

ROUSSEAU, CLARKE, BUTLER AND CRITIQUES OF DEISM

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ABSTRACT

Rousseau's stance on natural religion, revealed religion and their relation are outlined (section 1), and then his agreements and disagreements with Samuel Clarke (section 2). After a survey of Joseph Butler's critique of deism (section 3), Rousseau's arguments emerge as capable of supplying a counter-critique sufficient to show that deism could claim to have survived the eighteenth-century undefeated (section 4). If the attempted refutation of theistic arguments on the parts of David Hume and of Immanuel Kant was inconclusive (section 5), then the survival of deism up to the present turns out to represent a serious metaphysical option (section 6).

INTRODUCTION

Myths about Rousseau continue to proliferate. Thus Roger L. Emerson writes in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas* that Jean-Jacques Rousseau “undermined the deists’ superficial religion” (1), a verdict which would be as harsh on Rousseau as on the deists if, as I shall be maintaining, Rousseau largely shared their beliefs. There again, despite his greater sympathy for deism, E.C. Mossner, writing on ‘Deism’ in *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, relates that in *Émile* Rousseau’s Savoyard Vicar jettisons metaphysical arguments (and thus the core of natural theology, the mainstay of the deists) (2), despite the explicit deployment of such arguments on the part of this same character (see Section 1, below).

A good case has admittedly been made for holding that Rousseau was not officially committed to all the views of the Vicaire savoyard (3), much less to all those of “the illustrious Clarke”, the terms in which Samuel Clarke is honoured by his character, the Vicaire (4). But these latter divergences place Rousseau far closer to writers usually regarded as deists such as John Toland, Anthony Collins and Matthew Tindal

than Clarke himself stood, and are consistent with the view that, sometimes knowingly and sometimes unknowingly, Rousseau presented effective replies to critics of the deists such as Samuel Clarke and Joseph Butler. So, at least, I shall be arguing.

What the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century deists had in common, and critics such as Clarke and Butler sought to undermine, was a position in religious epistemology that was sceptical (to different degrees) about claims based on revelation, without rejecting belief in God grounded in natural reason (on one basis or another). It should accordingly be emphasised from the start that I am not using 'deism' in the sense widely employed currently in theological circles, as conveying belief in a clock-maker God who played or plays no role after or beyond creation. This metaphysical stance may have some links with the position just depicted as deism, but was not held by most of the deists just mentioned. Even if this has sometimes been the meaning of 'deism' when used pejoratively, it is not the sense relevant to a paper on the deism advocated by Toland and Tindal, criticised by Clarke and Butler and defended (as I hope to show) by Rousseau.

Rousseau's stance on natural religion (by which, as will be seen below, he meant religion based on nature, reason and conscience), on revealed religion and on their relation will first be outlined (section 1), and then his agreements with and divergences from Samuel Clarke (section 2). It will next prove relevant to review the critique of one of the ablest opponents of the deists, Joseph Butler (section 3). In the light of this critique, Rousseau's arguments and stance will emerge as capable of supplying a counter-critique sufficient to show that deism (belief, that is, in a deity discernible from nature, from reason and from conscience, rather than through special revelation) could claim to have survived the eighteenth-century undefeated (section 4), unless the attempted refutation of theistic arguments on the parts of David Hume and of Immanuel Kant (briefly reviewed in section 5) is regarded as conclusive. If

that attempted refutation was inconclusive, as I argue in section 5, then the survival of deism up to and including the present turns out to represent a serious metaphysical option rather than a mere historical curiosity (section 6).

I: ROUSSEAU'S STANCE ON NATURAL AND REVEALED RELIGION

Rousseau's *Émile*, first published in 1762, includes the famous dialogue conducted on a mountain-top between a Savoyard priest or Vicaire and the young Émile. By prior agreement the subject of the dialogue is religious belief and its critics. In this context, the Vicaire conveys that the philosophers are of little or no help, each having a system, but each putting personal vanity before love of truth. (5) N.J.H. Dent suggests that this criticism applies to philosophy in general (6), but Maurice Cranston points out that Rousseau's remarks here are directed mainly at the materialist metaphysics of philosophers such as Helvétius (7). This interpretation certainly coheres better with the high praise which shortly follows of "the illustrious Clarke", well-known both as a theologian and as a philosopher (and long since translated into French for non-readers of English such as Rousseau (8)), even if this praise is consistent with reservations on Rousseau's part.

