

ROUSSEAU AND THE PROBLEM OF WAR

Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, 1985.

CHRISTINE JANE CARTER

UMI Number: U352309

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



UMI U352309

Published by ProQuest LLC 2015. Copyright in the Dissertation held by the Author.
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

All rights reserved. This work is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.



ProQuest LLC
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346



CONTENTS

	INTRODUCTION	1
1	'LES MEDITATIONS D'UN SOLITAIRE': ROUSSEAU'S SYSTEM	10
	Nature and society	
	Rousseau as moralist	
	Emile - natural man?	
	Citizenship: the moral end of man	
2	FROM STATE OF NATURE TO STATE OF WAR	45
	The state of nature	
	The transition to society	
	The founding of the body politic	
3	TYRANNY AND WAR: "THE WORST SCOURGES OF HUMANITY"	77
	Property and inequality	
	War as the consequence of despotism	
4	A NEW STATE OF NATURE	94
	The state of war	
	The nature of war	
	The "laws of war"	
5	ROUSSEAU AND THE ABBE DE SAINT-PIERRE	120
	The Project for perpetual peace	
	Rousseau's <u>Jugement</u>	
	Rousseau's critique of rationalism	
6	THE REPUBLIC	158
	The general will and the realisation of the common good	
	Rousseau as "legislator": Corsica and Poland	
	The republic and its external relations	
7	MANKIND CONDEMNED TO POLITICS	190
	Rousseau and the problem of war: differing interpretations	
	Rousseau, reluctant realist	
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	214

INTRODUCTION

In this study of Rousseau's ideas on war and peace, I have attempted to distinguish those unifying themes which serve both to clarify these ideas and to establish their place within the body of Rousseau's work. I have thus hoped to provide a more complete interpretation of Rousseau's thinking on the problem of war than has hitherto been achieved. It has been necessary, in this enterprise, to come to terms with Rousseau's writing in its totality, as the expression of what was manifestly a coherent, if sometimes apparently paradoxical view of the world.

It is doubtless the case with any great writer who has tackled diverse subjects that to gain a full understanding of his ideas on one particular topic it is essential to grasp the principles and assumptions which inform his thinking as a whole; with Rousseau, there are additional reasons for taking this line of approach. Firstly, Rousseau himself laid considerable stress on the need to appreciate his work as a "system", and warned that a careless reader might easily misunderstand him.¹ Whilst Rousseau's claim to the unity of his work has, in modern scholarship at least, generally been taken seriously, there has been no consensus amongst commentators as to the meaning of his writings. Rousseau has been characterised in many different ways; he has appeared as an extreme libertarian, an advocate of what today we term totalitarianism, a utopian, a rationalist, and in a variety of other guises. None of this would have surprised Rousseau, who saw

¹ Rousseau Juge de Jean Jaques, Dialogues, in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Oeuvres Complètes, 4 vols. published to date (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1959-69, I, 932.) Hereafter cited as O.C., with volume and page number.

himself misrepresented in many ways during his lifetime; but it does mean that the student of any aspect of his thought has to be particularly scrupulous, picking a way through the conflicting interpretations of Rousseau's "message", returning time and again to the original texts in an attempt to be faithful to his intentions. Secondly, Rousseau's writings on the subject of international politics are fragmentary, in part bound up with the ideas of the Abbé de Saint-Pierre whose works he attempted to edit, and, on his own admission, incomplete.² Interpretation of these writings must therefore rest heavily on the examination of those ideas which Rousseau articulated more fully, and which in logical and philosophical terms form their foundation.

Since my endeavour is not without precedent, the object of the present work will be better understood if some reference is made to the unsatisfactory nature of scholarship in this area of Rousseau's thought. There have been only two extensive studies of Rousseau's ideas on the subject of international politics, the pioneering work done by J.L. Windenberger in 1900 and the closely related study by G. Lassudrie-Duchêne which followed six years later.³ Both of these writers broke new ground and offered very valuable insights into this previously neglected aspect of Rousseau's work. Windenberger also deserves recognition in that he was one of the first to take seriously

2 Rousseau planned a great work to be called the Institutions politiques, of which consideration of certain problems of international politics would form a part. Rousseau makes reference to this in the Confessions, O.C. I, 404.

3 J.L. Windenberger, La république confédérative des petits états, (Paris: Picard, 1900); G. Lassudrie-Duchêne, J.-J. Rousseau et le Droit des gens (Paris: H. Jouve, 1906).

Rousseau's claim to the unity of his work and to pay attention to the coherence of his "system", pre-dating even Gustave Lanson's celebrated essay "L'unité de la pensée de Jean-Jacques Rousseau".⁴ However, whilst Windenberger stands alongside those, especially Lanson and later E.H. Wright,⁵ whose efforts to vindicate Rousseau as a serious, coherent thinker provided inspiration to successive students of Rousseau, his work does not do justice to the complexity of Rousseau's thinking on the problem of war. Windenberger, and Lassudrie-Duchêne, likewise, fail to grasp the tensions in Rousseau's thought which, far from undermining its unity, provide its dynamic and essential consistency. The other major deficiency evident in these two works is their neglect of the socioeconomic framework within which Rousseau deliberately sets his political principles. Thus while both of these early studies still merit careful reading, they do not provide anything like a satisfactory account of Rousseau's ideas on war and peace understood in their broader context.

Subsequent scholarship has not met the need for such an account for a variety of reasons. Following the two works referred to above, the only efforts to consider Rousseau's contribution to theorising on the problems of international politics were either in the context of works devoted to the theme of peace plans or leagues of states, or as very minor parts of general commentaries on Rousseau's thought. None of these provided any major insights into Rousseau's contribution,

4 Annales de la Société Jean-Jacques Rousseau, VIII (1912), 1-31.

5 Ernest Hunter Wright, The Meaning of Rousseau (London: Oxford University Press, 1929).

and in some cases simply served to perpetuate the misapprehension first popularised by Voltaire, that Rousseau is a utopian advocate of a plan for perpetual peace, and hence little removed from the Abbé de Saint-Pierre.⁶ C.E. Vaughan, in his two volume edition of Rousseau's political works, which was until recently the standard text, made a further important contribution in his discussion of Rousseau's abstract of, and judgment on, the peace plan of the Abbé de Saint-Pierre, and in his "detective" work concerning the important fragment L'Etat de guerre.⁷ Nevertheless his interpretation differs little from that of Windenberger, except in emphasis.

In the years since Vaughan wrote, many eminent general commentaries have appeared which, whilst building on the foundations laid by himself and the other authors mentioned above, have added new dimensions to the understanding of Rousseau's thought. The contemporary student thus has the benefit of a great many valuable pieces of scholarship which were not available to Windenberger or Lassudrie-Duchêne.⁸ In

6 An example is the work by S.J. Hemleben, Plans for World Peace through Six Centuries (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943). Hemleben comments that "The value of Rousseau's work lay primarily in his justification of the good Abbé's purpose - he made clear the need of an international organisation for the negotiation of treaties and the pacific settlement of disputes"; pp. 80-81.

7 C.E. Vaughan, ed., The Political Writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 2 vols. (1915; rpt. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), I, 281-4. The original title of the fragment referred to, subsequently cancelled by Rousseau, was Que l'état de guerre nait de l'état social. I have used the commonly accepted abbreviated title L'Etat de guerre throughout. A further fragment first published in 1967, appears in the Pléiade edition of Rousseau's works under the title Guerre et Etat de guerre; O.C. III, 1899-1904. Both fragments represent elements of Rousseau's planned sequel to the Contrat Social.

