

The Plan for Perpetual Peace: From Saint-Pierre to Rousseau¹

He [the Abbé de Saint-Pierre] was even able to avoid the reproach that occurs so easily to the ignorant, who knows how to measure the possible only by the existing.²

In his Harvard Lectures as well as in *The Law of Peoples*, Rawls ventures a bold interpretation of Rousseau in terms of ‘realistic utopianism’. But what is exactly Rousseau’s theory of international relations, and more precisely what did he think of the idea of a perpetual peace plan (a European federation)? Coming before his *Judgment of Monsieur l’Abbé de Saint-Pierre’s ‘Plan for Perpetual Peace’* (published posthumously), the *Abstract of Monsieur l’Abbé de Saint-Pierre’s ‘Plan for Perpetual Peace’* (1761) is a peculiar text, in which Rousseau’s own contribution remains difficult to assess. To what extent was he following Saint-Pierre³? To what extent was he trying to clarify Saint-Pierre’s thought, to render his principles more profound, and to develop his ideas in a way that brought out their full worth?⁴ The testimony of the *Confessions* is

¹ Extract from C. Spector, ‘Le *Projet de paix perpétuelle*: de Saint-Pierre à Rousseau’, with the collaboration of B. Bachofen, B. Bernardi, and F. Guénard, in *Principes du droit de la guerre, Ecrits sur le Projet de Paix Perpétuelle de l’abbé de Saint-Pierre*, ed. by B. Bachofen et C. Spector, Paris: Vrin, 2008, p. 229-294 (translated by Patrick Camillier).

² ‘Judgment on the Polysynody’, in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau* [hereafter CWR], vol. 11, trans. Christopher Kelly and Judith Bush, Hanover, NH and London: University Press of New England, 2005, p. 91.

³ See *Projet pour rendre la paix perpétuelle en Europe*, Paris: Fayard, 1986, text revised by S. Goyard-Fabre, which has made available again the two volumes published in Utrecht by A. Schouten in 1713 as well as a third volume, *Projet de Traité pour rendre la paix perpétuelle en Europe*, which appeared in Utrecht in 1717.

⁴ ‘The Confessions’, in CWR, vol. 5, trans. Christopher Kelly, Hanover, NH and London: University Press of New England, 1995, Book IX, pp. 354-6. See S. Stelling-Michaud, ‘Ce que Rousseau doit à l’abbé de Saint-Pierre’, in *Études sur le ‘Contrat social’ de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, Paris: Les Belles Lettres,

tricky to interpret on this point: 'by not being limited to the function of translator, I was not forbidden to think for myself sometimes, and I could give such a form to my work that very important truths would pass in it under the Abbé de Saint-Pierre's cloak even more happily than under my own.'⁵ The question, then, is how much importance should be attached to this 'writing under the cloak': which clandestine truths is Rousseau trying to pass under Saint-Pierre's cloak? Apart from the art of writing – Rousseau had to forego methodical extracts from Saint-Pierre's works, whose boldness the citizen of Geneva could not dare to reproduce in France⁶ – we have also to consider Rousseau's original input. The foreword by the editor, Jean-François Bastide, should be mentioned here:

From the simplicity of the title it will appear at first to many people that M. Rousseau here has only the merit of having made a good abstract. Do not be deceived by this; *here, in many respects, the Analyst is the creator*. I felt that a part of the Public might be deceived about this, I desired a different entitling. M. Rousseau, full of a scrupulous respect for the truth and for the memory of one of the most virtuous Citizens who ever existed, replied to me: 'With regard to the title, I cannot consent to it being changed to a different one that would usurp for me any further a Plan that does not belong to me at all. *It is true that I have seen the object under a different point of view than the Abbé de Saint-Pierre did, and that I have sometimes given different reasons than his*. Nothing prevents you from being able, if you want, to say a word about this in the Foreword, as long as the principal honour still remains with that respectable man.'⁷

Saint-Pierre or the folly of reason

To gauge Rousseau's distance from the abbé de Saint-Pierre, we should thus consider his repeated accusation that 'passion' or the 'folly of reason' led his

1964, pp. 35-45, and my own analysis below.

⁵ 'The Confessions', Book IX, p. 342. For more information, see the annex below.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 356.

⁷ 'Abstract of Monsieur l'Abbé de Saint-Pierre's Plan for Perpetual Peace', in CWR 5, pp. 26-7.

predecessor to reason well on the basis of false principles.⁸ Rousseau rejects Saint-Pierre's childish optimism and his policy of 'disinterested reason' that modern man, and *a fortiori* the Prince, cannot understand⁹. He dismisses the sophistic system of 'perfected reason',¹⁰ which led Saint-Pierre to work for imaginary beings of reason:

... thorough examination of his political works showed me only superficial views, projects that were useful but impracticable because of the idea from which the author was never able to depart that men were guided by their intelligence [*lumières*] rather than by their passions. The high opinion he had of modern knowledge made him adopt that false principle of perfected reason, the basis of all the demonstrations he proposed, and the source of all his political sophisms. This rare man, the honour of his century and his species, and perhaps the only one since the human race has existed who had no other passion than that of reason, nevertheless did nothing but proceed from error to error in all his systems, out of having wished to make men similar to him, instead of taking them as they are and they will continue to be.¹¹

The question is both anthropological and political. Is the failure of Saint-Pierre's 'system of peace' inscribed in human nature and the nature of princes, or should it be attributed to particular historical circumstances? And, if the latter, can we think that a 'republicanization' of the states of Europe would open the way for the

⁸ Saint-Pierre 'would have been a very wise man if he had not had the folly of reason' (Fragments and Notes...', CWR 11, p. 109 – translation modified). 'He gave demonstrations, it is true, but he gave demonstrations only of the effects of a cause impossible to produce and reasoned very well based on false principles' (ibid.).

⁹ 'The Abbé de Saint-Pierre, kindly and without passion, seemed a God among men but in wanting to make them adopt his principles and make them relish his disinterested reason he made himself more of a child than they were' (ibid., p. 110). 'In addressing himself to princes, he should not have been unaware that he was speaking to children who were much more children than the others and did not fail to speak reason to them as if to wise men' (ibid., p. 113).

¹⁰ All Rousseau's judgments are important here. See also Rousseau's notes on part of a supplement that appeared in April 1758 in the scholarly *Journal des savants* and *Journal de Trévoux* (CWR, pp. 119-20). [Translations slightly modified] Later he would again mention 'the system of the Abbé de Saint-Pierre, who claimed that human reason would always go on perfecting itself' (Rousseau to Mirabeau, 26 July 1767, in C. W. Hendel, *Citizen of Geneva: Selections from the Letters of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, New York: Oxford University Press, p. 350).

¹¹ 'The Confessions', Book IX, pp. 354-5 – translation modified.

project of a European Republic? These issues – which concern the relationship between principles of political right and principles of public right¹² – will be the main theme of the present analysis. I will reassess the opposition between Saint-Pierre's absolutism and Rousseau's republicanism, and between Saint-Pierre's idealism and Rousseau's realism. As a matter of fact, the subsequent debate in Kant and Hegel – in which each accused his predecessors of utopianism, Kant condemning Rousseau/Saint-Pierre,¹³ and Hegel repeating the charge against Kant¹⁴ – threatens to lead us astray. I will show that Rousseau has the same theoretical position *vis-à-vis* the internal and the external question, when dealing with Saint-Pierre's proposals on a European Republic and the Polysynody. In both cases, Rousseau accuses Saint-Pierre of a defect in his analysis and political judgment which, if he had been consistent, would have led to a revolutionary position in the strong sense – a position of which the author of *The Social Contract* himself disapproved. In short, not only was Saint-Pierre far from being a convinced absolutist; Rousseau's own writings on the Abbé do not advocate a 'republican solution', which he regarded as impracticable for the Europe of his time.

1. The *Abstract of Monsieur the Abbé de Saint-Pierre's Plan for Perpetual Peace*

The *Abstract* starts from the difficulty that external relations entail for any internal reform of the state: the efforts devoted to its defense impede those that might be spent on its administration. 'Too much or too little' has been done by ensuring an internal peace that is always endangered by the risks of war. The expression used by Rousseau in 'The State of War' and *Émile* appears here too:

¹² In the eighteenth century, 'public law' [*droit publique*] denoted 'interstate law'.

¹³ See Immanuel Kant, 'Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch', in *Political Writings*, op. cit.

¹⁴ Hegel made fun of Kant's pacifist and universalist illusions. In his view, an alliance or confederation of states would inevitably remain contingent and give rise to disagreements that could be solved only through war. *Philosophy of Right*, London: Oxford University Press, 1967, §330-340, pp. 212-6.

If the social order were, as is claimed, the work of reason rather than the passions, would it have taken so long to see that either too much or too little has been done for our happiness in it; that since each of us is in the civil state with his fellow citizens and in the state of nature with all the rest of the world, we have forestalled private wars only to ignite general ones, which are a thousand times more terrible; and that by uniting ourselves to several men, we really become the enemies of the human race?¹⁵

So, what remedy is there for international anarchy? What is the way out from the state of war? A confederation, resulting from a contract, emerges straight away as the only possible solution: 'If there is some way of resolving these dangerous contradictions, this can only be by a form of confederative government, which, uniting Peoples by bonds similar to those which unite individuals, equally subject both of them to the authority of Laws.'¹⁶ Rousseau is here faithful to the ideas of Saint-Pierre. The federal form involves a treaty that is analogous, among peoples, to that which is supposed to bind individuals by subjecting them to the authority of the law.¹⁷ *But Rousseau seems to be proposing a union among peoples rather than among princes or states*, as we can see from the re-writing involved in the evolution of the manuscript: 'In order to dispel the contradiction I have just noted, no form of government is more advantageous than the confederative, because it ~~unites removes the disunity of states~~ unites peoples by bonds similar to those that unite the individuals which it encompasses.'

The reality of Europe

Before coming to Saint-Pierre's proposal, however, Rousseau makes a detour through history. He points out that only the moderns (Germanic Body, Helvetic League, French States-General) have properly understood the confederative form, although the ancients (Greeks, Etruscans, Gauls, etc.) were not ignorant of it. Apart

¹⁵ 'Abstract...', p. 28.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Abbé de Saint-Pierre, *Projet pour rendre la paix perpétuelle en Europe* [= PPP], Paris: Fayard, 1986. pp. 122-3.

from this advantage accorded to the moderns, rare enough in Rousseau's work, his personal contribution has to do with his *vision of Europe*. Whereas Saint-Pierre's *Projet de paix perpétuelle* had preserved the classical vision of a balance of forces among rival powers,¹⁸ the *Abstract* raises the possibility of pre-political federations bound up with united interests, interconnected maxims and corresponding customs: "This is how all the Powers of Europe form a sort of system among themselves which unites them by one single religion, the same international law, morals, literature, commerce, and a sort of equilibrium that is the necessary effect of all this, and which, without anyone in fact thinking about preserving it, would not be as simple to break up as many people think."¹⁹

*Rousseau, then, formulates an original conception of European civil society.*²⁰ Although in Antiquity the divisions between free men and slaves, or between Greeks and barbarians, made such a society impossible, the Roman empire did mark an early advance: it constituted a 'political and civil union' among member-cities by conferring on the vanquished the right to Roman citizenship and a single code of laws. This juridical tie ('chain of justice and reason') was subsequently compounded by a religious bond. Thus, 'the Priesthood and the Empire formed the social bond for various Peoples, who, without having any real community of interests, of rights or of dependency, had one of maxims and opinions, whose influence has still remained, when its principle has been destroyed.'²¹ The European union is social and moral (in the sense of mores) as well as juridical and economic. This passage, which has no precedent in Saint-Pierre (himself the author of an outline history of the states of Europe, *Annales politiques*), is of critical importance. For beyond the constitution of a political sphere, Rousseau has in mind here a public or civil sphere, a 'closer society among the Nations of Europe' than in any other part of the world, where various scattered peoples would be unable to unite into a real association.