There is admittedly an undertone of faint praise in the passage about Clarke. Clarke's system "seems ... to contain fewer things which are beyond the understanding of the human mind" than the other systems, which "are full of absurdities". But as "Every system has its insoluble problems", ... "these difficulties are therefore no final arguments, against any system". While this remains praise of a highly qualified kind, there follows apparently unqualified acclamation: "Then comes the illustrious Clarke who gives light to the world and proclaims the Being of beings and the Giver of things. What universal admiration, what unanimous applause would have greeted this new system—a system so great, so illuminating and so simple" (9). Clearly Rousseau's rejection of philosophy in matters of religion does not extend to the general kind of arguments for the being and attributes of God deployed by Clarke,

nor, accordingly, to natural theology. Not even the conditionality of “would have greeted” can be allowed to detract from this verdict, nor significantly to qualify the wholeheartedness of the Vicaire’s admiration for Clarke in this passage. To Rousseau’s overall attitude to Clarke I return in section II.

While the Savoyard proceeds to deploy his own version of the cosmological argument, and to argue for the existence, omnipotence and benevolence of God, it is clear that, for him, religion is grounded in a combination of reason and feeling, and develops at least as much out of conscience, the innate sense of justice, which he regards as God’s voice, implanted in all human beings by the creator, as from arguments such as Clarke’s, and such as his own. Yet reason in the form of the cosmological argument remains the mainstay of his position, as it was for the earlier deists. This entire stance, as *Émile* remarks, closely resembles natural religion, something which the orthodox wrongly regard as irreligion (10).

On the subject of revelation, by contrast, the Savoyard declares an attitude of (at most) respectful doubt, at the same time conveying hostility to the confusions and contradictions of supposedly revealed doctrines. His tone here diverges hugely from that of Clarke and again resembles instead that of the English deists, except insofar as one of their number (Tindal) detected implicit but unintentional deism in Clarke (11). Likewise miracles are treated as an impediment to faith in the author of the regular laws of nature (12), rather as most of the English deists had treated them. The beauty of the Gospel is recognised, and yet the Savoyard also declares it “full of incredible things, things repugnant to reason, things which no natural man can understand or accept” (13). Before submitting his reason to such things, reasons must be given him, he insists (14); this is where the defenders of revelation fail.

Hence his exposition of religious matters, without explicitly rejecting revelation outright, credits nothing but natural religion. God is to be worshipped, but dogmas

with no bearing on morality are to be ignored, says the Savoyard, in a passage reminiscent of Lord Herbert of Cherbury (15). God is to be served according to knowledge based on reason, and feelings based on natural law as recognised by conscience. Nothing more is needed; indeed revelations are probably to be rejected, as degrading God by investing him with passions like our own (16). As Reason asserts, in dialogue with Inspiration, “He who denies the right of reason, must convince me without recourse to her aid”; appeals against the deliverances of reason are either covert appeals *to* reason, or they are groundless (17).

There is no reason to doubt that the exposition of the Savoyard broadly expresses Rousseau’s personal position certainly about religion and largely about metaphysics too, although, as Roger D. Masters argues, Rousseau seems to have preferred not to acknowledge that he held these views, nor to make them part of his official philosophical system, granted his professed epistemological view that because of the limits of human reason these questions are beset with uncertainty, by contrast with matters of history and of morals (18). Despite his reluctance to profess these views as his official philosophical position about religion, and despite his continuing awareness that all systems were open to objections, these views certainly appear to have been his authentic, deliberate and persistent personal sentiments from around his fortieth year onwards, as he was to affirm explicitly in his later years (19).

II: ROUSSEAU AND ‘THE ILLUSTRIOUS CLARKE’

Besides championing the cosmological argument, Samuel Clarke argued in favour of revelation, of the consilience of natural religion and Christianity, and of the reasonableness of revelation in the light of the evidence of miracles and other signs. Human depravity makes the Christian revelation indispensable. Thus not only did he criticise individual deists such as Toland; his overall stance was fiercely hostile to deism in general (20). Accordingly, and despite the stance of the Savoyard on themes concerning revelation (noted in the previous section), the apparent praise on the part

of this same character for Clarke and his philosophical system may seem an obstacle to the thesis that Rousseau supplies a viable defence of deism.

However, the areas of agreement between the Savoyard and Clarke are limited. Both subscribe to the cosmological argument, albeit in somewhat different forms. And both maintain that matter cannot be the original source of motion in the universe, and is incapable of feeling and perception; and also that human beings are capable of initiating movement, and of freedom of thought and will (21). However, the Savoyard does not regard the cosmological argument as a demonstration of God's existence (as opposed to the least doubtful solution to the 'insuperable problems' which can be raised against any metaphysical system); his faith is based as much on appeals to experiential considerations as on this argument. Already we find a complete divergence of epistemological method, reflected in the frequent appeals of the Savoyard to observation and experience (22).