8 In addition to the many excellent commentaries which have appeared, the contemporary student has the benefit of the considerable scholarship represented in the now indispensable Pléiade edition of the complete works. In the context of the present study, Jean Starobinski's introduction to the Discours sur l'Origine et les

particular, Rousseau scholarship has progressed in the development of a more sophisticated appreciation of that which gives Rousseau's work its unity, and in the recognition of the profound significance of the emphasis which Rousseau gives to the social and economic determinants of political institutions, an emphasis to which the work of Emile Durkheim had earlier called attention.⁹ In these respects advances in scholarship have laid the foundation for a fuller understanding of Rousseau's thinking on the problem of war. Recent contributions in this area, despite this, still fall short of a fully satisfactory interpretation. Kenneth Waltz, F.H. Hinsley and Stanley Hoffman have all attempted to assess Rousseau's ideas on war and peace in the context of works which deal more broadly with the theory and practice of international relations.¹⁰ There are sharp differences in the interpretations offered by these three authors, and whilst of the three Hoffman provides the most thorough attempt to establish a coherent line of argument in Rousseau's work which renders explicable his ideas on war, his account still fails to do justice to the complexity of Rousseau's vision.

The present research, then, has been undertaken with the benefit of the considerable progress in scholarship on Rousseau which has taken place since Windenberger's day, and it will be evident throughout that I have drawn heavily on the insights provided by previous

8 fondements de l'inégalité and Sven Stelling-Michaud's commentary on the Ecrits sur l'Abbé de Saint-Pierre, both contained in the third volume, have been of particular assistance.

9 Montesquieu et Rousseau, précurseurs de la sociologie (Paris: Marcel Rivière, 1953); also "Le contrat social de Rousseau," in Revue de Metaphysique et de Morale, vol. XXV (1918), 1-23.

10 Kenneth Waltz, Man, the State and War (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959); F.H. Hinsley, Power and the Pursuit of Peace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963); Stanley Hoffman, The State of War (London: Pall Mall Press, 1965).

commentators. I have not, however, favoured one particular interpretation of Rousseau to the exclusion of all others. Of necessity, I have had to form my own judgments on the import of Rousseau's diverse writings, and in so doing have returned time and again to the original texts in the attempt to come to terms with the obscure or the paradoxical elements of his thought. This is indeed what Rousseau demanded of the reader who would be serious in his attempt to interpret his "system". I have endeavoured, in establishing my own position in the midst of widely divergent interpretations, not to succumb to the temptation of seeking to over-systematise Rousseau's thought, in the quest for a theme or motif which seems to provide that coherence to which Rousseau referred. Whilst it is clear to me that there is a demonstrable unity in Rousseau's work, it is also evident that it is a unity which not only accommodates, but to a large extent arises out of elements of tension and paradox in Rousseau's thinking. With the proviso that it is not possible to transcend one's own time and perspective, I hope I have gone at least some way to providing what Louis Althusser has called a "Rousseauist" reading of Rousseau.¹¹

To conclude this introduction, a little should be said about textual matters and the pattern which the work follows. Reference was made above to the fragmentary nature of the writings at the centre of this discussion: all that Rousseau wrote directly on the problems of international politics (or at least, all that has come down to us) are two completed works on Saint-Pierre's plan for a European league and some unfinished fragments, the most important of which is L'Etat de guerre. If we are to believe the testimony of the Comte d'Antraigues,

¹¹ Politics and History, trans. Ben Brewster, 2nd ed. (London: New Left Books, 1972), p. 133.

who was friendly with Rousseau in the latter years of his life, there existed a manuscript on the subject of confederation which Rousseau entrusted to him for safe keeping. So the story runs, d'Antraigues kept it for some years and in 1789 determined to publish it; but on advice from a friend he decided that this would be too dangerous, and subsequently, so he says, destroyed the manuscript with the blessing of one of Rousseau's "truest friends".¹² No evidence has been found which either corroborates or disproves d'Antraigues' story; Vaughan was of the opinion that extraordinary as the circumstances may seem, there is no good reason for disbelieving the Comte, since Rousseau was in the habit of entrusting unpublished works to his friends. Robert Derathé, commenting on the matter in the Pléiade edition of Rousseau's works, finds nothing to add to Vaughan's assessment.¹³ If Rousseau did produce such a manuscript, then presumably it represents at least some part of the work on international politics which, he indicated at the end of the Contrat Social, should follow on from the "principes du droit politique" he had therein established.¹⁴ In the absence of any indication of what the manuscript contained, the brief references to confederation in the Contrat Social itself, and

12 Notes et variantes, O.C. III, 1432. In a note to a pamphlet written in 1790 the Comte d'Antraigues commented that "Jean-Jacques Rousseau avait eu la volonté d'établir, dans un ouvrage qu'il destinait à éclaircir quelques chapitres du Contrat Social, par quels moyens de petits Etats libres pouvaient exister à côté des grandes Puissances, en formant des confédérations. Il n'a pas terminé cet ouvrage; mais il en avait tracé le plan, posé les bases, et placé, à côté des seize chapitres de cet écrit, quelques-unes de ses idées, qu'il comptait développer dans le corps de l'ouvrage. Ce manuscrit de trente-deux pages, entièrement écrit de sa main, me fut remis par lui-même; et il m'autorisa à en faire, dans le courant de ma vie, l'usage que je croirais utile." Ibid., 1431.

13 Ibid., 1432.

14 O.C. III, 470.

additional comments in the Emile, are the only source of guidance for the commentator. As Windenberger perceived, therefore, in view of the sparse and fragmented nature of Rousseau's writings on international politics, it is necessary to supplement their interpretation by drawing out the logic of Rousseau's position with reference to his major writings. I have differed from Windenberger in that I have not laid stress primarily on the Contrat Social, nor indeed purely on the political works, which only give a partial perspective on Rousseau. Concerning the writings on Saint-Pierre, since there has been no consensus amongst commentators as to precisely how Rousseau viewed the Abbé and his plans, or how faithful he was to Saint-Pierre's texts, I have gone to the original to form a judgment on these matters, making reference to the Abbé's collected works as well as to the Projet de paix perpétuelle.¹⁵

Finally, it will become clear to the reader that my method has in large part determined the organisation of the text which follows. I begin by setting the framework within which Rousseau's ideas on war and peace must be viewed if they are to be adequately comprehended: far from being a mere prelude to the succeeding chapters, this is central to the work. I then go on to focus on the specific area within this framework which explains the way in which Rousseau approached the problems of international politics, as a progression from a peaceful and innocent "state of nature" to a barbarous "state of war". Chapter 2 thus traces Rousseau's analysis of the origins of conflict, seen most clearly in the Discours sur l'Origine de l'inégalité. Chapter 3 indicates the next step in Rousseau's logic: the link between

¹⁵ For comment on the texts of the Abbé de Saint-Pierre utilised, see below, ch. 5, note 5.

tyranny, which arises as de facto society makes way for the birth of the state, and war as a means of public policy. This theme is pursued, and a further dimension added, in chapter 4, where investigation is made of the new "state of nature" in which sovereign states coexist, an "anarchical society" lacking laws and rulers. Hence, a permanent state of war. In chapter 5 I look at Rousseau's attitude towards the remedy for this unhappy situation proposed by the Abbé de Saint-Pierre, the European confederation. What does Rousseau's treatment of Saint-Pierre's work tell us about his own view of the practicability or desirability of such a plan, and can Rousseau as a thinker be put in the same utopian mould as the Abbé? The answers to these questions lead on to the substance of chapter 6, which investigates Rousseau's own prescription for the avoidance of war, or at least the dimension of his political thinking which points in that direction: the alternative to tyranny and princely ambition as manifest in the "republic", to which Rousseau's "principles of political right" are addressed. This shows the prescriptive and idealistic side of Rousseau's thought; the final chapter administers the necessary corrective and demonstrates Rousseau's considerable realism in his appreciation of the constraints upon moral and political action, and his awareness of the abiding problems inherent in the structure of international society. His sorry conclusion is that mankind is "condemned to politics" and hence condemned to war, but at the same time such realism does not imply an abandonment of ethics; rather it serves to strengthen the role of individual conscience, which finds its most complete expression in the concept of the rational will.