¹⁸ According to Stelling-Michaud, Rousseau's lively sense of European reality 'differs fundamentally from the schematic, conventional idea that the Abbé de Saint-Pierre had of Europe' ('Ce que Rousseau doit à l'abbé de Saint-Pierre', art. cit., p. 43).

¹⁹ 'Abstract...', p. 29.

²⁰ As Bernardi's aforementioned article deals at length with this question, it is mentioned here only in passing.

²¹ 'Abstract...', p. 30.

The causes of war

Nevertheless, Europe's 'real society' in no way guarantees in advance a *real harmony* among its peoples: wars, usurpations and revolts are features of corrupt civil society, so that what could be the leaven of unity becomes the seed of real discord and contradictions. Rousseau emphasizes the gulf between the humanity of the maxims and the violence of the wars, a gentle religion and bloody intolerance, a 'politics so wise in books and so harsh in practice'.²² For want of laws to regulate their conflicts, the princes clash with one another to impose their interests and to define their rights. The paradox is that, in Europe, divisions are the more deadly, the closer are the links between nations – so that the frequent disputes 'are almost as cruel as civil wars'. In a sense, the *Abstract* here joins by a different route Saint-Pierre's starting-point that the impossibility of securing peace in Europe has two major causes: the lack of treaty guarantees, and an inability to lay down the rights of the various powers once and for all. But Rousseau brings in the concept of a 'state of war', which he had developed in the Second *Discourse* and the *Principes du droit de la guerre*: 'Let us agree, then, that the state of the Powers of Europe in relation to one another is truly a state of war, and that all the partial treaties among certain of these powers are rather momentary truces than genuine peace.'²³

Rousseau first notes the pernicious effects of a lack of general principles of public right and the ineffectiveness of international law in Europe.²⁴ Public right consists of variable and contradictory rules that can result in a verdict only through the principle of might is right; since 'reason, without any secure guide, [would] always

²² Ibid., p. 31. The 'Abstract' is here at one with the opening paragraphs of 'The State of War' (CWR 11, pp. 61-2).

²³ 'Abstract...', p. 31 – translation modified.

²⁴ See esp. 'The State of War' (pp. 62-3) and the commentary by B. Bachofen in the French edition, *Principes du droit de la guerre*, op. cit. Cf. 'Considerations on the Government of Poland...' (CWR 11, p. 237): 'I do not attribute any importance to the safety one procures for oneself externally by treaties.... All this is useless with the Christian powers. They do not know any other bonds than those of their self-interest.' Also Rousseau to Malesherbes, 5 November 1760, in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Chrétien-Guillaume de Lamoignon de Malesherbes, *Correspondance*, Paris: Flammarion, 1991, pp. 74-5. On this point, see T. Fleury, 'Le droit des gens dans la pensée de Jean-Jacques Rousseau', *Annales*, Paris: Institut Michel Villey, 2006/1, pp. 291-335.

yield to personal interest in doubtful matters, war would still be inevitable, even if everyone wished to be just.²⁵ It is a striking formulation: even if princes were men of good will, peace would be impossible because no criterion would permit a verdict between their rival legitimate claims. Unlike Saint-Pierre, who approaches these geopolitical issues case by case and believes in the peaceful virtues of the status quo, Rousseau thinks it impossible to take account of right and usurpation in territorial disputes. This causes the perpetuation of the state of war. Again Rousseau implicitly distances himself from Saint-Pierre's expectation that reason, political science and governance will all be perfected together. The question, then, is as follows: given the state of war, how is it possible to perfect the art of politics and to find the remedy in the evil, as he puts it in *Geneva Manuscript*?²⁶

The remedies

Rousseau rules out a first possible solution: a global empire or monarchy.²⁷ If a European equilibrium exists, it stems from nature, from the carving out of nations bordered by mountains, seas or rivers. This gives rise to a spontaneous order, which has no need of a legislator to constitute or perpetuate itself ('whether one bears it in mind or not, this equilibrium exists, and needs nothing outside itself to be preserved, without anyone meddling in it; and if it were broken for a moment from one side, it would soon reestablish itself on another').²⁸ This political order is 'in some respects the work of nature', not the result of human crafting. From this point of view, the idea of establishing a universal monarchy – that is, a form of hegemony akin to that of Roman empire – is doomed to failure. The Enlightenment 'ridicule' of the imperial project appears in Rousseau's realist analysis of the forces present in Europe. He lists several reasons for the impossibility of such an empire, which Louis XIV aimed to establish for France, like Charles V before him for Spain. The failure anticipated for any grand

²⁵ 'Abstract...', p. 32 – translation modified.

²⁶ *Geneva Manuscript*, trans. by Judith Masters, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978, I: 2, pp. 158-63.

²⁷ On these two 'solutions' and their critics, see the special issue edited by C. Spector on "Montesquieu and Empire", *Revue Montesquieu*, No. 8, 2005-2006.

²⁸ 'Abstract...', p. 33 – translation modified. This whole passage (framed by asterisks) is a text developed in the rough draft of the *Abstract* and larded with inserts (see the variants in the French edition).

policy of conquest has two strategic causes: 1) developments in the art of war mean that it has become very difficult to create surprise effects or sufficiently powerful imbalances (the standardization of military discipline makes invasion and victory a tricky proposition) and 2) neither money nor alliances suffice any more to win a war, alliances generally ending in new conflicts of interest among the allies. Rousseau also points to the importance of the Germanic Body at the center of Europe, holding the other parties at bay. Whereas Saint-Pierre had seen the Germanic Empire as a model of confederation, Rousseau makes it the true stumbling block for any conqueror: 'In spite of the defects of this constitution of the Empire, it is certain that the European balance will never be broken so long as it persists.'²⁹

However, there is an obvious objection to this geopolitical analysis. Why not preserve the European balance if it proves to be stable and self-regulating? According to Rousseau, it is the very nature of this dynamic equilibrium that makes it pernicious, since it does not lead to rest and peace. On the contrary, the action and reaction of the forces present among the European powers causes 'continuous agitation', 'efforts [that] are always vain and always being reborn'. The equilibrium aimed at ensuring that no nation becomes powerful enough to attain hegemony therefore operates to the advantage of Europe's sovereigns. Following Saint-Pierre, Rousseau criticizes the classical system of the balance of powers,³⁰ but his quite different account focuses on the very nature of Europe and its 'present state'. 'The State of War' allows us to see the reason for this: it is because of their (artificial) nature that political bodies cannot maintain themselves in equilibrium.

The need for an art of politics also has its roots in another failure. The equilibrium system cannot be replaced as a way to peace with the (also involuntary) system of economic transactions and '*doux commerce*'.³¹ Not only do economic exchanges not bring peace; they do not make it possible to increase power to the point

²⁹ 'Abstract...', p. 35.

³⁰ See G. Livet, *L'Équilibre européen de la fin du XV^e siècle à la fin du XVIII^e siècle*, Paris: P.U.F., 1976; G. Zeller, 'Le principe d'équilibre dans la politique internationale avant 1789', in *Aspects de la politique française sous l'Ancien Régime*, Paris: P.U.F., 1964, pp. 172-84.

³¹ On this concept, see A. O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977.

where a lasting hegemony is established. Whereas Saint-Pierre saw trade as a possible substitute for interstate violence,³² Rousseau regarded it as an obstacle to lasting hegemony and, rather curiously, as a cause of 'political fanaticism'. The accusation was directed at governments under the sway of false and especially unstable economic principles: 'since ideas about commerce and money have produced a sort of political fanaticism, they cause the apparent interests of all Princes to change so suddenly that one cannot establish any stable maxim based on their true interests, because now everything depends on economic systems, most of them extremely bizarre, which run through the heads of ministers. Be this as it may, commerce, which daily tends to put itself into equilibrium, depriving certain powers of the exclusive advantage they used to draw from it, at the same time deprives them of some of the chief means they used to have for laying down the law for others.'³³ Commerce is thus the source of war rather than peace, since it does not do enough to satisfy the desire for hegemony. No more than the balance of power does the balance of commerce allow the urge for domination to be curbed.

Consistently, the *Abstract* successively discards three possible ways to peace among nations: empire, equilibrium and commerce. But, as in Hobbes, relative equality is at the root of the state of war, since each seeks to increase his power but fails to subjugate all his enemies.³⁴ The task is therefore to deduce from the equal distribution of forces the possibility of a political form other than Empire – the egalitarian and voluntary form of an association of nations. In short, if no one can win wars, and if it is impossible in the present state of things to prevent them from breaking out, conflicts can be resolved only through an end to the state of war – through an institutionalized peace, which could not be jeopardized by each party's pursuit of its particular interests. 'For, in order to form a solid and durable confederation, it is necessary to put all its members into such a mutual dependence that none is capable of resisting all the others by itself, and particular associations that might harm the

³² See C. Spector, *Montesquieu et l'émergence de l'économie politique*, Paris: Champion, 2006, chap. 4.

³³ 'Abstract...', p. 35 – translation modified. The critique that Rousseau develops in the 'Preface to *Narcissus*' rests upon different principles (the necessary antagonism of interests); see *The Discourses and Other Early Political Writings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 92-106.

³⁴ See C. Larrère, 'L'état de guerre et la guerre entre les États: Jean-Jacques Rousseau et la critique du Droit naturel', in *La Bataille, l'Armée, la Gloire*, Actes du Colloque de Clermont-Ferrand, 1983, Association des Publications de Clermont II, 1985, pp. 135-48.

principal member face sufficient obstacles to impede their implementation in practice: otherwise the confederation would be vain, and each would really be independent under the appearance of subjection.³⁵

Three conclusions bring the argument of this first analysis to a close: 1) among all the peoples of Europe (except Turkey) there is 'a social relation which, though imperfect, is closer than the general and loose bonds of humanity';³⁶ 2) paradoxically, the imperfection of this society makes the condition of its components worse than if they lacked all society (this is the 'too much or too little' that men have added to nature through the art of politics); and 3) these first bonds, which render this society harmful, also make it 'easy to perfect', so that 'all its members could draw their happiness from what at present constitutes their misery, and change the state of war that prevails among them into eternal peace'.³⁷ The distance between Rousseau and Saint-Pierre appears here at the last moment. It is clear that Rousseau cannot seriously believe that Europe is 'easy to perfect'. But should we detect irony at the very point at which the solution to the 'problem' is going to be set forth? The question is how the work that was begun by chance can be completed through reason and will; 'how the free and voluntary society which unites all the European States, taking on the force and the solidity of a true Body Politic, can change itself into a real confederation',³⁸ which will force all the parties 'to cooperate for the common good'.³⁹

The European republic

Only here, in fact, does the *Abstract* pick up again the explicit content of Saint-Pierre's positions, by spelling out the conditions for a European Republic.⁴⁰ The confederation has to be so general that no significant power can refuse to join it; it must be endowed with a tribunal to establish rules and regulations incumbent on all

³⁵ 'Abstract...', p. 36 – translation modified.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid. – translation modified.

³⁸ Cf. the formulation in the rough draft: 'From what I have just established, it follows that the powers of Europe have among one another precisely the relations necessary ~~to establish a to form~~ for the solidity of a confederative society.'

³⁹ 'Abstract...', p. 36.

⁴⁰ The history of the text shows, moreover, that this passage was written at a later date.

members; it must have a force of its own to compel each state to accept common deliberations; and it must be solid and durable, so that members cannot opt out at will as soon as they think their special interests are being sacrificed to the general interest of the association.