There are also differences of substance. Thus Clarke denies that physical sensation is an attribute of the body, whereas the Savoyard holds that sensations are determined by material processes, and that the soul is limited to activities of willing and reflection (23). For Clarke, morality is grounded in truths known to God and knowable by humanity, but for the Savoyard it is discerned by conscience, which naturally imparts the duties that human beings should follow, whereas rationalism in ethics leads us astray (24). And while, for Clarke, God's existence is conceptually necessary (25), the Savoyard's conclusion is that God "exists of himself alone", an independence that would seem not to betoken conceptually necessary existence, and further that while everything else depends on God, his nature is largely hidden and eludes human attempts at understanding (26).

So there are large differences both of method and of substance, independent of the antithetical approaches of Clarke and the Savoyard to the claims of Christian

revelation. In this connection, Clarke in fact held that people who accept natural religion but deny revelation are on a slippery slope to atheism. Yet the stance pilloried by Clarke was the very position of the Savoyard (27), despite his professed admiration of Clarke, and there is no reason to doubt that it was also the position of Rousseau himself, who could actually have cited his broad agreement with Clarke over natural religion as well as his distrust of philosophical systems to resist any charge of creeping atheism against himself.

The Savoyard's high praise of Clarke has to be set alongside these huge divergences. Rousseau seems to have wanted to appeal to a 'respectable authority' in areas of agreement between Clarke and the Vicaire, in order to secure a more favourable hearing overall for the views that he presented through the mouth of the Savoyard (28). Clarke would doubtless have been appalled at this use of his name and reputation.

III: BUTLER'S ARGUMENT AGAINST DEISM

Since Rousseau apparently did not read English (29), he may never have come across the celebrated critique of deism penned by Joseph Butler. Nonetheless this critique now requires attention, since it has often been regarded as a conclusive refutation of deism, supposedly showing that deists are rationally obliged to accept revealed religion in addition to their deism. Before Rousseau's confutation of such anti-deistic positions is investigated, it is appropriate to review Butler's case.

Butler's overall stance is that there is a significant probability that Christianity is true, and that, since 'to us, probability is the very guide of life' (30), we ought, on grounds of prudence, to be guided in a matter of such importance by this probability. While revealed religion is less than certain, the obstacles to acceptance of its distinctive tenets are no stronger than the obstacles to acceptance of natural religion (including belief in God's existence and purposive government of nature), which deists profess

to accept, and the probabilities concerned are comparable, granted that the limits of human faculties prevent more than probable belief in both cases (31). As Terence Penelhum expresses the matter, '[p]arity of reasoning requires that if we accept [the] claims [sc. of natural religion] in the face of the objections to them, we should be willing to do the same for the claims of revelation' (32). Besides (and here Butler steps outside analogical reasoning to develop a line of argument which, as we have seen, was deployed also by Clarke), the 'claims of revelation are supported by special evidences such as miracles [and] fulfilled prophecies' (33) and this enhances the rationality of accepting them, a conclusion that was to be firmly rejected by Rousseau (34).

What is particularly strange in someone taking this stance is Butler's apparent acceptance of the Cosmological Argument, again as presented by Samuel Clarke. This argument is recognised as an *a priori* proof in the Introduction of *Analogy* (35), and is summarised with approval in the main text (36). But an *a priori* proof offers a far higher degree of probability for its conclusion than mere analogical reasoning or than just a significant probability of not being false. To be consistent with his other remarks about probability, Butler would have to claim that there are severe limits to the degree of probability offered even by this argument, invoking (imaginably) considerations such as the finitude of human faculties. Otherwise he would have to choose between retracting the claim that nothing stronger than probability is to be had in matters of religion, and thus the basis of his architectonic argument from analogy, and retracting his endorsement of the *a priori* argument. Yet this latter option would involve the risk that readers persuaded by such a retraction might abandon their deism, and thus cease to be open to persuasion by Butler's central argument. Besides, Butler has strong motives for avoiding any move which might detract from the high probability (if not the certainty) of the doctrines of natural religion; for, as Penelhum remarks, 'this, and only this, permits him to follow in Aquinas's footsteps and say

that revelation supplements and completes them, and is rendered more rationally acceptable by the assumption of their truth' (37).

At other times, however, and in other contexts, Butler has strong motives for representing the doctrines of natural religion as only moderately likely. These motives arise, as Penelhum points out, when he is arguing that the evidence of nature does not unambiguously support these doctrines, but is significantly supplemented if the claims of revelation are accepted. Penelhum's example of a doctrine regarded in this light by Butler is the doctrine that God rewards virtue and punishes vice (38). The application of this argument to this particular doctrine could be avoided by deists by relegating it from the central doctrines of natural religion, or by not counting it as one of these in the first place.