CHAPTER 1

"LES MEDITATIONS D'UN SOLITAIRE": ROUSSEAU'S SYSTEM

In one of his last works, Rousseau maintained that the coherence of his thought would not be appreciated by the careless or inattentive reader, but that he did nevertheless have a système which was both rationally explicable and morally justifiable. At the centre of this system, he asserted, lay the antithesis between "nature" and "society", which he called his "great principle". The reader who made a thorough study of his writings would thus perceive "par tout le développement de son grand principe que la nature a fait l'homme heureux et bon mais que la société le déprave et le rend misérable."¹ In this chapter I hope to demonstrate the way in which Rousseau's "great principle" provides the key to the understanding of his work, his ideas on war and peace no less than his more celebrated contributions to political and philosophical discourse. The assumption which underlies the chapter, and indeed those which follow, is that it is not possible to comprehend fully Rousseau's position on the problems of international politics without first grasping the fundamentals of his "system". A system, moreover, which has many dimensions, of which the political is only one: Rousseau is as much a social theorist, and a moralist, as he is a political theorist. The state of war is, in Rousseau's perspective, the most spectacular and destructive of the social problems to which he addresses himself, but is explicable nonetheless in precisely the same terms as are lesser conflicts amongst men. War, in Rousseau's logic, is the supreme manifestation of man's movement away from nature, dreadful testimony to the evils of society and to the failure of political institutions to mitigate these evils.

1 Rousseau Juge de Jean Jaques, O.C. I, 934.

Nature and society

Rousseau's "great principle" first came to him in the shape of a revelation on the road to Vincennes, as he recalls in the Confessions. The trigger for this revelation was his contemplation of an essay title presented by the Academy of Dijon, "Si le progrès des sciences et des arts a contribué à corrompre ou à épurer les mœurs?".² Whilst he could afterwards recall his vision only indistinctly, the central theme of Rousseau's work was from that time established. In society, men are observably depraved and unhappy, whilst naturally, man is good. Far from making for moral progress, the development of "civilised" society has degraded and corrupted mankind, engendered pride and avarice and has made men enemies of one another. Rousseau embodied this idea in a scathing critique of contemporary society as his submission for the prize essay, the first step in what he was later to claim as the consecration of his life to "la sainte et pure vérité".³ The Discours sur les Sciences et les Arts was followed by two further critical works in which Rousseau extended and deepened his analysis, the Discours sur l'Origine et les fondements de l'inégalité and the Discours sur l'économie politique. In both of these works Rousseau demonstrated his conviction that man's decline was consequent upon changes in his material circumstances, changes which brought about inequality of wealth and power and gave birth to political institutions which merely served to reinforce this inequality and to foster large scale conflict, thus compounding the moral decline. Whilst the Discours sur l'économie politique touched on the question of what might be done to halt this decline, only with the Emile and the Contrat Social did

2 Confessions, O.C. I, 351.

3 Lettre à d'Alembert (Paris: Garnier Flammarion, 1967), p. 243. This work is not yet included in the Pléiade edition. Rousseau chose as his motto a phrase from the Satires of Juvenal: "Vitam impendere vero" - to submit one's life to the test of truth.

Rousseau address himself systematically and at length to work of a prescriptive nature. Later still he gave his speculation concrete application in the works on Corsica and Poland. Consideration of the works of the Abbé de Saint-Pierre, who had believed that the application of reason to human affairs could eliminate the problem of conflict and meliorate the problem of tyranny, helped Rousseau to sharpen his own ideas on the possibilities for moral improvement. Throughout the works referred to above, and others lesser known, Rousseau remained faithful to the guiding principle "revealed" to him in 1749 and underwent no substantial change in his outlook. Indeed, the more experience of life he gained, the more convinced he became that whilst nature made man good, society brought his corruption, and that once lost, nature could never be recaptured. Men must thus have recourse to artifice if they wish to improve their condition; such efforts will be misdirected however, unless nature is taken as the guide.

In his first published work, Rousseau had rejected much of what was by that time central to Enlightenment opinion, which saw a manifest progress in the development of "civilisation" in general and in the arts and sciences in particular. On the contrary, Rousseau's hypothesis was that of a progressive decline, which in the second Discours he attempted to "prove" by reference to a philosophy of history taking "natural man" as its starting point.⁴ The question that immediately arises is how Rousseau knew man to be naturally good, given apparently ample evidence of human failings. The answer is found in Rousseau

⁴ "O Homme, de quelque Contrée que tu sois, quelles que soient tes opinions, écoute; voici ton histoire telle que j'ai cru la lire, non dans les Livres de tes semblables qui sont menteurs, mais dans la Nature qui ne ment jamais." Discours sur l'Origine et les fondemens de l'inégalité parmi les hommes, O.C. III, 133. This discourse will hereafter be cited as Discours sur l'inégalité.

himself: "D'où le peintre et l'apologiste de la nature . . . peut-il avoir tiré son modèle, si ce n'est de son propre coeur?"⁵ Looking into his own heart, Rousseau believed he saw no trace of original sin, or of any evil other than that vanity and self-interest which society had fostered in him as in others. To perceive this was to lift the veil of appearance, and he thought it possible for any man "rentrer en soi pour y étudier l'homme et connoître sa nature, ses devoirs et sa fin."⁶ To know oneself in this way is to know man, for nature has not been annihilated but has retreated to the innermost recesses of the human heart. Whilst man's natural goodness persists and can be both apprehended and actively nurtured, there is nevertheless no return to the natural condition. Those who, like Voltaire, gave Rousseau the reputation of wanting to send men back to the woods were seriously misrepresenting him.⁷ Rather, Rousseau hopes for a new state of being in which man does not constantly violate the demands of his nature but lives in accordance with them, in so far as social circumstances permit.

If there is any possibility of achieving this then the first essential step is that the poverty of the human condition be realised and the gulf between "is" and "ought" fully exposed. Rousseau gave the clearest account of his intentions in Rousseau Juge de Jean Jaques:

5 Rousseau Juge de Jean Jaques, O.C. I, 936.

6 Discours sur les Sciences et les Arts, O.C. III, 6.

7 Voltaire, having read the Discours sur l'inégalité, wrote to Rousseau in the following vein: "J'ay reçu, Monsieur, votre nouveau livre contre le genre humain . . . Il prend envie de marcher à quatre pattes quand on lit votre ouvrage." Quoted in Notes, O.C. III, 1379.