Rousseau remains faithful to the spirit of Saint-Pierre's *Abrégé du Projet de paix perpétuelle* (a copy of which he had in one of his boxes). The first point is to make full use of the existing General Diets of the states of Europe, mostly set up under the treaties of Westphalia and Utrecht. The 'plenipotentiaries' at these congresses are *ostensibly sincere in seeking the 'public good' and endowed with common sense*⁴¹, and the idea is that they would adopt a confederative treaty consisting of five articles.

Article 1 would propose the establishment of a *perpetual and irrevocable alliance among the contracting sovereigns*, institutionally underpinned by a permanent congress in which all disputes would be settled through arbitration and binding judgments.

Article 2 would stipulate the number of plenipotentiaries, the forms of a rotating presidency, the scale of contributions and the forms of taxation to fund common expenditure.

Article 3 would guarantee to sovereigns the possession and governance of all states currently in their possession, and stipulate an elective or hereditary mode of succession (the political constitution remaining a sovereign matter for each member-state). The basis would thus be the status quo: that is, current possessions and the latest treaties would be taken as the basis for the mutual rights of the contracting parties, and sovereigns would be asked to renounce any future claim to rights not enshrined in the treaty (except in special cases to be settled by arbitration and not by force of arms).

⁴¹ This passage was added later by Rousseau. This presumption of rationality and virtue that Rousseau will be denied in the *Judgment* (see below).

Article 4 would specify the cases in which any ally infringing the treaty would be ostracized from Europe and proscribed as a public enemy: that is, refusal to implement the rulings of the Alliance, preparations for war, negotiation of treaties contrary to the confederation, and taking up arms to resist it or to attack one of the allies. The article would also provide for common defense and action to secure implementation of the Diet's rulings, as well as reparation for wrongs committed and compensation for expenses incurred.

Article 5 would empower representatives of the states (so-called 'plenipotentiaries of the European bodies') to adopt regulations for the common benefit of the 'European republic' and each of its members, through a procedure that would vary with the importance of the case: a simple majority or a qualified majority (three-quarters of the votes); the treaty itself could be amended only by a unanimous vote.

So what modifications did Rousseau make to the statement of articles contained in the original *Abrégé*? Saint-Pierre had advocated a treaty of 'perpetual alliance' among Christian sovereigns that would include a list of objectives for collective security and prosperity.⁴² In the *Abrégé*, the first article had concerned the *renunciation of all future claims*, 'advantageously offset by the nine equivalents, that is, by the nine great advantages that would result from the impossibility of war and the perpetual continuation of commerce and peace'.⁴³ The second had concerned *contributions* to the costs of common security and defense.⁴⁴ The third had set forth the principle of definitive renunciation of war and *settlement of disputes through arbitration*.⁴⁵ The fourth had laid down the *sanctions* to be applied in the event of violations (ostracization, reimbursement of any expenditure undertaken).⁴⁶ The fifth and last had prescribed the *forms of arbitration* within the permanent assembly – which would have the power to rule by unanimous or qualified majority vote on matters concerning

⁴² Saint-Pierre, *Ouvrages de politique*, vol. 1, containing the *Abrégé du Projet de paix perpétuelle*, Amsterdam: Jean Daniel Beman, 1733, p. 21-2.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

common security – and had made it impossible to alter any of the preceding articles except unanimously.⁴⁷

When Rousseau spelled out the conditions for a European confederation, he was thus following the spirit, if not the letter, of Saint-Pierre's plan. To compare the *Abstract* with the *Abrégé* is illuminating: not only does Rousseau place the statement of the advantages of confederation at the end of the *Abstract* (instead of before the five articles, as in Saint-Pierre); he also reverses the order of the first and third articles, so that precedence is given to the contractual moment whereby the arbitration tribunal is founded in the shape of a permanent congress. Indeed, this body now has to be set up before the principle of the renunciation of future claims – the idea of a territorial status quo – is established. As to the second article, Rousseau makes a slight change: it now asserts the principle of a contribution to common expenditure, but also specifies how the powers are to be organized – that is, the number of Plenipotentiaries and the forms of the rotating presidency. The fourth and fifth articles, on the other hand, remain almost exactly the same as in Saint-Pierre's text. Moreover, the differences between the two versions should not be overestimated. Rousseau could perfectly well draw on the slight variation in the *Supplément à l'Abrégé*, contained in volume two of the *Ouvrages de politique*, where Saint-Pierre does place the principle of mediation before the principle of the renunciation of all future claims (the questions of the number of represented states and the contribution to common expenditure then moving to the third article).⁴⁸ Saint-Pierre gave many versions of his Plan, and Rousseau's *Abstract* also coincides with the one in the *Annales politiques* (published in London in 1757 but previously circulating in manuscript), which contains a history of the states of Europe between 1658 and 1740.⁴⁹

Nevertheless, it has been argued that there is a crucial difference of orientation between the two authors. For Giuseppe Roggerone, Rousseau plays in the first article on the polysemy of the word 'sovereigns' ('the contracting Sovereigns shall establish

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 32-3.

⁴⁸ Saint-Pierre, 'Supplément à l'Abrégé', *Ouvrages de politique*, vol. 2, pp. 53-7.

⁴⁹ Saint-Pierre, *Annales politiques (1658-1740)*, Paris: Honoré Champion, 1912, pp. 31-4. This text is discussed and criticized by Voltaire in his *Siècle de Louis XIV*, in *Œuvres historiques*, Paris, Gallimard, 1957, p. 952; see also pp. 953, 966-70.

among themselves a perpetual and irrevocable alliance'), which may be understood to denote a popular assembly as well as a monarch – thereby indicating his own preferences.⁵⁰ Moreover, in the third article, Rousseau guarantees the possession of states in accordance with the principle of a territorial status quo, whereas Saint-Pierre envisaged that disputes would be settled through conciliation and that associated states would be asked to guarantee each member's possession and rule over the territories it had at the time when the treaty was signed. In Roggerone's view, therefore, *Rousseau passed over in silence the question of whether each state's political form would be preserved, and left open the possibility that the European monarchies would be democratized.*⁵¹ Saint-Pierre's reference to existing treaties on the issue of elective or hereditary succession became incidental. Finally, the fourth article supposedly gave Saint-Pierre's text a clearly Rousseauian inflection; ostracization from Europe in the event of treaty violations corresponded to the wish, expressed in *The Social Contract*, to compel people to be free and to punish them if they violated the compact.⁵²

How much credence should be given to Roggerone's thesis? Did Rousseau play on the ambiguity of the term 'sovereign' to insert his own ideas beneath Saint-Pierre's cloak? Was he stating his own view of the road to a good federal association, as he implied in *Émile* when referring to these works⁵³? We shall return to these questions below. But first it must be emphasized that, when Rousseau distinguishes between sovereignty and government in the *Discourse on Political Economy* and subsequently, he appears to exclude the hypothesis that the people should form the executive body of the nations involved in the confederation⁵⁴ – and this makes it very unlikely that he was engaged in a two-sided discourse based on the ambiguity of the term 'sovereign'. So, what does this imply for the planned Europe-wide contract? The *Abstract* has a formulation of its own for the consent that is supposed to allow a way out of the state of nature between states. Rousseau here takes up again a key argument

⁵⁰ G. A. Roggerone, *Saint-Pierre e Rousseau. Confederazione, democrazia, utopia*, Milan: Franco Angeli, 1985, pp. 44-5.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁵² See 'On the Social Contract' [hereafter OSC], in *The Basic Political Writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, trans. by Donald A. Cress, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1988, II:5.

⁵³ *Émile*, trans. by Allan Bloom, London: Penguin, 1991, pp. 466-7. See the Annex.

⁵⁴ In OSC (II:2), Rousseau insists that the declaration of war or the making of peace is an act of government rather than of sovereignty. See also LWF, 'Seventh Letter', pp. 237ff.

in the *Abrégé*, according to which dependence on a common tribunal would not weaken but actually strengthen the rights of sovereignty, both internally (against rebellion on the part of the sovereign's subjects) and externally (by preventing acts of aggression). But he intervenes with a further argument to justify the form of the pact, insisting that it is not an act of submission through which men alienate their liberty in exchange for security: 'Moreover, there is a great deal of difference between depending on someone else and depending only on a Body of which one is a member and of which each is the leader in his turn; for in this latter case one does nothing but secure one's freedom by the pledges one gives for it; it would be alienated in the hands of a master, but it is strengthened in those of Associates.'⁵⁵ The formulation seems similar to that in the Second *Discourse*, which had appeared a little earlier: 'It is therefore incontestable, and it is a fundamental maxim of all political right, that peoples have given themselves leaders in order to defend their liberty and not to enslave themselves.'⁵⁶ A certain distance from Saint-Pierre appears from now on. When the Abbé defended the European Union project, he said in effect that it would provide the benefit of laws that imparted to everyone their due, and that, by establishing an association strong enough to enforce compliance among its members, it would create a 'happy necessity' for men to respect their commitments.⁵⁷ What he envisioned was therefore a purely Hobbesian kind of contract. Fear of punishment was the only motive that made it possible to counterbalance the passions and interests running counter to the lasting character of the association.⁵⁸

Now, Rousseau did not content himself with this Hobbesian vision of the contract. On the one hand, he realized that force was necessary to underpin the association resulting from the reconciliation of divergent or even conflicting interests: 'Everyone sees that every society is formed by common interests; that every division is born from opposed interests; that since a thousand fortuitous events can change and modify both of them, as soon as there is a society, a compulsory force is necessary, which orders and concerts its members' movements, in order to give common

⁵⁵ 'Abstract...', p. 44.

⁵⁶ 'Discourse on the Origin of Inequality', in *The Basic Political Writings*, p. 72.

⁵⁷ Saint-Pierre, *Ouvrages de politique*, vol. 1, p. 24.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

interests and reciprocal commitments the solidity they cannot have by themselves.⁵⁹ But he equally maintained that association should now guarantee the 'liberty' of the associated political bodies.

The question of effectiveness

So Rousseau, following Saint-Pierre, drew up a veritable plan for a 'European Republic' or 'European Body', which would resolve disputes and avoid as far as possible any recourse to arms. The usefulness of this federal solution must now be assessed. The question of its effectiveness is twofold. Would the proposed confederation serve its purpose and be sufficient to give Europe a solid and perpetual peace? And is it in the interest of sovereigns to establish such a confederation and to achieve perpetual peace at the price of impairing their sovereignty?

On the first point, the *Abstract* asserts that a confederation of nineteen member-states, with equal voting rights in a European Diet, would nip a war among them in the bud.⁶⁰ The list of states is slightly different from those in the *Supplément* and the *Abrégé*, but Saint-Pierre was himself not consistent; his Plan initially included Turkey and other non-Christian states, and allowed for the possibility of associating less powerful states such as the Republic of Genoa or the Dukes of Modena and Parma.⁶¹ Rousseau stresses that this system should rule out two major dangers: the possibility for one power to resist all the others together, and the formation of a sub-league capable of standing up to the Confederation (an argument already used by Saint-Pierre). Peace may therefore be maintained through a kind of internal deterrence, so that individual states do not dare to take up arms because they know that a defensive alliance would take immediate action against them. Rousseau concludes that the federal institution, by underpinning the contract with common force, would

⁵⁹ 'Abstract...', p. 33.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 41.