Meanwhile, as Penelhum recognises, Butler is open to criticism for using 'probable' in some phases of his argument to mean 'highly probable' and in others to mean merely 'having some degree of likelihood' (39). Such equivocation already paves the way for one form of deistic reply to Butler: if the doctrines of natural religion are highly probable, then they are not genuinely analogous with those of revealed religion, but if they are represented as no more probable than those of revealed religion, this undermines the serious possibility of regarding them as a more or less reliable basis fit to be supplemented with the claims of revealed religion, and at the same time may well under-represent the various grounds for accepting them.

IV: ROUSSEAU'S CRITIQUE

A further reply to Butler is, I want to suggest, supplied unawares by Rousseau through the mouth of the Savoyard; it also comprises a tacit but probably a conscious and deliberate reply to Clarke's revelationism. For Rousseau's character, after presenting at length a reasoned case for natural religion, points out that revealed religion is entirely dependent for its credibility on reason, and in several ways at that.

Thus the adherents of revealed religion cannot defensibly set it above reason, or remove the right of reason to question it (40), and its teachings remain subject to the kinds of logical scrutiny which can identify contradictions and/or implausibility, and by the same token can identify claims that are contrary to reason (41). (Tindal had argued along comparable lines (42), but Rousseau may not have been aware of this, and may have absorbed arguments of this kind via French deists such as Diderot in his pre-atheistic phase.) Besides, the relation between revealed religion and natural religion is not one of parallelism, much less one of symmetry (43); for the truth of basic doctrines of natural religion (such as God's existence and benevolence) is a precondition of the credibility of claims to revelation (44), and claims purporting to attest a revelation, being human claims, can only be endorsed if they stand up to reasoned investigation (45), of a kind that in the circumstances could easily last for and require a lifetime (46).

Effectively, the upshot is that the Savoyard's religious beliefs consist, as he expounds them, in 'nothing but natural religion' (47), despite his overt respect for certain instances of purported revelation. While this need not be taken as Rousseau's official stance on religion, his character nevertheless explains and defends this position to *Émile* in ways that could serve among responses to advocates of revealed religion such as Clarke and Butler. Thus there can be no blame or guilt for those not submitting to purported revelations 'so long as I serve God according to the knowledge he has given to my mind, and the feelings he has put into my heart'; according, that is, to the deliverances of reason and of conscience (48). No benefit either to morals or to worthwhile beliefs can be derived from 'positive doctrine which cannot be derived without the aid of this doctrine by the right use of my faculties' (49). If a benevolent God exists, he conveys all that is needed in religion 'to our conscience and to our reason' (assisted by our senses); otherwise he is not benevolent. Besides, while this does not yet rule out the possibility of God speaking to our faculties through revelations imparted to others, in fact the purported revelations of

others, far from adding anything valuable, tend to add contradictions, to ascribe to God degrading and excessively human attitudes, and to generate pride, intolerance and cruelty among believers (50). While this critique of revelation in general might seem too sweeping, and might leave one or another purported revelation relatively unscathed, it forms only part of the Savoyard's case, which proceeds to a detailed appraisal (too detailed to be considered here) of the credibility of particular revelations and of apparently supportive items such as alleged miracles.

Characteristic is the claim that the creator of rational creatures cannot be supposed with any consistency to expect these creatures to subject their reason to authority, or to supposedly revealed teachings that are less clear, simple or comprehensible than the teachings of natural religion (51).

Though probability was not Rousseau's central concern, as it was Butler's, the Savoyard is allowed to raise numerous issues surrounding the probability and credibility of revealed religion and its particular manifestations. Indeed these epistemological concerns cohere well with Rousseau's characteristic stress on the uncertainty of reasoning in the field of metaphysics, an emphasis that could be held in some ways to match Butler's stress on the limits of human knowledge, particularly in matters that transcend nature, and with Rousseau's further characteristic recognition that he had never been able to remove all the difficulties facing his personal religious and metaphysical beliefs. Thus the assumptions of the two writers were not completely at variance. But with Rousseau, the self-consciousness that awareness of epistemological limits can generate consistently takes the form, at least in the discourse of the Savoyard, of scrutinising the reasonableness of doctrines whose adherents allege them to be above reason and above question (52), the authenticity of related texts, and the probability of related claims about prophecies or miracles (53). Supposedly revealed doctrines (the Savoyard not unreasonably argues) are fit to be credited only if they survive such a scrutiny at the bar of reason.