"Son but est de redresser l'erreur de nos jugemens pour retarder le progrès de nos vices, et de nous montrer que là où nous cherchons la gloire et l'éclat, nous ne trouvons en effet qu'erreurs et misères."⁸

Rousseau attempts to correct the error of our judgments in two ways: by demonstrating the characteristics of the natural state from which man has "fallen", and by showing us what might be if we accept the imperative to moral action. The first of these undertakings he accomplished in the Discours sur l'inégalité, the second in the principles put forward in the Emile and the Contrat Social. The second Discours is a particularly important work from the perspective of the present study, since in tracing the origins of inequality Rousseau is also tracing the origins of conflict amongst men, and ultimately of war. His analysis of the development of human society, and of the genesis of political institutions, conceived as a rupture with the natural state, will thus be looked at in detail in the next chapter. Here I will merely sketch a brief outline so as to set in context my comment on the conclusions which Rousseau draws from his critique of man as "un produit social", as Pierre Burgelin has aptly put it.⁹

Rousseau commences his analysis of the origins of inequality with a notion then current among political theorists, the "state of nature". Rousseau utilises this notion as the point of departure for the "hypothetical history" of mankind's progress to the "civilised" condition; looked at in another way, it is a representation of those essential characteristics of the human being which can still be found within each individual. Rousseau depicts the state of nature as a peaceful and happy condition in which man lives entirely self-

8 O.C. I, 935.

9 Introduction to the Emile, O.C. IV, XCI.

sufficient, at one with himself and his physical surroundings. Changes in material circumstances force men to establish social relations which become ever more complex and demanding; the harmony of the natural order is lost and individuals become increasingly dependent on their fellows, both physically and psychologically. The acquisition of material wealth and gaining the esteem or respect of others become all consuming aims, and appearance comes to take precedence over "being". Men now seek to better themselves at the expense of others whilst outwardly adhering to polite manners and subscribing to lofty sentiments. Some will be better able to profit from this situation and hence arise substantial inequalities of wealth, and of the power over others consequent upon wealth. Thus arises the "state of war" which Hobbes assumed to be the natural condition of mankind, and the sorry result is that men willingly embrace tyranny as a means of escaping the chaos of perpetual conflict. Human wretchedness is now complete, and happiness is no more in a condition where people constantly desire what they cannot have, whether it be greater wealth, power, or the slave wanting his freedom. Worse, organised groups of men are now the declared enemies of other such groups, and the "state of war" takes on a new and yet more terrifying aspect. Individuals are torn one way and another, neither at peace with themselves nor with their fellow men. If the voice of nature is heard to speak in their hearts it is suppressed, for compassion brings scant reward. This then is the fate of "civilised" man, and such are the fruits of progress.

Rousseau as moralist

Rousseau's vision seems to offer little hope, so complete appears his rejection of the supposed benefits of society and of political institutions. However, Rousseau's aim was not only to pass judgment,

but also to offer constructive suggestions in the belief that in certain limited circumstances men could improve their situation. The Emile was the first of Rousseau's major prescriptive works, and of all his writings the one he considered best. As the book's epigraph, Rousseau chose a quotation from Seneca, one of his favourite authors: "We suffer from a curable ill; and since we are born upright nature aids us if we wish to correct ourselves."¹⁰ Rousseau's self-avowed commitment to truth compelled him to set out principles which would offer both a standard by which to judge existing practices, and a guide to positive redemptive action. His writing career was thus, in his view, a form of service to mankind, despite the fact that he had few illusions as to the likelihood of his words being heeded.¹¹ The question of Rousseau's position on the relationship between theory and practice, and the extent to which he thought a moral improvement in the human condition possible, is one on which commentators have differed widely. It is a question central to the understanding of the thinking behind Rousseau's "system" as it appears in his major works, and it is particularly important in the context of the present study since it has to be established what attitude Rousseau took towards the prospect of eliminating the problem of war. Before I make my own position clear, it will be helpful to look briefly at the range of interpretation through the standpoints of three authors who have taken markedly different positions.

¹⁰ Emile ou de l'éducation, O.C. IV, 239.

¹¹ Even to his major imaginative work, La Nouvelle Héloïse, Rousseau sought to demonstrate a moral lesson; indeed, he justified his "folies" by suggesting that "l'amour du bien, qui n'est jamais sorti de mon coeur" turned them "vers des objets utiles et dont la morale eut pu faire son profit." Confessions, O.C. I, 435.

Ernst Cassirer offers a Kantian reading of Rousseau which places his thought firmly in the idealist tradition. Cassirer interprets Rousseau thus: man is accountable for the evils of his condition, but these evils can be overcome by him "freely creating and freely shaping the order in accordance with which he wants to live."¹² Here, the educational process as embodied in the Emile is seen as the link between the "is" and the "ought", for "society will never change if it is not confronted with a categorical duty, an unconditional will to renewal. . . . This spiritual and ethical decay the educational plan of Emile desires to prevent." There is at least the possibility of progression towards a perfected condition for mankind, and it is to this end that Emile is educated "exclusively to be a 'citizen among those who are to be'."¹³ In Cassirer's view, then, Rousseau's works have the very positive aim of demonstrating what the exercise of "rational will" can bring about. The interpretation of Bertrand de Jouvenel offers a clear contrast in presenting Rousseau as a "pessimistic evolutionist"¹⁴ who views history as an unending flux of growth and decay and does not therefore hold out the prospect of perfectibility in some future age. Jouvenel stresses Rousseau's belief that even the best constituted state must sooner or later fall into decline, along with his view that the future holds no promise of anything superior to that achieved in the Ancient world. The object of Rousseau's moralism, in this interpretation, is to demonstrate what is worth preserving or nurturing in the world as it is:

12 The Question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, trans. Peter Gay (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963), p. 82.

13 Ibid., p. 123.

14 "Rousseau the Pessimistic Evolutionist," Yale French Studies, XXVIII (Fall-Winter 1961-1962), 83-96.

Ce qui est perdu est perdu; il faut sauver ce qui est sauvable. Or qu'est-ce qui est sauvable? Dans la grande société corrompue, c'est l'individu . . . Dans la petite société qui n'est pas encore trop avancée vers la perdition, c'est la société elle-même. 15

We must choose to save either the man or the citizen; it is fruitless to seek to unite the two because the gulf between nature and society has become too wide to bridge.

Yet another interpretation has been given more recently by Judith Shklar, pursuing a theme first elaborated by Albert Schinz.¹⁶ She regards Rousseau's major writings as presenting two different "utopias" - models of perfection which by their nature are unattainable in reality. These models are the "Golden Age" or rural idyll (represented in the Emile and the novel La Nouvelle Héloïse) and the "Spartan City State" (outlined in the Contrat Social). The two Utopias represent the ideals of man and citizen respectively. We ought to choose between the two, but the necessity for choice is itself a criticism of our having failed to unite nature and society rather than a call for a decision. Rousseau has no intention of spurring men to action, according to Shklar; he merely wishes to bring judgment to bear on them. Thus: "He made passivity his central principle, and a necessary one. For nothing less was compatible with the total condemnation of his age."¹⁷

What these interpretations have in common is their stress on Rousseau's moralism and the recognition that the opposition between

15 "Essai sur la Politique de Rousseau," in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Du Contrat Social (Geneva: Editions du Cheval Ailé, 1947), p. 84.

16 La Pensée de Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1929). Schinz saw Rousseau as being unable to make a definite choice between two ideals, the "Romantic" and the "Roman".

17 Men and Citizens (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 7.

"nature" and "society" which Rousseau first establishes in his critical works is taken up in his prescriptive ideas in the apparent opposition between "man" and "citizen". The disputed questions are precisely where Rousseau's moralism leads him, and how optimistic he is for the future of mankind. If men are to escape their miserable condition, is it by means of an individual retreat from society so that "nature" might be in some sense recaptured, or by the founding of a social and political order in which the principles of right serve to bind individuals in a common life as citizens? What is the link, if any, between the two possibilities, and is citizenship to be preferred as a higher moral end? Is Rousseau truly of the "age of optimism" or does his vision of human destiny place him in a more austere tradition? In the remainder of this chapter I hope to provide answers to these questions, and in so doing to establish the foundations for my analysis of Rousseau's account of the origins and possible resolution of conflict in human society.