⁶¹ The list is anyway contingent. See the variation in the order and Rousseau's remark: 'It is pointless to make the list more precise here, since, until the plan is implemented, events may occur at any moment which would make it necessary to rework it, but which would change nothing essential in the system.' Ibid., pp. 39-40 – translation modified.

establish a new balance of rights and force among the European powers and completely fulfill its objective of putting an end to wars and rebellions.⁶²

Deterrence is not, however, all there is to Rousseau's vision of confederation. In the new system, the causes of conflict would also disappear – something that Saint-Pierre had never really anticipated. Individual states may decide to use an armed solution to carry through a conquest, to defend themselves from a conqueror, to weaken an over-powerful neighbor, to defend rights that are under attack, to settle a non-negotiable issue in dispute, or to fulfill certain commitments under the treaty. But none of these *casus belli* could continue to exist in the properly constituted European Republic.

One final unresolved question, which will prove decisive, concerns the advantage that parties to the contract would gain from signing the treaty of confederation. The starting point is realistic: 'for one feels very well that it would be in vain to make the public interest speak to the prejudice of private interest.'⁶³ Since one must count not on virtue but on interest, it has to be shown that sovereigns would have an interest not only in peace but in a peace established by means of the European Confederation. *The objection is weighty: why would sovereigns agree voluntarily to give up part of their sovereignty, and to substitute interdependence for the hitherto prevailing system of 'absolute independence'?* It would seem that sovereigns cannot be deprived of the right to take the law into their own hands or to enjoy the glory of conquests, nor prompted to give up their 'apparatus of power and terror' and to become equitable and peaceful. Rousseau here challenges Saint-Pierre by arguing that there can be no 'compensation' for such cruel privations.

In fact, this impossibility of providing compensation – for power, however unjust, or for honor, however vain – is the main point of divergence from the argument of Saint-Pierre's *Projet de paix perpétuelle*. What reason do men have to be just, unless it is out of virtue, interest or a desire to enhance their reputation? But, among

⁶² Ibid., p. 42.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 41.

princes, a good name is not acquired through justice. The appearance of the first person pronoun has a resounding effect:

I would not dare respond along with the Abbé de Saint-Pierre: 'That the genuine glory of Princes consists in procuring the public utility and their Subjects' happiness; that all their interests are subordinate to their reputation; and that the reputation that one acquires among the wise is measured by the good one does for men; that, since perpetual Peace is the greatest undertaking that has ever been done, it is the most capable of covering its Author with immortal glory; that, since this same undertaking is also the most useful for Peoples, it is also the most honourable for Sovereigns.'⁶⁴

In this respect, Saint-Pierre deserved his reception among those he tried to win over: 'In the chambers of ministers these speeches have covered the Author and his projects with ridicule.'⁶⁵ The theory of international relations should be based on the sovereigns' perceived interest, rather than on their hypothetical *wish for enlightened glory*.

Institutionalized peace: a rational choice?

Yet Rousseau does not here step into the breach as he will do in the *Judgment*. At the end of the *Abstract*, he sticks to Saint-Pierre's argument in terms of 'interests' and emphasizes the 'rational choice' model underlying his predecessor's political science – a model based on the theory of probabilities in games of chance.⁶⁶ When rightful action is not rewarded with victory, it is better to keep what you have than to risk it for a thoroughly unpredictable benefit. This is why, in its plans for expansion, each state 'must find a resistance superior to its effort; from which it follows that, the more powerful having no reason to play, nor the weaker any hope of profit, it is a

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 42.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ On Saint-Pierre's 'game theory', see *Projet pour rendre la paix perpétuelle en Europe*, op. cit., pp. 122-3.

good thing for all to renounce what they desire in order to secure what they possess.'⁶⁷ The end of the *Abstract* thus compares the expected losses and benefits of what Saint-Pierre called 'system of war' and 'system of peace'. For princes, the main advantages of peace are a drastic cut in military spending, an end to the ravages of depopulation, and better use of wealth with a view to the blossoming of trade, agriculture and the arts. For peoples, they are reduced taxation and increased prosperity.⁶⁸ In evoking the benefits that would come from a European Republic, Rousseau also refers to the dynastic interests (more secure crowns and territorial rights) and, like Saint-Pierre, to the greater protection against risks of rebellion.⁶⁹ The confederation would make things easier for state institutions, and this might increase the sovereign's glory and authority as well as public resources and 'the happiness of Peoples', without incurring any real disadvantages.⁷⁰ No doubt the man who wrote the *Judgment* could not fully embrace the formulas in the *Abstract* concerning the futility of conquests in terms of interest calculation ('If all Kings have not yet recovered from the folly of conquests, at least it seems that the wisest are beginning to glimpse that they sometimes cost more than they are worth'⁷¹). As the *Judgment* would show, Rousseau did not subscribe to the idea that economic rationality would henceforth replace military rationality, and the logic of utility or true glory the logic of vain prestige. There too, however, it is not so simple to put things in perspective, since the philosopher does share the critique of conquests expressed in the *Abstract*: that is, territorial expansion does not automatically expand the sovereign's power, especially if the pernicious effects of war (loss of human life, lower birth-rates, higher taxes, trade interruption, rural depopulation, decline of agriculture) are taken into account. For Rousseau as for Saint-Pierre, only 'good laws' can result in power. The true strength of states lies in the size not of their territory but of their population.⁷²

⁶⁷ 'Abstract...', p. 42; translation slightly modified.

⁶⁸ The argument was central in Saint-Pierre's Plan: see *Projet...*, p. 45.

⁶⁹ 'Abstract...', pp. 40-5.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁷² *Ibid.* See C. Spector, 'Rousseau et la critique de l'économie politique', in B. Bensaude-Vincent and B. Bernardi, eds., *Rousseau et les sciences*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003, pp. 237-56.

This dense argument leads to the conclusion that the establishment of perpetual peace depends solely on the consent of sovereigns; that accordingly it 'does not offer any difficulty at all to remove other than their resistance'; and that, once established along the lines of the Plan, it would be lasting and would fulfill its object perfectly.⁷³

Doubtless, this is not to say that the Sovereigns will adopt this plan; (Who can answer for anyone else's reason?) but only that they would adopt it if they consulted their own interests; for it should be well noted that *we have not at all assumed men to be as they ought to be*, good, generous, disinterested, and loving the public good out of humanity; *but as they are*, unjust, greedy, and preferring their self-interest to everything. The only thing that is assumed in them is sufficient reason to see what is useful to them, and enough courage to bring about their own happiness. If, in spite of all this, the Plan has still not been implemented, it is not because it is fanciful; it is because men are demented, and because it is a sort of folly to be wise in the midst of fools.⁷⁴

Thus, Rousseau subjects Saint-Pierre's texts to profound revision: not only does he condense and reorder the arguments, employing rigorous rationalization and abstraction; he puts forward a completely new conception of Europe, which Saint-Pierre by no means included in his Plan. Rousseau's genius does not appear only in his ability to convey the spirit of the swollen and muddled text he was given to read; he manages to draw out the founding principle of Saint-Pierre's thought – that is, a form of utilitarianism and 'rational choice theory' applied to international relations. This is the theory that will be his target in the *Judgment*.

⁷³ 'Abstract...', p. 48.

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 48-9 – translation modified; emphases added;

II. The *Judgment on the Plan for Perpetual Peace*

Published posthumously (1782), the *Judgment* picks up at the point where the *Abstract* began and ended: 'If ever a moral truth was demonstrated, it seems to me that it is the general and particular utility of this plan'; peoples and princes alike would gain 'immense' advantages from it. But Rousseau highlights a paradox: the sovereigns who would defend the European Republic once it had been established, seeing a coincidence between their particular interest and the common good, would nevertheless oppose with all their might the establishment of such a republic. So, should Saint-Pierre's plan be dismissed? Although the work may strike the impatient reader as 'useless for producing perpetual peace' and 'superfluous for preserving it', it cannot be regarded as 'vain speculation'. 'No, it is a solid and well thought out book, and it is very important that it exists.'⁷⁵

From this starting-point, an answer must be given to those who confront reasons with realities, theory with practice. If the advantages of the plan are so evident, it will be asked, why have sovereigns not adopted it before now? Rousseau's key argument here is that princes eager to increase their power make mistakes about the means to achieve their end. Carried away by *amour-propre*, they delude themselves about their true interests: 'Let us distinguish, then, in politics as in morality, real interest from apparent interest; the first would be found in perpetual peace – that has been demonstrated in the *plan*; the second is found in the state of absolute independence which removes sovereigns from the empire of the law in order to subject them to that of fortune.'⁷⁶ How should we interpret the opposition between real and apparent interest? The author of the *Plan* had already used this classical distinction when he argued that offensive and defensive leagues are always in peril since the promises are prone to have no effect:

There is a change of will, because the (real or apparent) interest that led to the signing of the Treaty has itself changed. I call *real interest* that which the

⁷⁵ 'Judgment of the Plan for Perpetual Peace', in CWR 11, p. 53. This point is an addendum.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

wisest normally pursue to increase their wealth, their reputation and their power, to strengthen and enlarge either their house or their state. I call *apparent interest* a passing unstable interest that stems either from a fleeting passion or from a frivolous and unfounded hope; an unsettled imagination is even enough for the vainest hopes and the most illusory opinions to be admitted to the imagination.⁷⁷

Rousseau takes up the distinction between real and apparent interest, but turns it against Saint-Pierre. The mechanics are inexorable: despotism (which Rousseau considers to be the destiny of a monarchy, and even of a republic⁷⁸) cannot but see the world through the prism of the passions of domination. 'The entire occupation of Kings, or of those they charge with their functions, relates to only two objects, extending their domination abroad and rendering it more absolute at home.'⁷⁹ This is the very heart of Rousseau's critical philosophy. Within the framework of the 'tyrannical' economy that the *Discourse on Political Economy* counterposes to 'popular' economy, the *real* interest of leaders is to crush and ruin peoples in order to secure possession of their property and power.⁸⁰ In this way Rousseau not only denounces the Machiavellianism of governments that trample on the rights of peoples and the rights of humanity;⁸¹ he reverses Saint-Pierre's argument according to which the power of kings is rationally based upon the happiness of peoples.

The *Judgment* therefore establishes that the advances of despotism and conquest are inextricably bound up with each other.⁸² Monarchs extract money and men from enslaved peoples in order to subjugate other peoples, and conversely war provides a pretext for the raising of taxes and armies to hold the people in check. The argument here not only encompasses critiques of Louis XIV and the 'war king', who

⁷⁷ PPP (Fayard), p. 36.

⁷⁸ 'Discourse on the Origins of Inequality', in *The Basic Political Writings*, p. 79.

⁷⁹ 'Judgment...', p. 54.

⁸⁰ On the critique of 'state maxims' and 'cabinet mysteries', see 'Discourse on Political Economy', *The Basic Political Writings*, p. 120.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

⁸² 'Judgment...', p. 54.

aimed rather at an enlightened reform of monarchy.⁸³ A denunciation of the oppression of peoples is the heart of Rousseau's response to Saint-Pierre,⁸⁴ as it is of his refutation of Hobbes and Grotius. The *Social Contract* will take this further, in an ironical remark on a 'political sermonizer' who is undoubtedly Saint-Pierre:

Kings want to be absolute, and from a distance one cries out to them that the best way to be so is to make themselves loved by their peoples. This maxim is very noble and even very true in certain respects. Unfortunately it will always be an object of derision in courts. The power that comes from the peoples' love is undoubtedly the greatest, but it is precarious and conditional. Princes will never be satisfied with it. The best kings want to be able to be wicked if it pleases them, without ceasing to be the masters. A political sermonizer might well say to them that since the people's force is their force, their greatest interest is that the people should be flourishing, numerous and formidable. They know perfectly well that this is not true. Their personal interest is first of all that the people should be weak and miserable and incapable of ever resisting them.⁸⁵

To prove that the *Plan for Perpetual Peace* favors the enlightened interests of monarchs, however powerful, Saint-Pierre argued that peace would strengthen them on their throne and that the existence of a common army would reduce the risks of sedition or usurpation.⁸⁶ To the objection that subjects would lose out from this while sovereigns would gain, Saint-Pierre retorted that tyranny in the 'system of peace' would not be harsher or more oppressive than in the 'system of war'.⁸⁷

⁸³ It is a recurrent argument: one finds it especially in Fénelon's *Adventures of Telemachus*, which Rousseau quotes in *Émile* (op. cit., p. 404).