At the more general level of methodology, the Savoyard conveys that if adherents of these doctrines assert their rational superiority to the deliverances of ordinary, natural reason (whether in the form of natural religion or in that of the scrutiny of their own credentials), and seek to persuade us to distrust what natural reason conveys, then they must perforce appeal to that very reason that they maintain to be at least defective and possibly corrupt (54). However, revelationists who claim that the reason of the unconvinced is corrupted by sin are in no position to appeal to reason to convince them (55). This would probably comprise Rousseau's reply to the twentieth-century revelationist, Karl Barth, who, after reporting the Savoyard's discourse blow by blow, rightly remarks Rousseau's originality in comprehensively rejecting revelation as in any way distinct from 'the inherent development of humanity' and human reason, an originality easily transcending that of contemporary 'neologians' including Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (56), but implicitly rejects Rousseau's entire position, as grounded in misconceptions about the sufficiency of human reason and the uncorrupted nature of the human heart (57). Rousseau could both challenge the dogmatic assumption that these are misconceptions, and maintain that insofar as his opponents rely on reason, they precisely grant him the very ground on which he stands.

If, however, revelationists could somehow cast doubt upon the principles of reason (such as the law of non-contradiction or the arguments of natural theology), says the Savoyard's defender of Reason in dialogue with a defender of Inspiration (in a passage that unwittingly turns the tables on Butler), far from helping revealed religion this would engender uncertainty about the very existence of God (58). But granted Rousseau's reasonable contention that reason cannot undermine itself, and his related claim that the key tenets of natural religion, as opposed to revealed religion, are capable of reasoned support, there is no need for anyone accepting Rousseau's premises to endorse either Butler's suggestion that natural religion is beset by the same difficulties as revealed religion, or Clarke's view that revelation is necessary to

overcome the defects of reason resulting from human depravity (59). (Some contemporary suggestions that the tenets of natural religion are nevertheless incapable of reasoned support for other reasons will be considered in the next section.)

Thus, Rousseau's character the Savoyard supplies a reasoned critique of positions such as Clarke's which also effectively answers much of Butler's case, and at the same time serves to rehabilitate many aspects of the general position of the English deists. Not surprisingly, the publication of this passage resulted in Rousseau being exiled both from Catholic France and from the Protestant cantons of Switzerland (60). But since this critique might itself seem vulnerable to criticisms of the theistic arguments such as those advanced by Rousseau's friend and contemporary, David Hume, and later in the century by Immanuel Kant, a brief appraisal of their critique is in place before the conclusion that deism survived the century undefeated can be drawn.

V: A BRIEF REVIEW OF HUME AND KANT ON THE GROUNDS OF DEISTIC AND THEISTIC BELIEF

It is often claimed that David Hume destroyed the theistic arguments to a first cause and to a cosmic designer (61). If so, then the core of Rousseau's deism would also have been undermined thereby, as well as the most cogent rational basis for theistic religions such as Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

However, as I have argued elsewhere, Hume's criticisms in the *Dialogues of a priori* arguments in metaphysics are made to turn on God's existence being regarded as conceptually necessary. This was indeed a feature of Clarke's arguments, but not of all versions of the cosmological argument, as deployed during that century. The arguments of Clarke's opponent, Daniel Waterland, for example, are immune from these criticisms (62). Further, as has been seen above, nothing in the position of the Savoyard or of Rousseau himself depended on conceptually necessary existence

either. Hume's character, Cleanthes, purports to 'rest the whole controversy' (about the cosmological argument) on his own conclusion that 'There is no being, therefore, whose non-existence implies a contradiction' (63), while the related objections of his character Philo seem also to turn on this proposition (64). While there is room to question Cleanthes' claim (65), the present point is that against versions of the cosmological argument such as that of the Savoyard (and, come to that, Waterland's more persuasive version) this objection is simply irrelevant. It follows that the Savoyard's arguments are unaffected by Hume's central criticism.

Hume's Cleanthes additionally raises objections to would-be explanations of infinite successions of items or events (66), and Rousseau does not rule out the possibility of an infinite past (67). But he could have replied that causal explanations need not involve antecedent factors as causes, and that infinite successions might remain amenable to causal explanations of in terms of simultaneous causation. Besides, if he had been shown an early draft of Hume's 'Dialogues' (something that might just possibly have actually happened during his exile in Britain in the late 1760s) and had grasped their meaning, he could have pointed out that Hume's Demea is allowed to anticipate and parry Cleanthes' objections in advance when he remarks that even infinite collections raise explanatory issues, such as why this particular collection or succession exists and not another, or none at all (68). The agency of a being unamenable to being created or destroyed, Rousseau could have added, might serve to resolve these otherwise inexplicable issues. Thus, as I have argued elsewhere, those of Hume's objections to the cosmological argument that do not turn on conceptually necessary existence turn out to be inconclusive (69).