Emile - natural man?

Rousseau considered the Emile to be the work in which his principles were best elaborated.¹⁸ This is not entirely surprising, since it is in this work more than any other that he attempts to vindicate man as a being whose natural sentiments and inclinations are good. He describes the book, in fact, as "un ouvrage assez philosophique sur ce principe avancé par l'Auteur dans d'autres écrits que l'homme est naturellement bon."¹⁹ Emile represents man as he is essentially,

¹⁸ Rousseau comments in the Confessions that "les gens les plus capables d'en juger me confirma que c'étoit là le meilleur de mes écrits, ainsi que le plus important." O.C. I, 573.

¹⁹ Rousseau continues: "Pour accorder ce principe avec cette autre vérité non moins certaine que les hommes sont méchants, il falloit dans l'histoire du coeur humain montrer l'origine de tous les vices". Letter to Philibert Cramer, 13 October 1764, Correspondance complète de Jean-Jacques Rousseau, ed. R.A. Leigh, 40 vols.

stripped of the mask of vanity and deceit which obscures the soul of "civilized" man: a man as Rousseau was able to see himself, "dans toute la vérité de la nature. . . ." ²⁰ In order to demonstrate man's natural goodness Rousseau depicts an educational process through which a child, abstracted from society as far as this is humanly possible, is allowed to develop gradually in accordance with the demands of nature. Emile, up to manhood, is governed by sentiment, whilst reason slumbers. This way, innocent amour de soi, which is the primary motivation of "natural man" is not perverted into amour-propre, the vanity and self-regard which becomes so all consuming in the social state.²¹ Emile emerges from this carefully constructed educational process, under the watchful eye of his tutor, as a whole man, sufficient unto himself in both the material and the psychological sense. He has learnt a simple trade and can support himself, thus minimising his dependence on others for subsistence. This is very important in Rousseau's eyes because he saw material interdependence as the root cause of conflict and competition amongst individuals. His ideal is thus a situation in which the family unit can be as autonomous as possible. Psychologically, Emile is also independent of others, caring nothing for their opinion: unlike social man, he lives "within" and not "outside" himself.²²

19 (Geneva: Institut et Musée Voltaire, 1965-1982), XXI, 248; hereafter cited as Correspondance.

20 Confessions, O.C. I, 5.

21 See below, ch. 2, pp. 63-70.

22 This is a distinction which Rousseau makes in the second Discours, where he comments that "le Sauvage vit en lui-même; l'homme sociable toujours hors de lui ne sait vivre que dans l'opinion des autres, et c'est, pour ainsi dire, de leur seul jugement qu'il tire le sentiment de sa propre existence." Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C. III, 193.

Thus far, Rousseau would seem to be advocating the simple rustic life far removed from government and political processes. However, Rousseau is at pains to make it clear that his intention is not that Emile should skulk in the woods away from all human company - no doubt he anticipated that conclusions of this kind would be drawn following the response to the second Discours.²³ There is no going back to the state of nature, and enforced isolation, other than in the early formative stages of the child's development, is no substitute for the natural liberty once enjoyed. More importantly, it is by no means desirable that Emile should shun human company, for having been prevented from falling into vice he is in a position to benefit from the moral possibilities which society offers. This is perhaps the most paradoxical aspect of Rousseau's thought, for whilst he abhors existing society and laments the corruption of contemporary political institutions, he is committed to the notion that within the body politic alone can man realise his full moral potentiality. The natural state is characterised by goodness, but virtue is only possible in the context of citizenship.²⁴ But how is it that an individual who

23 "Mais considerez premièrement, que voulant former l'homme de la nature il ne s'agit pas pour cela d'en faire un sauvage et de reléguer au fond des bois, mais qu'enfermé dans le tourbillon social, il suffit qu'il ne s'y laisse entraîner ni par les passions ni par les opinions des hommes. . . ." Emile, O.C. IV, 550-51.

24 Rousseau gives a succinct account of the advantages of the civil state over the natural state in the Contrat Social: "Quoiqu'il se prive dans cet état de plusieurs avantages qu'il tient de la nature, il en regagne de si grands, ses facultés s'exercent et se développent, ses idées s'étendent, ses sentimens s'ennoblissent, son ame toute entiere s'élève à tel point, que si les abus de cette nouvelle condition ne le dégradent souvent au dessous de celle dont il est sorti, il devroit bénir sans cesse l'instant heureux qui l'en arracha pour jamais, et qui, d'un animal stupide et borné, fit un être intelligent et un homme." O.C. III, 364.

has emerged into manhood out of a childhood in which he has known no bonds of duty and obligation can be prepared for moral action? Is there not an unbridgable gulf between the natural man, all for himself, and the citizen, at one with his community? Rousseau is explicit about this problem and tackles it forcefully at the beginning of the book. First, he poses the dilemma, commenting that in deciding upon a method of education, we are forced "de combattre la nature ou les institutions sociales. . . ." Logically, then, this means that we must "opter entre faire un homme ou un citoyen; car on ne peut faire à la fois l'un et l'autre." This is because:

L'homme naturel est tout pour lui: il est l'unité numérique, l'entier absolu qui n'a de rapport qu'à lui-même ou à son semblable. L'homme civil n'est qu'une unité fractionnaire qui tient au dénominateur, et dont la valeur est dans son rapport avec l'entier, qui est le corps social. 25

The form of education best suited to the making of citizens is of a "public" kind, where individuals are from their earliest days initiated into the common life which will take the place of their purely personal concerns. Rousseau would seem to imply that not only are "man" and "citizen" irreconcilable opposites, but that citizenship in the proper sense of the term is unattainable in the majority of states. If this were so then the Emile and the Contrat Social could well be seen as offering two different "utopias" as Shklar suggests. In fact, Rousseau's position is more complex: he does wish to marry the two aims, thus saving the individual from being torn between natural inclinations and social pressures. Logically, this must be Rousseau's intention, since he does not believe it possible to recreate the natural condition (the "rural idyll" is a long way removed from the

25 Emile, O.C. IV, 248-49.

"state of nature"), nor does he think that nature can be entirely stamped out. Thus the only way in which nature and society can be reconciled is by removing the "self-contradictions" within man.²⁶ Emile will be "tout pour lui" in the sense that he is self-sufficient, and he will yield to natural inclinations, which are always benign. He can readily become "une unité fractionnaire" because he is not self-centred, and this lack of self-regard is the hallmark of both uncorrupted man and true citizen.

Emile, then, is a man free of the contradictions which have come to characterise man in society. He can be both man and citizen, because his natural sentiments, amour de soi and pitié, have not been perverted, and it is precisely these sentiments which constitute the foundation of virtue, but at a reasoned level. Emile, who reaches the age of reason as a being who is good but amoral, has a far greater capacity for virtue than his fellows who long before became immoral. For it is a central principle of Rousseau's that once corrupt, man and state alike are beyond redemption. All effective moral action must be preventive.²⁷ The fact that Emile has been deliberately spared from engaging his mind and emotions in any moral dilemmas, and knows nothing of the concept of duty, does not mean that he is wilful and unable to consider the interests of others; on the contrary, once his reason is awakened, because his heart is pure he will see clearly the necessity

26 Ibid., 251. Pierre Burgelin comments in his introduction to the Emile that: "Quand, comme en France, on ne peut faire un citoyen, on cherche à faire un homme. Mais l'homme ne s'oppose pas radicalement au citoyen, si la destinée normale, quoiqu'exceptionnelle, de l'homme est de vivre dans un cité." O.C. IV, XCIV.