⁸⁴ It should be stressed that Leibniz already thought that Saint-Pierre set little value on the fate of subjects: 'M. l'Abbé de S. Pierre is right to consider the Empire as a model of Christian society. But the difference is that the grievances of subjects against their sovereign would not be admitted in the society corresponding to his Plan, whereas in the Empire subjects are able to plead against their princes or against their magistrates.' ('Observations sur le Projet de paix perpétuelle', in *Correspondance de G. W. Leibniz-Ch.- I. Castel de Saint Pierre*, A. Robinet éd., Paris: Centre de philosophie du droit, 1995, p. 38-9).

⁸⁵ OSC, III: 6, p. 183. Cf. *ibid.*, I: 4, pp. 144-6.

⁸⁶ PPP (Fayard ed.), pp. 40-1.

⁸⁷ See below.

The question of the Plan's implementation is now posed in all its sharpness. Why should sovereigns, in a state of absolute independence, agree to respect legal channels that restrict their sovereignty (even if they participate in the common arbitration tribunal)? Why should they limit their power through being 'forced to be just', at home and abroad? Taking up again the *Abstract's* rational choice paradigm, Rousseau profoundly subverts it by insisting that a kind of irrationality must be integrated into relations among nations: 'A prince who trusts his cause to the hazards of war is not unaware that he is running some risks, but he is less struck by them than by the advantages he promises himself, because he fears fortune much less than he hopes to gain from his own wisdom.'⁸⁸ Belief in the success of a strategy here prevails over an evaluation of the (supposedly lesser) risks linked to the situation.

Rousseau thus lucidly reconstitutes another figure of rationality at work in the realms of power. Counting on his own forces and alliances, or even on the beneficial effects of defeat, the prince will not accept that it is better to reign justly over a small prosperous people than over a vast empire of impoverished subjects; the irrationality of the logic of glory finally carries the day. The really key point is that a despot always has an interest in waging war to perpetuate his rule. *The economic interest to which Saint-Pierre refers is therefore unlikely to quell ambition or the desire for domination.* Princes will not be convinced by arguments that point to the breakdown of trade, depopulation, financial disturbances or real losses caused by a futile conquest: 'Always to evaluate the gains or the losses of sovereigns in money is a very faulty calculation; the extent of power they aim at is not at all counted by the millions one possesses.'⁸⁹

Rousseau reassesses the very idea of interest, showing that one cannot trust in the enlightened interest of princes. Sovereigns wish to satisfy both their ambition and their cupidity, but these cannot be limited to purely pecuniary considerations: the prince 'wants to command in order to get wealthy and to get wealthy in order to command; he will sacrifice each in turn to acquire whichever one he lacks, but it is only to possess the two together at the end that he pursues them separately; for in

⁸⁸ 'Judgment...', p. 55 – translation modified.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

order to be the master of men and of things he must have empire and money at the same time.'

In the end, then, *Rousseau refuses to apply a simplistic rational choice model to interstate relations*. If enlightened interest does not govern ordinary humans,⁹⁰ still less does it govern princes.⁹¹ Especially instructive in this regard is the letter of June 1767 to Mirabeau, in response to a copy of Le Mercier de la Rivière's *L'Ordre naturel et essentiel des sociétés* that Mirabeau had sent in the hope of 'converting' him to Physiocracy. To know one's interest is not enough to follow it, and the despot is not a wise man who, mindful of the rational benefits of regulated administration, would readily accept the rule of law.⁹² Political realism is wrong to suppose that there is a predictable logic of reasons of state or a 'political science of the Courts'. The paradox will appear most clearly in the *Considerations on the Government of Poland*.⁹³

This makes it easier to understand why Rousseau is today of interest to international relations theorists considering the relevance of rational choice doctrines. Are these capable of accounting for the 'geopolitics of passions', which cannot be reduced to interests and strategic calculation?⁹⁴ Following Raymond Aron, Stanley Hoffmann analysed the writings on war in which Rousseau showed that it is futile to try to reduce risk and uncertainty in international affairs by defining a rational foreign policy.⁹⁵ Rational calculation – that is, a combination of means to ends, risk acceptance in accordance with probabilities, and choice dictated by a hierarchy of preferences –

⁹⁰ See a fragment corresponding to the planned *Histoire des moeurs*: 'The error of most moralists was always to take man for an essentially reasonable being. Man is but a sensuous being who consults only his passions in order to act, and for whom reason serves only to palliate the stupidities they make him commit.' *Oeuvres complètes* III, p. 554.

⁹¹ 'If politicians were less blinded by their ambitions...' ('Discourse on Political Economy', p. 119).

⁹² *Lettres philosophiques*, ed. H. Gouhier, Paris: Vrin, 1974, p. 167.

⁹³ See 'Considerations on the Government of Poland and Its Planned Reformation', in CWR 11, pp. 237-8.

⁹⁴ See especially (following R. Aron and S. Hoffmann) Pierre Hassner's *Violence and War*, Budapest: Central European University Press, 1997: ch. 3, 'Violence, Rationality and Unpredictability: Apocalyptic and Pacific Tendencies in Studies of International Conflict', pp. 50-72; and the section 'De la dialectique du bourgeois et du barbare à une géopolitique des passions', in idem, *La Terre et l'Empire*, Paris: Seuil, 2003, p. 398-402. The same author has written an article on Rousseau that essentially agrees with the conclusions of Stanley Hoffmann: 'Rousseau and the Theory and Practice of International Relations', in C. Orwin and N. Tarcov, eds., *The Legacy of Rousseau*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997, pp. 200-19.

⁹⁵ S. Hoffmann, *Rousseau on International Relations*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.

does not govern the conduct of diplomats or strategists, which remains irreducible to the actions of *homo aeconomicus*. The desire for power, and even more for glory, does not subordinate itself to the desire for security.⁹⁶

III. Reform or revolution? The state of the question and the Republican hypothesis

Should one therefore desire a profound transformation of the states of Europe, subordinating the progress of public right to the progress of political right? Interpreters seem unanimous in stating that the main difference between Saint-Pierre and Rousseau concerns their theories of internal politics, the one accepting absolutism, the other ceaselessly opposing it.⁹⁷ Whereas Saint-Pierre proposed a *league of kings* to defend the territorial status quo, Rousseau sought to *federate sovereign peoples*, believing that a federation could be established only among equal nations in charge of their own destinies. According to Stelling-Michaud, 'Rousseau's republicanism is here asserted as the precondition for the institutional universalism which, through the channels of democratic constitutions, will have such a powerful impact on the minds and customs of peoples';⁹⁸ 'it is sovereign peoples, not monarchs, that have to be federated.'⁹⁹ Other authors stress that the *Judgment* subordinates the problem of war to the problem of despotism, so that the establishment of peace cannot happen with princes and ministers who fuel the vicious circle of internal oppression and external war.¹⁰⁰ Should it be said, then, that Rousseau vacillated between 'legal utopianism' and 'historical

⁹⁶ R. Aron, *Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966, pp. 72, 77.

⁹⁷ See C. Carter, *Rousseau and the Problem of War*, New York: Garland, 1987, p. 157.

⁹⁸ S. Stelling-Michaud, 'Ce que Rousseau doit à l'abbé de Saint-Pierre', art. cit., p. 43. See also *Dictionnaire de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, op. cit.: entries *État de guerre*, by S. Goyard-Fabre (p. 319), *Extrait du projet de paix perpétuelle*, by J. Roussel (pp. 319-20), and *Saint-Pierre*, by J.-L. Lecercle (pp. 842-3). See also Lecercle's 'L'Abbé de Saint-Pierre, Rousseau et l'Europe', *Dix-huitième siècle*, No. 25, 1993, pp. 13-39.

⁹⁹ S. Stelling-Michaud, introduction to the *Écrits politiques*, vol. 3 of *Oeuvres complètes*, pp. xv, cxi-cxli. S. Goyard-Fabre follows this line of interpretation: if peace can result from federative leagues, these must unite peoples rather than princes ('La guerre et le droit international dans la philosophie de Rousseau', *Études Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, No. 7, 1995, pp. 45-78; 'L'optimisme juridique de l'abbé de Saint-Pierre', in *L'Année 1796. Sur la paix perpétuelle de Leibniz aux héritiers de Kant*, ed. by J. Ferrari and S. Goyard-Fabre, Paris: Vrin, 1998, pp. 19-41; *La Construction de la paix ou le travail de Sisyphe*, Paris: Vrin, 1994).

¹⁰⁰ C. Larrère, 'L'état de guerre et la guerre entre les États: Jean-Jacques Rousseau et la critique du Droit naturel', art. cit., pp. 135-48. The same verdict is found in H. Guineret, *Jugement sur le 'Projet de paix perpétuelle' de l'abbé de Saint-Pierre*, op. cit., p. 55.

scepticism'? It might almost seem that perpetual peace was no more than a norm of reason, which would explain the incomplete or hesitant character of Rousseau's texts on war and peace.¹⁰¹

An important point is at stake here: whether the republicanization of European states was necessary before a federation of European peoples could be achieved. Starting from a normative position (the position of the *Social Contract*), J.-L. Windenberger reconstituted Rousseau's theory of interstate relations. Single, indivisible and inalienable, the General Will seems by nature unamenable to the representation of sovereignty in a federation, where it would be in danger of dissolution as common rules imposed restrictions on its independence. Even if the federal state was more than a merely defensive alliance and constituted the most effective remedy for the danger of war, it seems a tricky matter to develop a new general will at the level of the union, given that such a form 'ignores the fundamental rights of the peoples that it comprises'.¹⁰² Rousseau therefore advocated a different paradigm of the *confederation* as a free and voluntary association of sovereignties. Although sovereignty, vis-à-vis other powers, is a *power* that cannot be alienated, it can seek to associate itself with and contribute to a new international contract analogous to the social contract within individual countries.¹⁰³ Thus, the peoples of Europe might consent to a confederation that would defend each one of them with common forces, since the people would then be obliged only by its own will: 'There will be no alienation here, no subjugation, only a reciprocal agreement among states arising from the free will of each.'¹⁰⁴ Only a confederation does not undermine internal sovereignty and preserves the autonomy of peoples, while acting in international relations as a moral person. It alone is a genuine republic, whose members are the peoples involved

¹⁰¹ See O. Asbach and D. Hüning, 'L'état de nature et la fondation du droit. L'abbé de Saint-Pierre comme intermédiaire entre Hobbes et Rousseau', in *Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Politique et Nation*, Actes du II^e Colloque international de Montmorency (1995), Paris: Champion, 2001, pp. 153-67, here pp. 166-7.

