from (in particular) the *Discourse on Inequality*, *Letter to Voltaire*, *Letter to Beaumont*, *Emile*, and the chapter on civil religion from the *Social Contract*. Scott devotes three chapters to the Savoyard Vicar's Profession of Faith that, taken together, constitute the most comprehensive and nuanced account to date of its place within *Emile*, and present a strong case for thinking that many of the Vicar's beliefs diverge considerably from positions that Rousseau defended elsewhere and in his own name.

Alongside the distinction between truth and utility, much of the book is framed around the differences between Rousseau's depictions of "natural man" and "moral man." Scott demonstrates that the *Discourse on Inequality* may profitably be read as a theodicy, albeit one that applies solely to humans considered as "physical" and not as "moral" beings. Our "metaphysical and moral side" exists merely "in potentiality" in the pure state of nature (72), and it is only once the moral or social attributes of humans start to develop that the door to corruption is open and natural goodness lost. Scott adds an important caveat to this argument, however, as he shows how, in theory at least, humans can develop into moral beings without being corrupted. When we turn to *Emile*, it becomes apparent that a citizen could conceivably be educated in a way that would "produce a unified soul," comparable to the psychic unity possessed by "natural man" (120). Consider also Rousseau's claim "that man is a naturally good being, loving justice and order" (quoted at 84). Insofar as natural goodness involves the love of justice and order, it cannot be explained in terms of physical attributes alone. The key conclusion we should derive from Scott's analysis of Rousseau's theodicy, it seems to me, is not so much that it applies only to

the physical side of human nature, as that the development of humans' moral (or social) attributes is a necessary (although not sufficient) condition for the loss of natural goodness.

Scott maintains that in distinguishing the moral from the physical side of human nature in the *Discourse on Inequality*, Rousseau set out "a phenomenological account of freedom" without embracing metaphysical dualism (113). Similarly, when we turn to Rousseau's explanation of the development of our moral capacities in *Emile*, Scott argues that there "is no metaphysical discontinuity in this progress from the physical to the moral" (122). This is one of several cases where, on Scott's interpretation, the Savoyard Vicar's views are "inconsistent with Rousseau's conception of human nature and his system of the natural goodness of man in general" (181). In this case, where Rousseau treats humans as naturally unified beings, the Vicar holds that "we are naturally divided beings, consisting of two 'principles' associated with body and soul" (108).

My remarks so far have only highlighted a couple of Scott's most important arguments, and *Rousseau's God* has a great deal to say about many other important topics too, including providence, conscience, and civil religion. Without doing justice to the full breadth and depth of Scott's study here, it is worth offering some more critical reflections on the arguments surveyed so far.

One reason why many scholars (myself included) have taken the Profession of Faith to reflect Rousseau's own views is because there are several places where Rousseau indicated that this is precisely how we should we read it. Scott makes much of the fact that, in some cases, Rousseau claimed that the Savoyard Vicar's views are only "approximately" the same as his own, or that a reader should assume that even if Rousseau does not adopt the Vicar's (and Julie's) profession(s) of faith entirely, he at least "favors them greatly" (quoted at 11, 132). But if Scott is right about the inconsistency between the Vicar's views and Rousseau's broader philosophical commitments, then even Rousseau's claim that their views are approximately the same cannot be sustained. More to the point, at times Rousseau unequivocally affirmed that the Savoyard Vicar's articles of faith were his own. This passage from the *Letters Written from the Mountain*, for example, counts strongly against Scott's interpretation: "For myself, I know very well what constitutes the fundamental principles of mine [Christian faith], and I have said so. Almost all of Julie's profession of faith is affirmative, the entire first part of the Vicar's is affirmative, half of the second part is also affirmative, a part of the chapter on civil Religion is affirmative, the Letter to the Archbishop of Paris is affirmative. There, Sirs, are my fundamental articles" (*Collected Writings of Rousseau*, vol. 9, ed. Christopher Kelly and Eve Grace [UPNE, 2001], 161).

That these are articles of *faith* is also important. Rousseau may well have thought that certain positions for which he argued presuppose metaphysical commitments that are not susceptible to proof by philosophical reasoning or

evidence, and thus the truth of those positions ultimately hinges on matters of belief. Consider the case of free will. Scott maintains that the Savoyard Vicar's reasoning begins with a phenomenological account of freedom that closely resembles Rousseau's discussion from the *Discourse on Inequality*, but the Vicar then goes further and "adopts metaphysical dualism" to counter materialism (171). It is at least plausible, however, that Rousseau thought that what Scott calls the phenomenological account of freedom presupposed metaphysical dualism all along, which would explain why even in the *Discourse* he associated this freedom with the spirituality of the soul and insisted that it cannot be explained by the laws of mechanics.

There is much more that could be said on this subject, of course, as on the many other aspects of Rousseau's philosophy upon which Scott advances deeply insightful and thought-provoking interpretations. One of the many successes of *Rousseau's God* is that it shifts the burden of proof onto those who think that the Vicar does represent Rousseau's own views. Anyone wishing to defend that interpretation henceforth should either respond to Scott's forceful challenges or conclude that Rousseau was inconsistent on topics of central importance to his thought.

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Emily Finley: *The Ideology of Democratism*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. Pp. xii, 218.)

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Can a majority of voters will something undemocratic? Both journalists and academics—such as Nadia Urbinati in *Me the People* (Harvard University Press, 2019) and Jan Werner-Müller in *What Is Populism?* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016)—have claimed it can in the wake of recent populist developments like the 2016 Brexit Referendum and the election victories of parties like Hungary's Fidesz and Poland's Law and Justice. For such a claim to be coherent, democracy must be more than simply than what the majority decides: it must be synonymous with good government, with justice, or with pluralism. But if that synonym is left unclear, it becomes hard to evaluate what the alternative form of rule being proposed would be. In practice this means that judges, bureaucrats, or even monarchs step in to govern in the people's name but against their expressed will.

In her debut monograph, Emily Finley offers a critical account of why elites are prone to dismiss the people in the name of democracy, but does not address the possibility of excessive deference to the people. Following