27 Elsewhere, Rousseau speaks of "cette grande maxime de morale, la seule peut-être d'usage dans la pratique, d'éviter les situations qui mettent nos devoirs en opposition avec nos intérêts, et qui nous montrent nôtre bien dans le mal d'autrui" Confessions, O.C. I, 56.

for the rules and obligations which social life requires, and embrace them enthusiastically. The culmination of Emile's education consists in the study of theoretical works on politics (including consideration of the Abbé de Saint-Pierre's peace project) and in a period of travel which enables him to observe the workings of different states. The object of this is to enable him to choose the state in which he would prefer to make a home and undertake the duties of citizenship. As it happens, Emile chooses the land in which he was brought up, and Rousseau does not pretend that he is likely to chance upon a well governed republic of the kind outlined in the Contrat Social. Only in the latter context could Emile's potentialities be fully realised as that moral autonomy which, although it has its origins in nature, is so far from the natural condition that Rousseau terms it "denaturation".²⁸ In the circumstances in which Emile is likely to find himself, he will be as worthy a citizen as political institutions allow him to be.

There is a further dimension to the educational process, as described in the Emile, which helps to explain why this man raised in accordance with the demands of nature can so readily assume the mantle of citizen in whatever state he may chance, or choose to live. It is, moreover, a dimension which is important to understanding Rousseau's attitude towards the constraints upon moral and political action. Emile must learn to submit without demur to the "joug de la

28 "Les bonnes institutions sociales sont celles qui savent le mieux dénaturer l'homme, lui ôter son existence absolue pour lui en donner une relative, et transporter le moi dans l'unité commune; en sorte que chaque particulier ne se croie plus un, mais partie de l'unité, et ne soit plus sensible que dans le tout". Emile, O.C. IV, 249.

nécessité",²⁹ which weighs heavily upon all individuals. Natural man is no stranger to this yoke, familiar as he is with the dictates of the seasons and the limits of his own powers. Socialised man loses this sense and ceaselessly desires what he cannot have, or achieve. This is the greatest source of human misery, and if it is to be avoided, Emile must "sente de bonne heure sur sa tête altière le dur joug que la nature impose à l'homme, le pesant joug de la nécessité sous lequel il faut que tout être fini ploye." If the individual is to be schooled in yielding to necessity, it is essential that he "voye cette nécessité dans les choses, jamais dans le caprice des hommes. . . ." ³⁰ To attempt otherwise is to encourage resentment and rebellion, but once the stoic mentality is developed, even submission to the arbitrary will of others can be accepted with equanimity, when there is no choice. Rousseau illustrates this in his unfinished sequel to the work, Emile et Sophie. Here we have recounted the various disasters that befall Emile after he and his tutor have parted ways (Emile's child dies, his wife is unfaithful, and more improbably, he is then taken as a slave by pirates) and find that through it all he remains as "free" as he was before. "Soumis à la loi de nécessité", he comments, "je cessai mes vains murmures, je pliai ma volonté sous l'inévitable joug. . . ." ³¹ The reason why Emile retains his freedom even in captivity, Rousseau explains, is that freedom itself resides in the inner self of man, not in external circumstances. This is a view which bears the stamp of

29 Ibid., 320.

30 Ibid.

31 Emile et Sophie, ou les Solitaires, O.C. IV, 899.

Rousseau's Calvinist upbringing as well as his reading of the Stoics; in the present age it has been developed as the central theme of existentialist philosophy. Thus: "La liberté n'est dans aucune forme de gouvernement, elle est dans le coeur de l'homme libre, il la porte par tout avec lui."³²

This emphasis on freedom as a quality of man's inner being might seem to sit ill with the commitment to the perfection of the political order which is clearly central to the Contrat Social. There is, however, no contradiction, since Rousseau considers it preferable, given that the natural condition cannot be re-established, that man seek to realise his freedom as moral autonomy in a well governed republic. This represents the most complete expression of human freedom, but the exercise of rational will which in this context is realised collectively can be affirmed individually whatever the circumstances. In Emile, it manifests itself as an acceptance of that which cannot be changed, along with a self-willed commitment to the pursuit of right and justice however unhappy the social condition he inhabits. Rousseau's interpretation of freedom, far from leading him towards quietism, elevates the importance of the quest for a just social and political order because this alone provides the vehicle through which the highest freedom, which is virtue, can be attained. Towards the end of the Emile, Rousseau imagines the tutor attempting to convince his pupil of the need for him to embrace the duties of citizenship, and in so doing he gives one of his most forceful statements of the benefits of the social state:

32 Emile, O.C. IV, 857. This aspect of Rousseau's thought has been explored by Pierre Burgelin in his La Philosophie de l'Existence de Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950).

Ô Emile! où est l'homme de bien qui ne doit rien à son pays? Quel qu'il soit, il lui doit ce qu'il y a de plus précieux pour l'homme, la moralité de ses actions et l'amour de la vertu. Né dans le fond d'un bois il eut vécu plus heureux et plus libre; mais n'ayant rien à combattre pour suivre ses penchans il eut été bon sans mérite, et il n'eut point été vertueux, et maintenant il sait être malgré sans passions. 33

Society facilitates the moral life, and substitutes autonomy for the independence of the natural state; at best, this will mean true citizenship, at worst, the development of sufficient inner strength for the individual to withstand the manifold ills of the social condition. In each case the object is the avoidance of that destructive dependence on others which engenders only vice and unhappiness. It is worth quoting in full the explanation of this point as it appears in the Emile, since it is a clear statement of Rousseau's position, and will serve as a convenient preface to some remarks on Rousseau's political principles:

Il y a deux sortes de dépendance. Celle des choses qui est de la nature; celle des hommes qui est de la société. La dépendance des choses n'ayant aucune moralité ne nuit point à la liberté et n'engendre point de vices. La dépendance des hommes étant desordonnée les engendre tous, et c'est par elle que le maître et l'esclave se dépravent mutuellement. S'il y a quelque moyen de remédier à ce mal dans la société c'est de substituer la loi à l'homme et d'armer les volontés générales d'une force réelle supérieur à l'action de toute volonté particulière. Si les loix des nations pouvoient avoir comme celles de la nature une inflexibilité que jamais aucune force humaine ne put vaincre, la dépendance des hommes redeviendrait alors celle des choses, on réunirait dans la République tous les avantages de l'état naturel à ceux d'état civil, on joindrait à la liberté qui maintient l'homme exempt de vices la moralité qui l'élève à la vertu. 34

Citizenship: the moral end of man

If dependence on "things" is the key to Emile's development as a free and self-sufficient individual, it is dependence on law which is

33 O.C. IV, 858. Rousseau is here using the word "libre" in the negative sense of independence.

34 Ibid., 311.

the key to autonomy in the political order. The character of the "republic" which would result from the application of Rousseau's "principes du droit politique" will be discussed in detail in chapter 6; at this point my object is to discuss these principles in terms of the moral imperative for change which arises out of his critique of existing institutions. In the Emile Rousseau writes that a virtuous man is "celui qui sait vaincre ses affections."³⁵ It is therefore required of the citizen not that he extinguish his affections, but that he subordinate them to concern for the common good. Difficult though this might be, it is necessary if that conflict of personal interests which generally prevails in society is to be avoided. Just as the starting point of Rousseau's speculation, encapsulated in the Vincennes "revelation", had been the opposition between man's natural goodness and the observable depravity of social man, so the point of departure in Rousseau's political thinking is the opposition between man's natural freedom and the observable enslavement of men under political institutions. Hence the celebrated beginning of the Contrat Social: "L'homme est né libre, et par-tout il est dans les fers."³⁶ This leads directly to the "problème fondamental" with which Rousseau deals in the course of the work: "Trouver une forme d'association qui défende et protège de toute la force commune la personne et les biens de chaque associé, et par laquelle chacun s'unissant à tous n'obéisse pourtant qu'à lui-même et reste aussi libre qu'auparavant."³⁷ The form of association which guarantees freedom in this way is one in which each individual has an equal say in formulating the rules by