¹⁰² J.-L. Windenberger, *Essai sur le système de politique étrangère de J.-J. Rousseau. La République confédérative des petits États*, Paris 1899, Geneva/Paris: Slatkine, 1982, pp. 204-5.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 211, 231.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 198. Windenberger's thesis agrees with the 'Swiss' reading of Rousseau, which holds that, although his examples of federations were drawn from antiquity, he really had in mind Switzerland and the post-1579 United Provinces (p. 209).

in it. The central authority has no power other than that which the members entrust to it as to a delegate with a revocable mandate.¹⁰⁵

In opposing Kenneth Waltz's thesis that Rousseau's proposed solution to international anarchy is a federation of peoples, Stanley Hoffmann comes to a close conclusion.¹⁰⁶ Empirically the nations seem condemned to the state of war, while normatively Rousseau's complex solution is neither a world state¹⁰⁷ nor even a European federation. Paradoxical as it may seem, the author of *The Social Contract* does not attempt here to regain the advantages of the pact that makes people free and virtuous. A federation with a legislative body and coercive powers would conflict with the indivisible and inalienable character of sovereignty. The essence of the General Will (the impossibility of its being represented) is such that any formula for a shared legislative power would destroy liberty. The only possibility, then, would be a confederation with common executive bodies but legislative powers that remained separate within the national entities. One can conceive of associations of governments but not of peoples. In this regard, the confederation 'does not put an end to the folly: it merely provides small states with a way of being wise among the fools.'¹⁰⁸

Yet, far from being restricted to a defensive alliance,¹⁰⁹ federation seems to be the precondition for any democratic state to be established and stabilized. This is the view of G. A. Roggerone, for whom Windenberger failed to see that the indivisible, inalienable and absolute character of sovereignty made it impossible to conceive of the confederation as a social contract among states. For the multiplicity of states to regard the confederal organization as an instrument against war as well as against tyranny, a culturally homogeneous civil society has to develop – and that requires the republicanization of the nations of Europe. Only states governed by popular sovereignty can ensure that the common interest has primacy over particular interests.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 212.

¹⁰⁶ S. Hoffmann, *Rousseau on International Relations*, op. cit.

¹⁰⁷ The arguments are strong: such a state could not be republican, since the republic has sense only in small states; the legislature would be unable to assemble in a world state. Moreover, a large territory goes together with the need for a strong executive, lessening the opportunity to arouse love of the fatherland.

¹⁰⁸ S. Hoffmann, 'Rousseau on War and Peace', *American Political Science Review* 57(2), 1963, p. 330.

¹⁰⁹ F. Ramel and J.-P. Joubert, *Rousseau et les relations internationales*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2000, p. 31.

Unless the federal system is an idle fantasy, then, its achievement is possible only if the principles of political right are applied.¹¹⁰ But, in that case, Rousseau should accept that the choice is limited to utopia or revolution.¹¹¹ He allows for the possible effectiveness of revolution (Holland and Switzerland arose through 'expulsion of the tyrants'¹¹²), but considers it an exceptional and dangerous path that is ruled out for peoples corrupted by long servitude. It may be, therefore, that the only path which remains open is education. According to G. Roosevelt, neither the pacifist nor the realist reading of Rousseau does justice to the richness of his thought. Neither pessimistic nor utopian, the philosopher was above all a political educator.¹¹³

My claim is different. The above interpretations seem to involve a contradiction when they counterpose the monarchism and idealism of Saint-Pierre (supposedly 'Hobbesian' internally but utopian externally) to Rousseau's republicanism (supposedly realist externally, however utopian internally). For the fact is that Saint-Pierre did not support absolutism: he was keen to avoid abuses of power through the spread of enlightenment and the elective depersonalization of public functions, and actually envisioned a thorough transformation of monarchy, so that the administrative rationality associated with an elected aristocracy of merit would lead to common prosperity.¹¹⁴ And Rousseau, for his part, did not argue in these texts for the establishment of a general will of the sovereign peoples. A fragment on the plan for perpetual peace is unambiguous on this score:

While examining the constitution of the States that make up Europe I saw that some were too big to be governed well, others too small to maintain themselves in independence. The infinite abuses that prevail in all of them appeared to me difficult to forestall but impossible to correct, because most

¹¹⁰ G. A. Roggerone, *Saint-Pierre e Rousseau. Confederazione, democrazia, utopia*, op. cit., pp. 38, 55. Cf. G. Lafrance, 'L'abbé de Saint-Pierre et Jean-Jacques Rousseau', in *L'Année 1796. Sur la paix perpétuelle de Leibniz aux héritiers de Kant*, op. cit., pp. 55-61.

¹¹¹ Roggerone, op. cit., p. 87.

¹¹² *Geneva Manuscript*, II:3, p. 184.

¹¹³ G. G. Roosevelt, *Reading Rousseau in the Nuclear Age*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990.

¹¹⁴ See the *Polysynody* and T. E. Kaiser, 'The Abbé de Saint-Pierre, Public Opinion, and the Reconstruction of the French Monarchy', *Journal of Modern History*, 55, 1983, pp. 618-43; N. O. Keohane, *Philosophy and the State in France*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980, chap. 13.

of these abuses are founded upon the very interest of those who could do away with them. I found that the connections which persisted among all the powers would never leave any of them the time and the security necessary for recasting its constitution. Finally prejudices are so much against any sort of change that, unless one had the force ready to hand, one would have to be as simple as the Abbé de St. Pierre to propose the slightest innovation in any government at all.¹¹⁵

The series of pieces on Saint-Pierre's *Polysynody* point in the same direction. Accusing his predecessor of being an unwitting revolutionary ignorant of the risks that his violent reform would impose on the 'masses' who make up the French monarchy, Rousseau displays real prudence.¹¹⁶ The Polysynody would introduce a 'mixed government', combining a republican and a monarchical form. But *no republicanization of monarchy is possible*, and modern man cannot base himself on virtue.

These difficulties did not escape the Abbé de Saint-Pierre, but it may have suited him better to disguise them than to resolve them. When he talks about these contradictions and pretends to reconcile them, it is by such absurd means and such unreasonable arguments that one sees very well he is perplexed or that he is not proceeding in good faith. *Is it credible that he put forward these means so inappropriately, including among them love of country, the public good, the desire for true glory, and other chimeras that vanished long ago, or of which there remain no more than traces in a few small republics?* Did he seriously think that anything of all that could really have influence in a monarchical form of government? And, having cited the Greeks, the Romans and even a few moderns who had ancient souls, does he not himself admit that it would be ridiculous to base the constitution of the state on dead maxims? What is necessary, then, in addition to these alien means whose inadequacy he recognizes? He replaces one difficulty with another, establishes one system on top of another, and founds his Polysynody on his European Republic.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ 'Fragment', CWR 11, p. 49 – translation modified.

¹¹⁶ 'Polysynody', in CWR 11, pp. 77-90.

¹¹⁷ 'Judgment on the Polysynody', CWR 11, p. 97 – translation modified.

A European 'political body' therefore seems out of reach. Similarly, when he considers in the *Geneva Manuscript* or the *Social Contract* the likely destiny of the corrupted peoples of Europe, Rousseau dismisses both the path of reform and the path of revolution.¹¹⁸

Truly, the idea of republicanizing the large European states is not formulated anywhere in Rousseau's work. The *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* remains deliberately vague about a conversion of the despotic monarchies into enlightened monarchies or republics; the analysis focuses more on the possibility that existing republics may become despotic.¹¹⁹ We should also note that, contrary to Hoffmann's view, the small autarkic republic was not the path that Rousseau necessarily considered ideal, since the natural tendency of states to expand meant that the pacification of international relations would even then not be assured.¹²⁰ Republicanization would not guarantee peace, since war is inscribed in the very nature of the body politic. This applies as much to republics as to monarchies – even if the former, to remain free, must avoid the spirit of conquest.¹²¹ The *Discourse on Political Economy* explicitly states that the general will, though just internally, may be unjust externally; the rule of justice, though sure in relation to all citizens, may be defective in relation to foreigners.¹²² This helps us to understand the conclusion to the *Judgment* on Saint-Pierre's plan for peace, which takes account of the historical and political conditions in Europe: 'Let it not be said, then, that if his system has not been adopted, it is because it is not good; on the contrary one should say that it was too good to be adopted.'¹²³

¹¹⁸ OSC, II:8, p. 166. Cf. the *Geneva Manuscript*, II:3, pp. 184f.

¹¹⁹ 'Discourse on the Origin of Inequality', p. 79.

¹²⁰ See the *Geneva Manuscript*, II:3, pp. 184ff.; OSC, II: 9,10.

¹²¹ OSC, III: 1, p. 174: 'the larger the state becomes, the less liberty there is.' Cf. 'Considerations on the Government of Poland', CWR 11, p. 183.

¹²² 'For the will of the state, however general it may be in relation to its members, is no longer so in relation to other states and to their members, but becomes for them a private and individual will which has its rule of justice in the law of nature, which enters equally into the principle established.' ('Discourse on Political Economy', op. cit., p. 114.)

¹²³ 'Judgment...!', p. 60.

The conclusion of the *Judgment* is ambiguous. If the European Republic becomes a reality, it will last 'forever'.¹²⁴ The doubts concern whether it can be established in a European political context where absolute monarchies hold sway. Either a peerless negotiator (analogous to the “legislator” in the *Social Contract*) would have to mediate in the process, or the member-states of the confederation would have to change and no longer be ruled by despotic governments. The first argument supports itself on the example of Henri IV, which Saint-Pierre continually invoked.¹²⁵ Rousseau emphasizes that this French monarch, far from being angelic, used secret discussions to appeal to the particular interest of potential allies, promising them advantages without taking them all for himself, aware that victory over the House of Habsburg would effectively confer on him first place in Europe. Henri IV's plan was therefore based on the concurrence of particular interests, not on the aim of achieving the public good.¹²⁶ But, for lack of a new Henri IV able to disguise his drive for domination through diplomacy, the once 'reasonable' plan for perpetual peace becomes inapplicable. The danger is that, in the absence of *consent* to a federal constitution, some may resort to force or a revolution to impose one; and 'perhaps this would cause more harm all at once than it would prevent for centuries'. At such a price, it is hard to say 'whether this European League is to be desired or to be feared'.¹²⁷

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Therefore, Rousseau's divergence from Saint-Pierre is due to the fact that he refuses to develop a political science independent of a situational art of politics¹²⁸. In his view, two dimensions are necessary to judge whether reforms are opportune: the dimension of man as a being of prejudices and passions; and the dimension of circumstances and situations. This holds for internal as well as external reform.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

¹²⁵ There is no space to go into detail here; it would be necessary to compare this and Sully's conceptions of the 'grand design'. See H. Guineret, *Jugement sur le 'Projet de paix perpétuelle' de l'abbé de Saint-Pierre*, Paris: Ellipses, 2004, pp. 60-81; and P. Rolland, art. cit., pp. 141-63.

¹²⁶ 'Judgment...', p. 59. See B. Bernardi's analysis in 'Principes du droit de la guerre', op. cit.

¹²⁷ 'Judgment...', p. 60.

¹²⁸ See also the 'Judgment on the Polysynody', op. cit.

Should we therefore regret that Rousseau did not follow his thought through to the end and adopt a Kantian-type solution?¹²⁹ But Kant would have to deploy a philosophy of history and reintroduce a kind of teleology in order to conceptualize perpetual peace. In this respect, Rawls, though an heir to Kant, made Rousseau his real predecessor in seeking to build a 'realistic utopia' in international relations.¹³⁰ In his *Law of Peoples*, where he tries to theorize justice at an international level, Rawls draws on the idea that men and women might possibly be reformed by their institutions. But, by a peculiar irony of history, it is the Rousseau of the *Social Contract*, not the one of the texts on war and peace, who is enlisted in support of the idea of a society of peoples and an extension of international law. It may be, therefore, that his probings of European civil society, however unfinished, are not without relevance for the present time.

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Annex: Who is the author of the *Abstract* and the *Judgment* of the *Plan for Perpetual Peace*?