Hume's objections to the teleological argument need not have troubled Rousseau, who seems not to have appealed to it, at least explicitly, and in general to have sought to avoid arguments about God's nature (70). Certainly in one passage the Savoyard argues from the laws of motion to God's intelligence (71), but Richard Swinburne has

argued persuasively that Hume's objections are inconclusive against arguments from such regularities of succession, as opposed to ones from synchronic order (72). On the problem of evil, Hume's discussion would certainly have exercised Rousseau, but his Savoyard deploys a vigorous version of the Free Will Defence, and at least attempts to relate it to physical evil as well as to moral evil (73).

Nevertheless Hume is sometimes considered to have delivered a fatal blow to deism by undermining in *Natural History of Religion* the beliefs of several of the English deists that current religions were corruptions of a once-universal monotheism, which would itself have comprised a primeval natural religion (74). But Rousseau's deism seems not to have included this anthropological claim, and Rousseau could have maintained that deism needs to say nothing in particular about the human past, beyond its critique of past purported revelations.

Immanuel Kant was himself in some ways a deist (in the above sense) of an idiosyncratic kind, to judge from his approach in *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* (75). Nevertheless his criticisms of theistic arguments (in *Critique of Pure Reason*) appear to strike also at Rousseau's deism (76), even though his moral arguments, as in the second *Critique*, would (if credible) tend to uphold the view of Rousseau's Savoyard that the phenomena of conscience comprise a basis for religious belief (77), and the contention of Kant's *Opus Postumum*, that, conceived as respect for the moral law, conscience is the voice of God in us, seems even closer still to Rousseau (78). However, Kant's arguments of the first *Critique* centrally claim that all the theistic arguments turn on the ontological argument and its key concept of a logically necessary being (79). Thus arguments such as Rousseau's that neither employ nor imply this concept are apparently immune from his central criticism.

Kant's further criticisms of all attempts to reason in areas that lie beyond experience would (if sound) be a problem for Rousseau's deism. But the claim that nothing

beyond experience can be known (80) seems arbitrary. For this claim pre-empts apparently viable answers to the question of whether we can know or reasonably believe anything about the conditions necessary for experience to be possible, a question which would apparently make good sense and would apparently be intelligibly askable, but for the Kantian embargo on asking it.

While limits of space prevent further discussion of possible counter-attacks from supporters of Hume and Kant, the kind of deistic position defended by Rousseau's Savoyard would seem not to have been subverted or undermined by at least the central critiques of religion of Hume and of Kant. The same could probably be claimed for the theistic core of Christianity, Judaism and of Islam, if they can also be defended against deistic and other critiques of revelation.

VI: DEISM: A SERIOUS METAPHYSICAL OPTION

It remains to draw some broader conclusions about deism. Contrary to what is usually supposed, deism seems not to have been superseded or overthrown either by its theistic critics such as Clarke and Butler or by Enlightenment philosophers such as Hume and Kant. In particular, the deism of the Savoyard, and thus probably of Rousseau, can be defended against at least eighteenth-century criticism. This was not (as it may be worth re-emphasising) the kind of deism that represents God as an absentee designer, responsible for nothing but initiating the cosmic process, but (as has been mentioned above) the deism of a deity discernible from nature, from reason and from conscience, rather than from revelation (in the sense of 'special revelation(s)').

Such deism has to defend itself on at least two fronts. Against scepticism about religion it deploys (besides arguments from conscience) arguments such as the cosmological argument, and can, I have argued, avoid the pitfalls identified by philosophers such as Hume and Kant. Against revelationists such as Clarke and

Butler it deploys its own critique of revelation, and challenges them to give reasons, if they can, for abandoning reason (that is, for abandoning reasoning and reasons) in favour of religious authority.

Rousseau's deism could be enlarged upon and defended better than is done in *Émile*. Thus it could be updated in matters of epistemology so as to secure immunity from possible charges of hypostatizing the faculty of reason, supplemented through detailed text-based scrutinies of purported revelations such as the critique of the Bible on the part of Hermann Samuel Reimarus (as published posthumously by Lessing (81)), and could be upheld with a more vigorous presentation of the cosmological argument than that of Rousseau (82), a more explicit version of the teleological argument (83), and a more persuasive theodicy with regard to physical evil (84). More recent developments would also require such deism to be related to evolution and to Big Bang cosmology. But short of a latter-day vindication of Hume's Fork, or of some semantic counterpart concerning the limits of intelligibility (such as the Verification Principle threatened but failed to be), there is every reason to consider it capable of such revision, and thus a metaphysical option for the third millennium, and not just a footnote to the history of philosophy of the eighteenth century.

