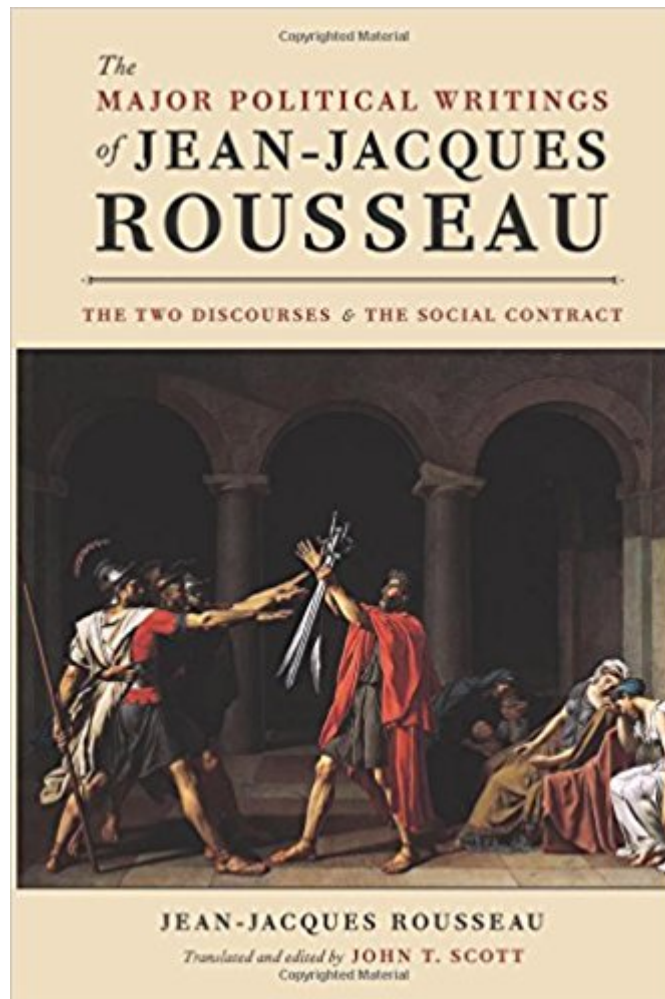


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# The Major Political Writings Of Jean-Jacques Rousseau: The Two "Discourses" And The "Social Contract"



## Synopsis

Individualist and communitarian. Anarchist and totalitarian. Classicist and romanticist. Progressive and reactionary. Since the eighteenth century, Jean-Jacques Rousseau has been said to be all of these things. Few philosophers have been the subject of as much or as intense debate, yet almost everyone agrees that Rousseau is among the most important and influential thinkers in the history of political philosophy. This new edition of his major political writings, published in the year of the three-hundredth anniversary of his birth, renews attention to the perennial importance of Rousseau's work. The book brings together superb new translations by renowned Rousseau scholar John T. Scott of three of Rousseau's works: the *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts*, the *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men*, and *On the Social Contract*. The two *Discourses* show Rousseau developing his well-known conception of the natural goodness of man and the problems posed by life in society. With the *Social Contract*, Rousseau became the first major thinker to argue that democracy is the only legitimate form of political organization. Scott's extensive introduction enhances our understanding of these foundational writings, providing background information, social and historical context, and guidance for interpreting the works. Throughout, translation and editorial notes clarify ideas and terms that might not be immediately familiar to most readers. The three works collected in *The Major Political Writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* represent an important contribution to eighteenth-century political theory that has exerted an extensive influence on generations of thinkers, beginning with the leaders of the French Revolution and continuing to the present day. The new translations on offer here will be welcomed by a wide readership of both Rousseau scholars and readers with a general interest in political thought.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book is a useful and scholarly collection of Rousseau's primary political writings, with a fine translation. I previously owned the two Cambridge University Press editions of Rousseau's political writings, but I decided to replace one of them with this volume (but keep the one on Rousseau's later writings). The advantages of the Cambridge edition are that it includes additional writings, including letters and short compositions, that are not included in the Scott translation. But to compensate for that, the Chicago edition has several advantages of its own. For one thing, the book is more good-looking and is made out of more pleasing materials. I have always found the Cambridge blue books bulky, heavy, and difficult to leave open. Another benefit is that the Chicago edition uses footnotes rather than the confusing end-notes employed by Cambridge. The most important advantage is the translation. Scott's translation is more fluid and readable than Gourevitch's. I was surprised by this, since I have grown to expect a highly literal, "Straussian" translation from Chicago University Press (especially since the book has an endorsement by Robert Bartlett on the back cover). I cannot say whether Scott's translation is also more faithful, but it is certainly more beautiful and fluid. However, it should be noted that the differences between the translations are fairly minor; many passages are translated identically (or nearly so), and both seem to be fairly literal. Finally, this edition is more useful for teaching college classes on Rousseau, since you can get his major political writings in one volume rather than two, as with Cambridge.

good

Good copy of a good book.

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