35 Ibid., 818.

36 O.C. III, 351.

37 Ibid., 360.

which the community will operate: ". . . l'obéissance à la loi qu'en s'est prescrite est liberté."³⁸ Such freedom is far from the "negative freedom" which man enjoyed in the natural state; hence Rousseau's use elsewhere of the term "denaturation" to describe the process by which it is attained. Moral freedom is sacrificial of purely personal interest, as Rousseau indicates with an anecdote in the Emile:

Une femme de Sparte avoit cinq fils à l'armée, et attendoit des nouvelles de bataille. Un Ilote arrive; elle lui en demande en tremblant. Voix cinq fils ont été tués. Vil esclave, t'ai-je demandé cela? Nous avons gagné la victoire. La mère court au temple et rend grace au Dieux. Voilà la Citoyenne. ³⁹

It would nevertheless be wrong to conclude from this chilling example of devotion to country that the citizen may be continually torn between private and public interest, for this would be simply to mirror the contradictions which men experience in the kind of society Rousseau was condemning. In the well ordered state such conflict of interest will be minimal due to the individual's identification with a moi commun which has become the primary object of his affections. Thus whilst as a citizen man can no longer live "within himself" in the purely individual sense, he can do so as a member of the moi commun.⁴⁰

Exclusive concern with one's own well being is transformed into concern for the common good, and the foundation for virtue thereby laid. It may seem that this rooting of virtue in sentiment, which would appear to undermine its basis in reason and will, means that what Rousseau is talking about is not virtue in the strict sense at

³⁸ Ibid., 365.

³⁹ O.C. IV, 249.

⁴⁰ See below, ch. 6, pp. 161-66 for discussion of the way in which Rousseau conceives a moi commun as arising out of the act of association.

all, but some higher form of self-interest. And indeed, Rousseau claims in the Emile: "Etendons l'amour-propre sur les autres êtres, nous le transformerons en vertu, et il n'y a point de coeur d'homme dans lequel cette vertu n'ait sa racine."⁴¹ Close examination of this remark demonstrates that Rousseau is not attempting to identify virtue with self-interest, but to locate its roots in natural sentiment (amour-propre develops out of amour de soi) and to indicate that it is attainable by every man. It must also be emphasised that Rousseau saw virtue as arising out of a union of sentiment and reason; it is the latter which entails the conscious volition, but sentiment provides the impulse. Man must both know and love the good if he is to pursue it.⁴²

Citizenship thus provides a way in which, if circumstances permit, individuals can not only find a much happier life, but can do so in the pursuit of good and can thus fulfil human potentialities to their fullest extent. This sublime condition is one in which men would once again be whole, that is not torn by inner contradictions, as they were originally in the natural state. Nature is thus in a sense reappropriated at a higher level, through the exercise of the rational will.⁴³ To interpret Rousseau's political principles thus, would be, as Ernst

⁴¹ O.C. IV, 547. We might have expected to read l'amour de soi, but according to Rousseau's logic this cannot be extended to others, since it is a sentiment concerned exclusively with individual self-preservation. Amour-propre, however, can be thus extended, since it is an artificial sentiment awakened in society. In the process, it is transformed from a pernicious to a useful attribute.

⁴² See below, ch. 2, p. 57, and note 36.

⁴³ Starobinski has interpreted this as a dialectical movement, from the negation of nature in corrupt society to the negation of the negation in nature reappropriated at a higher (conscious) level. Jean Starobinski, Jean-Jacques Rousseau: la transparence et l'obstacle (Paris: Gallimard, 1971).

Cassirer does, to make a "Kantian" of him. Certainly it was this aspect of Rousseau's thought which so impressed Kant and upon which later writers in the same tradition - notably T.H. Green and Bernard Bosanquet - founded their interpretation of Rousseau's ideas.

Whilst the debts of the idealists to Rousseau are obvious, it is equally obvious to the reader who attempts to do justice to Rousseau's "system" that there is another major dimension to his political thought which leads in quite a different philosophical direction. If individuals are to be equal one with another in their capacity to shape the laws by which the republic is governed, and thus remain free, they must first be equal in the material sense. No moi commun can arise on the basis of an association in which there is material inequality, for such inequality leads necessarily to the conflict of interests and the domination of some individuals over others. To appreciate the importance of the "materialist" dimension of Rousseau's thought it is only necessary to go to the Discours sur l'inégalité and the Discours sur l'économie politique to note the pride of place which he gives to the role of property in bringing about man's misfortunes. It is an emphasis which we find repeated in the prescriptive works, where Rousseau makes it quite clear that a legitimate political order can only be founded on the basis of an equality of material possessions such that all members of the association have "quelque chose et qu' aucun d'eux n'a rien de trop."⁴⁴ In citing once again the "fundamental problem" which Rousseau poses in the Contrat Social it is now possible to underline that he wishes to find "une forme d'association qui defende et protege de toute la force commune la personne et les biens

⁴⁴ Contrat Social, O.C. III, 367.

de chaque associé . . . " (my emphasis).⁴⁵ In arguing the importance of material equality Rousseau is not simply condemning the experience of history and contemporary realities, he is also pitting his ideas against his contractualist predecessors who had shown no such concern. For Hobbes and Locke it was enough that an association be freely entered into and that law be the safeguard of property and the means of resolving disputes. Rousseau sees this as the legitimization of tyranny, and it cannot be the route to freedom for either those who are the masters of others, which the rich necessarily are, or the slaves, who are the poor. If domination and servitude are to be avoided each man must have enough to be comfortably self-sufficient, and no more. This is necessary, as we saw in the context of the Emile, in order to minimise the dependence of the individual on his fellows, for dependence only stimulates amour-propre and gives rise to conflicts. In the political context self-sufficiency takes on a yet greater significance as the prerequisite of freedom under law. Rousseau's insistence on the grounding of political institutions within a specified socioeconomic milieu geared towards equality puts him outside the liberal tradition of political theorising and explains the interest which his ideas have held, and still hold, for thinkers on the left.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Ibid., 360.

⁴⁶ In the utopian socialist tradition, Proudhon counted Rousseau the greatest influence on his ideas. In recent years, thinkers of the "new left" have provided further insights into the character of Rousseau's social and political theory. Prior to the work by Althusser already cited, and Lucio Colletti's From Rousseau to Lenin, trans. John Merrington and Judith White (London: New Left Books, 1972), Galvano della Volpe had devoted a number of essays to the interpretation of Rousseau, which first appeared in collected form in 1957. A more recent edition is Rousseau and Marx, trans. John Fraser (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1978).