The correspondence between author and editor at the time of publication is revealing in this regard.¹³¹ While refusing to hand over the manuscript of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* to Bastide, Rousseau suggested that the *Abstract* – which was due to appear first

¹²⁹ On the relationship between Kant and Rousseau on this point, see J. Ferrari, 'Les métamorphoses de l'idée de Paix perpétuelle de Saint-Pierre à Kant', in *Les Lumières et la solidarité internationale: Papers of the North-South Seminar on Condorcet*, University of Burgundy, 1995, pp. 125-37; 'La découverte de Rousseau', in *Les Sources françaises de la philosophie de Kant*, Paris: Klincksieck, 1979, pp. 171-261 (on the writings on Saint-Pierre, pp. 217-20); and 'L'abbé de Saint-Pierre, Rousseau et Kant', in P. Laberge, G. Lafrance and D. Dumas, eds., *L'Année 1795. Kant. Essai sur la paix*, Paris: Vrin, 1997, pp. 25-40.

¹³⁰ J. Rawls, *The Law of Peoples*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001, p. 6. Rawls then goes on to quote from *The Social Contract*.

¹³¹ On the publication details and general context of these works, see S. Stelling-Michaud's introduction to volume 3 of Rousseau's *Oeuvres complètes*, pp. xv-xvi, cxx-cl; M. Cranston, 'Rousseau on War and Peace', in *Rousseau and the Eighteenth Century*, Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1992, pp. 189-96; and the introduction by B. Bernardi and G. Silvestrini to *Principes du droit de la guerre...*, op. cit.

in Bastide's *Le Monde comme il va* – was merely a piece of 'scribbling' in the service of someone else's ideas:

It was six years ago that, Count de Saint-Pierre having entrusted to me the manuscripts of his uncle the late M. the Abbé, I began to abridge his writings *so as to make them more convenient for reading, and to make what is useful in them better known*. My plan was to make this abridgement in two volumes, one of which would have contained abstracts of the Works, and the other a detailed judgment on each plan: but after some attempt at this labour, I saw that it was not suited to me and that I would not succeed in it at all. Thus I abandoned this plan, after having executed it only on the *Perpetual Peace* and on the *PolySynody*. I am sending you, Sir, the first of these abstracts, as an inaugural subject for you who love peace, and whose writings breathe it. May we see it soon established among the powers; for among Authors it has never been seen, and today is not the time that one must hope for it.¹³²

The *Confessions* relate the origins of the project. The suggestion for it came from the Abbé de Mably, and was pursued by Mme Dupin, who wished to pay tribute to the memory of Saint-Pierre. Rousseau had met the Abbé at her *salon* shortly before his death, in 1742 or 1743, but it was only in 1756 that he left Paris for the Hermitage entrusted with the seventeen volumes of published works and five boxes of manuscripts. There he got down to the task that he considered 'useful in itself' and 'very suitable for a man who was hardworking in unskilled labour but lazy as an author, who – finding the effort of thinking very tiring – preferred to clarify and push someone else's ideas in things to his taste over creating ones of his own.'¹³³ Without ruling on Rousseau's possible distance from this self-judgment, we should follow the continuation of his testimony. Before calling off the task for fear of political persecution, he was discouraged by its scale and complexity, as the 'excellent things' in

¹³² 'Letter from M. Rousseau to M. de Bastide', 5 December 1760, CWR 11, p. 25 – translation modified; emphases added.

¹³³ 'The Confessions', Book IX, p. 342 – translation modified.

Saint-Pierre's writings were drowned in the diffuse, confused whole.¹³⁴ Rousseau had gathered the material for this major project, including for an introductory biography of Saint-Pierre. And his own writings on the Abbé made him think that he would not have badly fulfilled the mission entrusted to him.¹³⁵

Censorship and authorial responsibility

When it was published in 1761, with Charles Duclos acting as intermediary, the *Abstract* immediately faced the ordeal of the censorship, which asked for the question of its authorship to be reopened. At first Bastide gave assurances to Rousseau that there would be no major changes, although, together with Duclos, he asked him to modify his characterization of 'Christianity' as a 'sect'.¹³⁶ Rousseau agreed to use only the first term instead of the second.¹³⁷ In February 1761, Bastide explained that a cabal against *Le Monde* and rivalry between different journals prevented him from publishing the *Abstract* there.¹³⁸ He therefore suggested bringing it out separately, with a Cochin-engraved frontispiece of a monument in Reims by Pigalle showing the fruits of peace. The publisher said that he had persuaded Malesherbes to deal personally with censorship of the *Abstract*, and that he had received requests only for some minor changes. Rousseau protested indignantly that the proposed cuts were far from trivial, and that all his other writings contained 'much stronger things'. While listing the changes to which he agreed and leaving the rest to Duclos' judgment, Rousseau dwelled on two that he considered particularly significant. The first concerned the point at which he dissociated himself from Saint-Pierre, where the censor seemed to want to make him say the opposite of what he had intended: 'I would not dare respond along with the Abbé etc. I absolutely cannot say that *I would dare* given that it is not true that *I would dare*. But I suggest we come to an arrangement about this: *I would not dare* is left in the text, and *I would dare* is put in the list of errata. The text will be my thought, the erratum will be the censor's.' So, Rousseau counterposes 'his'

¹³⁴ Ibid., pp. 342-3.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 355.

¹³⁶ *Correspondance complète de Rousseau*, henceforth CC, Leigh ed., Geneva: Institut et Musée Voltaire, vol. VII, 1969, No. 1187, p. 345.

¹³⁷ Rousseau to Bastide, 18 December 1760, No. 1196, p. 356.

¹³⁸ CC, vol. 8, 1969, No. 1284, p. 91.

thought to the censor's at the very point where he ironically differs from the optimistic thought of his predecessor: 'I would not dare respond along with the Abbé de Saint-Pierre: That the genuine glory of Princes consists in procuring the public utility and their Subjects' happiness.'¹³⁹

Equally telling is the second passage challenged by the censor, which follows soon after the first: 'I cannot say at the end of the tirade *while not forgetting the virtues of Princes*, given that there is nothing to be recalled. But if you prefer I will say: *and, whatever the virtues of Princes may be, let us speak of their interests*. Or else: *in politics one should not speak of the virtues of Princes; one should speak only of their interests*. Or some similar turn of phrase.'¹⁴⁰ Rousseau's objection to the censor's proposal is revealing, but one wonders about this verbal distance that again allows him to assert his political realism. Did Saint-Pierre really trust in the virtue of princes, or was he content to appeal to their interests? Did Rousseau himself ground his political approach on the interests of sovereigns¹⁴¹?

Why publish the Abstract without the Judgment?

The other key question concerns the relationship between the *Abstract* and the *Judgment*, which was posthumously published in 1782 in Moulton's and Du Peyrou's edition of the complete works.¹⁴² In fact, Rousseau did not demur when Bastide associated his thought with Saint-Pierre's – even if the citizen of Geneva refused to take his predecessor on board and insisted on their differences.¹⁴³ Although Rousseau would not falsely claim a glory to which he was not entitled,¹⁴⁴ he seemed in no hurry to publicize his disagreement with Saint-Pierre. The philosopher even said he was 'very

¹³⁹ 'Abstract...', p. 42. The full text of this passage will be considered below.

¹⁴⁰ Rousseau to Bastide, 13 February 1761, CC, No. 1285, pp. 94-5.

¹⁴¹ See my previous analysis.

¹⁴² In vol. 23, pp. 62 to 82. The original signed manuscript, not yet a clean copy, is kept at Neuchâtel: R. 34, f° 1-6 v°.

¹⁴³ 'As to the title, I cannot accept that it should be changed for one that would adapt me to a Project that is not my own.' (Rousseau to Bastide, about 22 February 1761, CC, No. 131, pp. 153-4.) The elided passage contains the terms that appear in the above-mentioned foreword.

¹⁴⁴ 'M. de Bastide here gives me all the credit for the work, and even the credit for refusing it; that is not just. I am not at all modest, and there are kinds of praise to which I am very susceptible. Indeed, I am very proud of having no wish for undeserved glory.' CC, No. 1321, p. 165.

happy' not to have mentioned the *Judgment* to Bastide, who had been badgering him for such a text.¹⁴⁵ This reticence has been the cause of some confusion, from Voltaire down to the present day, since Rousseau's theoretical position was considered close to Saint-Pierre's, and the success of the *Abstract* enhanced the author's reputation.¹⁴⁶ Kant is a revealing example: in his view, Rousseau shared with Saint-Pierre the plan for perpetual peace, which, though ridiculed as 'wild and fanciful', would through the cunning of reason come to appear rational in the eyes of people ravaged by the experience of wars.¹⁴⁷

It is therefore legitimate to ask why Rousseau agreed to publish only one part of his thought, at the risk of creating a huge misunderstanding. What truth-value should be given to the *Extract*? The question is all the more important because, especially in the *Letters Written from the Mountain*, Rousseau would reflect on the idea of the author and the responsibilities it implies.¹⁴⁸ Among the select number of books written to speak the truth and to be of public utility, he argues, many have been published anonymously. A writer may or may not acknowledge their authorial function according to the prevailing circumstances in religion and politics, but also in the society and culture.¹⁴⁹ We should therefore consider closely the subtle invocation of the 'author' in the opening words of the *Abstract*: 'Since no greater, finer, or more useful Plan has ever occupied the human mind than the one of a perpetual and universal Peace among all the Peoples of Europe, no Author has ever better deserved the attention of the Public than the one who proposes the means for implementing this Plan.'¹⁵⁰ The next sentence leads Rousseau to justify his interest in Saint-Pierre: 'a

¹⁴⁵ 'The Confessions', Book XI, p. 459.

¹⁴⁶ It was mainly through Rousseau that Saint-Pierre's ideas were disseminated in Europe. The *Abstract* was printed in two thousand copies in January 1761, and Bastide soon had to order another run (followed by English and German translations). Publication of the *Abstract* gave fresh impetus to the debate on perpetual peace, as we know from the work of various academies. The Académie française proposed the subject for investigation in 1766.

¹⁴⁷ Kant, 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose', in *Political Writings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 47.

¹⁴⁸ See LWF, 'First Letter', pp. 137-9; 'Third Letter', pp. 182-4; 'Fifth Letter', pp. 211-21, and the Groupe Jean-Jacques Rousseau collection: B. Bernardi, F. Guénard and G. Silvestrini eds., *La Religion, la Liberté, la Justice. Un commentaire des Lettres écrites de la montagne de Rousseau*, Paris: Vrin, 2005. The *Dialogues* are also a long and sly reflection on the concept of the author.

¹⁴⁹ LWF, 'Fifth Letter', p. 219.

¹⁵⁰ 'Abstract...', p. 27 – translation modified. For further evidence that Rousseau admired Saint-Pierre's liberty, see 'Letters Written from the Mountain' [=LWF], in *Collected Writings of Rousseau* 9, 'Sixth

sensitive and virtuous man' cannot remain cold or without 'enthusiasm' for the Abbé's enterprise. It is therefore sensitivity of mind and an ardent wish to contribute to the good of humanity, rather than cold reason, 'harsh and repellent', indifferent to the public good, which impel the author of the two *Discourses* to enter the territory of his predecessor.¹⁵¹

Rousseau here immediately outlines both the reasons why he has taken up Saint-Pierre's text and the reasons why he will ultimately distance himself from it: on the one hand, infectious enthusiasm for the good of humanity; on the other, the illusory character of the heartfelt project. Rousseau's dual impulse changes Saint-Pierre's orientation, which claimed to address reason and humanity as inseparable from each other – reason as constitutive of humanity – by refusing to treat as illusory a project that was in his view perfectly argued. In a sense this says everything, and Rousseau's genius was that he could 'extract' the quintessence of the project only by subverting it. In so far as the plan for perpetual peace appealed to the heart rather than the mind, to sentient man rather than rational man, Rousseau could work to publicize it and to gain people's *conviction* in its favour. But, in so far as the plan sowed illusions and could not really keep its promise at the court of reason – that is, despite its claims, could not genuinely *persuade* – Rousseau would take it upon himself to criticize it. So, his address to the public involves a quite unusual use of the first person pronoun, in which 'I' is the sentient subject rather than the instantiation of a universal reason always quick to object and to criticize:

I do not doubt that many Readers might arm themselves in advance with incredulity in order to resist the pleasure of persuasion, and I pity them for so sadly mistaking stubbornness for wisdom. But I hope that some honest soul will share the delightful emotion with which I take up the pen on a subject so interesting for humanity.¹⁵²

Letter', p. 236.