NOTES

1. Roger L. Emerson, 'Deism', in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968, Volume I, 646-652, at p.651b. But, as Helena Rosenblatt has recently disclosed, Rousseau's *Émile* was condemned at Geneva as an attempt to "reduce all religion to a perfect deism". See Helena Rosenblatt, *Rousseau and Geneva*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p.271. (Rousseau's views on political aspects of religion, discussed by Rosenblatt at pp.258-280, are beyond the scope of the current paper.)
2. E.C. Mossner, 'Deism', *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, New York: Macmillan and London: Collier-Macmillan, 1967, Volume II, 326-336, at p.332b.

3. Roger D. Masters, 'Rousseau and the "Illustrious Clarke"', in Michael Launay (ed.), *Jean-Jacques Rousseau et son Temps*, Paris; Librairie A.-G. Nizet, 1969, 37-50; see pages 46-50.
4. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile*, trans. Barbara Foxley, London: Dent (Everyman's Library), [1911] 1963, p.231.
5. *Émile*, pp.230-231.
6. N.J.H. Dent, *A Rousseau Dictionary*, Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1992, p.78.
7. Maurice Cranston, *The Noble Savage: Jean-Jacques Rousseau 1754-1762*, London: Allen Lane, 1991, p.193.
8. Clarke's *Treatise on the Existence of God*, plus his *Discourse on the Unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation*, was published in the French translation of Ricotier as *Traité de l'Existence et des Attributs de Dieu: Des Devoirs de la Religion Naturelle, et de la Vérité de la Religion Chrétienne*; the second edition, in three volumes, was published at Amsterdam by Jean Frederic Bernard in 1728. See Masters, p.38.
9. *Émile*, p.231.
10. *Émile*, p.258.
11. J.P. Ferguson, *An Eighteenth Century Heretic, Dr Samuel Clarke*, Kington: The Roundwood Press, 1976, p.32.
12. Cranston, pp.195-196.
13. *Émile*, pp.272.
14. *Émile*, pp.261.
15. *Émile*, pp.272.
16. *Émile*, pp.259.
17. *Émile*, pp.265.
18. Masters, 'Rousseau', pp.46-48.
19. This is apparent from Rousseau's defence of *Émile* (including the relevant passages thereof) in *Letter to Archbishop Beaumont*; see Maurice Cranston, *The*

Solitary Self: Jean-Jacques Rousseau in Exile and Adversity, Chicago: University of Chicago Press and London: Viking/Penguin, 1997. See also his 'Walk Three' of the 'Reveries of the Solitary Walker', in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Collected Writings of Rousseau* (vol. 8), ed. Christopher Kelly, Hanover and London: Dartmouth College and Universities Press of New England, 2000, pp.17-27, especially p.22.

20. Samuel Clarke, *A Discourse concerning the Unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion, and the Truth and Certitude of the Christian Revelation* (composed 1705), chapters II, XII and XVI to XXI; published in *A Discourse concerning the Being and Attributes of God, the Obligations of Natural Religion, and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation*, London: 1706. (By 1749 this work had attained its tenth edition.)

21. Masters, pp.38-41.

22. Masters, pp.41 and 43.

23. Masters, p.42-43.

24. Masters, pp. 43-45.

25. See Robin Attfield, 'Clarke, Independence and Necessity', *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 1.2, 1993, 67-82.

26. *Émile*, p.239.

27. Masters, p.45.

28. Masters, p.50.

29. Masters, p.38.

30. Butler, *The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature*, Introduction, in W.E. Gladstone (ed.), *Butler's Works* (2 vols.), Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896, Vol. I, p.5

31. *Analogy*, II 4, 5-6; Gladstone, Vol. I, pp.247-9

32. Terence Penelhum, *Butler*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985, p.104.

33. Penelhum, p.104.

34. *Émile*, pp.262-3, and 265; see also section 1 (above) and section 4 (below).

35. *Analogy*, Introduction, 8-10; Gladstone, Vol. I, pp.9-12

36. *Analogy*, I, vi, 3-4; Gladstone, Vol. I, pp. 140-142
37. Penelhum, p.102.
38. Penelhum, pp. 102-3.
39. Penelhum, p. 90-92.
40. *Émile*, pp.264-5.
41. *Émile*, pp.263-4.
42. Matthew Tindal, 'Christianity as Old as Creation', in Peter Gay (ed.), *Deism: An Anthology*, van Nostrand: Princeton, NJ, 1968, pp.112-116.
43. *Émile*, p.259.
44. *Émile*, p.260.
45. *Émile*, p.261.
46. *Émile*, p.270.
47. *Émile*, p.259.
48. *Émile*, p.259.
49. *Émile*, p.259.
50. *Émile*, p.259. Some similar claims had recently been made in Germany by the neologist critics of Christian Wolff; see Charles H. Talbert (ed.), *Reimarus: Fragments*, London: SCM Press, 1971, Introduction, p.5.
51. *Émile*, pp.264. For parallel themes of Toland, see *Reimarus: Fragments*, Introduction, p.17.
52. *Émile*, pp.264, 266. Parallel conclusions had already been drawn in Germany by Hermann Samuel Reimarus, who died in 1751, but they remained undisclosed until Lessing published them in the Wolfenbüttel Fragments, between 1774 and 1778. See *Reimarus: Fragments*, pp.14-22. Rousseau's recognition that no system of beliefs is immune from difficulties, encountered above in the context of Clarke's system, is specifically applied to his own personal beliefs e.g. in the Third Walk; see *Collected Works*, vol.8, p.22.
53. *Émile*, p.262.
54. *Émile*, pp.264-5.

55. *Émile*, p.265.
56. Karl Barth, *From Rousseau to Ritschl*, trans. Brian Cozens, London: SCM Press, 1959, ch.II ('Rousseau') pp.58-117, at p.116.
57. Barth, pp.105-17. However, Barth at least recognises that Rousseau was more consistent than any of his eighteenth-century theological opponents: see p.91.
58. *Émile*, pp.265-6.
59. Ferguson, *Dr. Samuel Clarke*, p.30.
60. Barth, pp.89-93.
61. For example, such a claim was recently made by Robert Sharpe in *The Moral Case Against Religious Belief*, London: SCM Press, 1997, p.92.
62. See Attfield, 'Clarke, Independence and Necessity', pp. 69-73, 76-80
63. David Hume, 'Dialogues concerning Natural Religion', Section IX, in Richard Wollheim (ed.), *Hume on Religion*, London and Glasgow: Collins, 1963, pp. 162-3. Some of the confusions present in this passage of Hume are well elicited in M. A. Stewart, 'Hume and the Metaphysical Argument A Priori', in A. J. Holland (ed.), *Philosophy, Its History and Historiography*, Dordrecht: Reidel Publishing Company, 1985, 243-270, at pp. 250-251.
64. Hume, 'Dialogues', pp. 164f. I have argued that these objections turn on conceptually necessary existence at 'Clarke, Independence and Necessity', pp. 78-9.
65. See Robin Attfield, *God and the Secular*, Aldershot: Gregg Revivals, 1993, ch. 5, sect 2.
66. Hume, 'Dialogues', p. 164.
67. *Émile*, p. 239.
68. Hume, 'Dialogues', p. 162.
69. Attfield, 'Clarke, Independence and Necessity', pp.79-80.
70. *Émile*, p. 239.
71. *Émile*, p. 239.
72. Richard Swinburne, 'The Argument from Design', *Philosophy*, 43, 1968, 199-212
73. *Émile*, pp. 243-5.

74. Hume, 'A Natural History of Religion', in Wollheim, *Hume on Religion*, pp. 31-98. The suggestion that this work implicitly undermined deism is made, for example, in Kenneth Cragg, *Reason and Authority in the Eighteenth Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964, pp.89-90, 134-135.
75. Immanuel Kant, *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, trans. Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960
76. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Transcendental Dialectic, Bk II, ch iii; N. Kemp Smith (trans.), *Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, London: Macmillan, 1968, pp.485-531.
77. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. L.W. Beck, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1977, Book II, chs. II-V.
78. For Kant's *Opus Postumum*, see Theodore M. Greene's Introduction to Kant, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* (note 74 above), pp.lxv-lxvi.
79. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Transcendental Dialectic, Bk II, ch iii; Kemp Smith, pp.510-511, 523-524.
80. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Transcendental Dialectic, Bk II, ch iii, sect. 7; Kemp Smith, pp. 527-529
81. See note 51 above.
82. See, for example, William L. Rowe, *Philosophy of Religion*, Encino and Belmont, CA: Dickenson, 1978, chapter 2, and Robin Attfield, *God and The Secular: A Philosophical Assessment of Secular Reasoning from Bacon to Kant*, 2nd edn, Aldershot: Gregg Revivals and Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1993, chapter 5.
83. See, for example, R. G. Swinburne, 'The Argument from Design', *Philosophy*, 43, 1968, 199-212
84. See, for example, B.R. Reichenbach, 'Natural Evils and Natural Laws: A Theodicy for Natural Evils', *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 16, 1976, 179-196. I am grateful to Patricia Clark, Kathryn Plant and Barry Wilkins for their help in researching this paper; and, for their comments and criticisms, to the participants of the 'Athens and Jerusalem' conference of the British Society for the History of

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