¹⁵¹ 'Abstract...', pp. 27-8.

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 28.

A comparison with the opening of *The State of War* brings out a major convergence: it is because the horrors of war move the 'human entrails' that Rousseau undertakes there to 'plead the cause of humanity' by seeking to establish justice.¹⁵³ Yet it is exactly as if the irony of the understanding immediately negated the enthusiastic Plan of the *beautiful soul* (*belle âme*). Rousseau presents the hope conveyed by the idea of eternal harmony and fraternal happiness as a mere pipe dream; the 'touching tableau' is no more than an illusory vision of bliss. Without yielding too long to the influence of feeling, it is necessary 'to reason coolly', 'not to put anything forward without proving it', and to beg the Reader in turn to stick to a rational process of refutation and objection.¹⁵⁴ The first three paragraphs of the *Abstract* therefore reveal to us Rousseau's complex theoretical posture, from which he will no longer depart. In this respect, the *Judgment* will not contradict the *Abstract* (as if the 'reasons for' in the latter were those of feeling, while the 'reasons against' in the former were those of reason). It will accomplish it by pursuing the demands of the rational posture that were laid down right at the beginning. In this way, the sequence from *Abstract* to *Judgment* shares the aim of a genuine 'critique', as formulated at this time by Marmontel in his article in the *Encyclopaedia*: that is, 'the enlightened examination and fair judgment of human output' should shape public opinion.

Two other texts shed light on the status of the *Abstract* and its relationship to the *Judgment*. First, after speaking of the duty to give an author his due, a passage in the *Confessions* refers to Rousseau's judicious decision 'to present separately' his own and Saint-Pierre's ideas and, 'to do so, to enter into his intentions, to clarify them, to extend them, and to spare nothing to make them valued at their full worth'.¹⁵⁵ In this perspective, the *Judgment* was meant to counter the arguments of the *Abstract* – which would already have been published and 'had its effect' – and, so to speak, exposed it 'to the fate of the sonnet in *The Misanthrope*'.¹⁵⁶ Two symmetrical mistakes had to be avoided: one was simply 'to let the author's visions pass' (which would not have been 'useful'); the other was 'to refute them rigorously' (which would have been

¹⁵³ 'The State of War', in CWR 11, p. 61.

¹⁵⁴ 'Abstract...', p. 28.

¹⁵⁵ 'The Confessions', p. 355. The issue is partly (though of course not only) one of style, as in the 'Fragments and Notes on the Abbé de Saint-Pierre' (CWR 11, pp. 109f).

¹⁵⁶ Molière, *The Misanthrope*, Act I, Scene 2, v. 376.

'dishonorable', in view of the task Rousseau had accepted and his duty to treat the author honourably). Wishing to combine usefulness with honour, he therefore split his analysis into two, without troubling himself too much over publication of the *Judgment*:

I made my attempt on the *Perpetual Peace*, the most substantial and the most polished of all the works that made up this collection, and, before abandoning myself to my reflections, I had the courage to read absolutely everything the Abbé had written on this fine subject, without ever becoming discouraged by his tedious passages and unnecessary repetitions. The public has seen this abstract, thus I have nothing to say about it. As for the judgment I brought to bear on it, it has not been printed and I do not know whether it ever will be: but it was written at the same time as the abstract.¹⁵⁷

So, what are the reading guidelines to be adopted? A first point is that, although Rousseau claimed to have had 'the courage to read absolutely everything the Abbé had written' on perpetual peace, it is necessary to focus on the manuscripts and printed texts that he had in his possession, especially volumes 1 and 2 of the 1733 *Ouvrages de politique*.¹⁵⁸ The *Abrégé du Projet de paix perpétuelle* and the *Supplément à l'Abrégé*, which feature at the front of the *Ouvrages*, were doubtless Rousseau's favourite texts, although it is not sure that they are the only ones he had on the subject.¹⁵⁹ The second point is that the *Abstract* requires a critical reading: although it is impossible to comb

¹⁵⁷ 'The Confessions', p. 355. [For the sake of consistency, the translation of the word '*extrait*' has here been changed from 'abridgement' to 'abstract' – *trans. note*.] According to Stelling-Michaud, it was only in 1763 that Rousseau expressed a wish to include the *Judgment* in a collection of his works, an outline of which he sent to Du Peyrou in January 1764 ('Introduction' to *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 3, pp. cxxxviii-cxxxix).

¹⁵⁸ The printed matter placed at Rousseau's disposal included, in vol. 1, the *Abrégé du Projet de paix perpétuelle* and, in vol. 2, the *Supplément à l'Abrégé*, but also a *Projet pour parvenir à la paix* in vol. 8, a plan for perpetual peace between Spain and England in vol. 15, and a reflection 'on the system of perpetual peace' in vol. 15 (see the list compiled by Rousseau, in volume 3 of his *Oeuvres complètes*, pp. 672-82). A systematic study has not yet been made of the manuscripts kept in Neuchâtel (Ms. RI). Among those not immediately accessible to Rousseau, however, were certain objections and replies to objections concerning early versions of the *Projet de paix perpétuelle*.

¹⁵⁹ According to A. Robinet, Rousseau knew really well only the *Abrégé*, from which the 'five articles' are drawn. 'Corps social et souveraineté nationale dans le conflit Saint-Pierre – Leibniz – Rousseau', in *Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Politique et Nation, op. cit.*, pp. 143ff.

through it sorting everything of Saint-Pierre's from everything of Rousseau's, nor should we strip Rousseau of all 'authority' over the arguments that he gives in favour of the Plan. The arguments that he places at the service of Saint-Pierre must not be confused with those that he sets out on the basis of his own principles – otherwise it would be easy to catch him in the act of contradicting himself, especially on the question of trade. Should his positions in the *Judgment* therefore be taken as the criterion of truth? That is not a satisfactory solution either, since Rousseau does not develop his own positions in the judgments he makes on the *Plan for Perpetual Peace* or the *PolySynody*. Rather, he tries to do justice, both positively and negatively, to a plan that is not his own.¹⁶⁰

In fact, only *Émile* provides a complete viewpoint on the sequence from *Abstract* to *Judgment*, by inserting it into the whole of his work. Having said that his work on 'Political Institutions' will examine 'how a good federative association can be established, what can make it durable, and how far the right of confederation can be extended without jeopardizing that of sovereignty', Rousseau effectively brings in Saint-Pierre when he describes the opposition between *Abstract* and *Judgment* as one between 'reasons for' and 'reasons against'¹⁶¹

Beyond the dismissal of Saint-Pierre's plan in the *Judgment*, we have to consider the fate of the idea of a 'good federative association', both in Book 1, Chapter 2 of the *Geneva Manuscript*, which is contemporaneous with the *Abstract*, and in *The Social Contract* and *Émile*. It is scarcely surprising that Rousseau was not content to refute Saint-Pierre but returned elsewhere in his work to the question of confederations: the lack of a solution to the problem of international relations threatened to jeopardize the very principles of political right. To put it briefly, the internal 'solution' remains unsatisfactory so long as the risk of insecurity is so great for republics. How can small states – whose necessity is linked to the principle of popular sovereignty and an effective general will – resist the ambitions of the great powers except through a defensive federal-style solution?¹⁶² The suggestion that Rousseau entrusted at least part

¹⁶⁰ See the article by B. Bernardi in *Principes du droit de la guerre*, op. cit.

¹⁶¹ *Émile*, op. cit., pp. 466-7.

¹⁶² OSC, 8, III: 15, pp. 199-200. See also *Émile*, pp. 466-7.

of a work on confederations to one of his republican admirers, the Comte d'Antraigues, seems implausible.¹⁶³ But Book 5 of *Émile*, which includes a résumé of *The Social Contract* and the planned 'Political Institutions', certainly takes the idea seriously.¹⁶⁴ It is worth quoting extensively from the text, which provides a framework for the previous note:

Once we have thus considered each species of civil society in itself, we shall compare them in order to observe their diverse relations [...] Is it not this partial and imperfect association which produces tyranny and war, and are not tyranny and war the greatest plagues of humanity?

Finally, we shall examine the kind of remedies for these disadvantages provided by leagues and confederations, which leave each state its own master within but arm it against every unjust aggressor from without. We shall investigate how a good federative association can be established, what can make it durable, and how far the right of confederation can be extended without jeopardizing that of sovereignty.

The Abbé de Saint-Pierre proposed an association of all the states of Europe in order to maintain perpetual peace among them. Was this association feasible? And if it had been established, can it be presumed that it would have lasted? [* Since I wrote this, the arguments for have been expanded in the extract from the Abbé's project; the arguments against – at least those which appeared solid to me – are to be found in the collection of my writings that follows this extract.] These investigations lead us directly to all the questions of public right which can complete the clarification of the questions of political right.

Finally, we shall lay down the true principles of the right of war, and we shall examine why Grotius and the others presented only false ones.

I would not be surprised if my young man, who has good sense, were to interrupt me in the middle of all our reasoning and say, 'Someone might say that we are building our edifice with wood and not with men, so

¹⁶³ See J.-L. Windenberger, *Essai sur le système de politique étrangère de J.-J. Rousseau, La République confédérative des petits États*, op. cit.

¹⁶⁴ Rousseau also says, however, that he never integrated his theory of the confederation into *Institutions politiques* (OSC, IV:9, p. 227).

exactly do we align each piece with the ruler!' 'It is true, my friend, but keep in mind that right is not bent by men's passions, and that our first concern was to establish the true principles of political right. Now that our foundations are laid, come and examine what men have built on them; and you will see some fine things!'

Then I make him read *Telemachus* while proceeding on his journey. [...] We know that Telemachus and mentor are chimeras.¹⁶⁵

So, *Émile* reveals *a posteriori* the key place of the 'Writings on the Abbé de Saint-Pierre' in the architecture of Rousseau's system: internal and external policy, the principles of political right and public right, can only be theorized together. In the sequel to 'Political Institutions', Rousseau would have posed a problem (as he did in *The Social Contract*¹⁶⁶): 'how far can the right of confederation be extended without jeopardizing that of sovereignty?' Does his solution exist? Yes: leagues and confederations do make it possible to leave the state its own 'master within' while defending it against unjust attack from without. The reference to the Abbé de Saint-Pierre here suggests an association that somehow reproduces the solution of the social compact (which ends the state of war among individuals) at the level of European states. The question that remains unresolved is whether such an association is 'practical' and, if so, whether it can endure. *Émile* sounds a final cautionary note, in the form of an objection by the young man of 'good sense', who asks whether human nature is not being forgotten in this formulation of public right and political right. The governor's reply is at the level of principles: right does not bend to human passions, and so the laying of foundations does not amount to building a utopia or taking men as one would wish them to be. Proof of this is the reference to Fénelon's *Adventures of Telemachus*, whose reform project is regarded as a wild dream. The very question of the nature of Rousseau's 'realism' is here posed in all its sharpness. In particular, the quoted passage from *Émile* tells us that, far from being a commission that he undertook more or less willingly but regarded as alien to his central concerns as a

¹⁶⁵ *Émile*, pp. 466-7.

¹⁶⁶ OSC, I: 6.

philosopher, Rousseau's critical examination of Saint-Pierre's works was integral to the project of his 'Political Institutions'. It was in a sense the prolegomenon to 'all the questions of public right' that were to clarify the future questions of political right.