The notions of equality and self-sufficiency have a special significance also in relation to Rousseau's thinking on war. The culmination of the move away from nature is the state of war between the competing political bodies which have taken the place of looser human groupings. Rousseau sees the "disposition" of the state as very similar to that of badly socialised man: in both cases ambitions are grossly inflated and the pursuit of wealth and power become all consuming goals. Consequent conflict amongst individuals is at least limited by their physical capacities; when the organised might of the state is thrown against that of other states the results are catastrophic. Full analysis of Rousseau's views on the nature of the state and of inter-state conflict will be found in chapters 3 and 4. At this point it is only necessary to provide a glimpse of how the notions of self-sufficiency and autonomy apply in this context. A moment's reflection on the character of the republic as alluded to above will indicate that there is a close link between the self-supporting nature of its citizens and the concept of the self-sufficient state. It would be curious indeed were Rousseau to prescribe principles of political right in accordance with which a state might be well governed and its members strive towards virtue, if at the same time he envisaged such a state pursuing policies of aggrandizement, policies which contribute so much to human misery. Rousseau's object is both justice and peace, a peace moreover which is not won by conquest or bought by dubious alliances, but which is founded on the genuine commitment of a community to independence and freedom. Essentially, this will mean a withdrawal from the complex and corrupting world of international politics and diplomacy, just as Emile, to avoid falling into vice, had to be raised to maturity in relative social isolation.

It is now possible to come back to the issue which was raised

earlier, the extent to which Rousseau's works offer a moral imperative for change which he hoped, or expected to see brought about. Throughout his work Rousseau is at pains to stress that he is not writing for imaginary beings, but for men as they are, grasping and self-interested. In the Contrat Social Rousseau states at the outset that his purpose is to find whether there is some "regle d'administration légitime et sûre, en prenant les hommes tels qu'ils sont, et les loix telles qu'elles peuvent être. . . ." In this enterprise, he goes on, he hopes to unite "ce que le droit permet avec ce que l'intérêt prescrit, afin que la justice et l'utilité ne se trouvent point divisées."⁴⁷ It is a testimony to his realism that Rousseau indicates that interest "prescribes" whilst right merely "permits" and that he here makes a very explicit reference to the need to take "utility" into account. The first conclusion to be drawn, therefore, is that Rousseau is not putting forward an abstract system with no bearing on social and political practice. Indeed, in connection with his major works, Rousseau claimed that he had not built a system which could be relegated, along with "la République de Platon, l'Utopie et les Sévarambes dans les pays de chimères."⁴⁸ It is, moreover, this determination not to construct a utopia which leads him to consider the application of his principles in a variety of circumstances, some far from promising. This can be seen most clearly in the proposals he put forward for improving the constitutions of Corsica and Poland,

47 O.C. III, 351.

48 Lettres écrites de la montagne, O.C. III, 810. The Utopia is of course Thomas More's, and Les Sevarambes by Denis Vairasse. The context in which this comment is made is Rousseau's defence of the Contrat Social and the Emile against the ban imposed upon the works by the Genevan authorities.

but the attempt to anchor his principles of political right in the world of practical politics can also be seen throughout the Contrat Social. In his interpretation of the latter work, Vaughan claimed that there was a contradiction in Rousseau's thought, manifest in the disjunction between the "abstract principles" of the first two Books and the more concrete orientation of Books three and four.⁴⁹ This is not a tenable position, since Rousseau makes it clear at the outset that in attempting to devise a well ordered political system he takes men "as they are", and, it emerges in Book two, circumstances as they are. Taking men as they are necessitates that Rousseau consider a manner of arriving at the common good whilst assuming the members of the political association to be motivated by their own particular interest: this is "la volonté de tous" rather than "la volonté générale."⁵⁰ As to the circumstances in which reform of a state's constitution might be undertaken, Rousseau specifies clearly those circumstances in which a good constitution can be realised, thus making the point that the more favourable the existing conditions, the greater the degree of perfection in political institutions. It is

49 Vaughan says that in place of the "abstract principles of the speculative treatise", Rousseau has substituted "an appeal to outward circumstance and historical precedent which might have come from Montesquieu or Burke." Thus he concludes that "... Rousseau now stands at the opposite point of the compass from that at which he started." The Political Writings of Rousseau, I, 81. That there is such a major disjunction in Rousseau's political thought does not now find general acceptance among commentators, although it has been echoed in other works. Kingsley Martin, for example, comments of Rousseau's political writings that therein "two strands lie side by side: on one page we are dealing with absolutes and on the next making compromises and exceptions which seemed to undermine his most cherished principles." French Liberal Thought in the Eighteenth Century, 3rd ed. (1929; rpt. New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 208.

50 Contrat Social, O.C. III, 371.

fundamental to his political thinking, therefore, that the "legislator" frame a system of legislation in accordance with the existing institutions and the traditions of the particular state:

Comme avant d'élever un grand édifice l'architecte observe et sonde le sol, pour voir s'il en peut soutenir le poids, le sage instituer ne commence pas par rédiger de bonnes loix en elles-mêmes, mais il examine auparavant si le peuple auquel il les destine est propre à les supporter. 51

Rousseau does not, then, start off with absolute and abstract principles which become compromised as the Contrat Social progresses. His aim, sustained throughout, is to establish principles of political right which can be approached in those states where circumstances permit, principles absolute in themselves but entirely relative in their application.⁵²

Rousseau's general attitude towards the practical application of his ideas can be illustrated by his comments in correspondance to certain notables who were interested in applying his educational principles as outlined in the Emile. To the Abbé Madyieu, Rousseau remarks that whilst his system demands an "all or nothing" approach, nevertheless:

Ce que j'appelle tout, n'est pas de suivre servilement mes idées; au contraire c'est souvent de les corriger; mais de s'attacher aux principes et d'en suivre exactement les conséquences, avec les modifications qu'exige necessairement toute application particuliere. 53

51 Ibid., 384-85.

52 Marcel Raymond has commented in his introduction to Rousseau's writings on education and ethics in the fourth volume of the Pléiade that the Contrat Social shows us a "cité introuvable, mais en fonction de laquelle on appréciera la valeur, le degré de justice, des cité terrestres. Qu'on l'interrogeât sur la façon de gouverner et d'éduquer les Corses ou les Polonais, Rousseau sut tenir un compte exacte de la réalité et de ses contraintes." O.C. IV, XII.

53 28 February 1770, Correspondance, XXXVII, 309.

Earlier, in correspondance with the Prince of Wurtemberg, Rousseau had addressed himself to the difficulties inevitably encountered by the Prince, anxious to fulfil the duties of fatherhood and yet ill fitted to do so in his elevated station. Were he in such a position, Rousseau says,

Je commencerois donc par me dire: Il ne faut pas vouloir des choses contradictoires. Il ne faut pas être et n'être pas. La difficulté que je veux vaincre est inhérente à la chose. Si l'état de la chose ne peut changer il faut que la difficulté reste. Je dois sentir que je n'obtiendrai pas tout ce que je veux mais n'importe, ne décourageons point. De tout ce qui est bien je ferai tout ce qui est possible. Mon zèle et ma vertu répondent. Une partie de la sagesse est de porter le joug de la nécessité. Quand le sage fait le reste il a tout fait. 54

Both of these comments illustrate well Rousseau's view that the function of principles, whether educational or principles of political right, is to provide not only a standard for judgment but a guide to action - action, however, which can only be productive if there is an acceptance of that which, in history and circumstance, cannot be changed.

It remains to be considered how likely Rousseau thought it that his political principles would find application, and in what light he viewed the future. In an interesting comment in a fragment which it is believed was to form part of a preface to the Contrat Social Rousseau expresses the hope that his ideas might one day influence a statesman who has genuine concern for his people (a rare enough breed, by his own admission):

J'aime à me flatter qu'un jour quelque homme d'Etat sera citoyen, qu'il ne changera point les choses uniquement pour faire autrement que son prédécesseur, mais pour faire en sorte qu'elles aillent mieux, qu'il n'aura point sans cesse le bonheur public à la bouche, mais qu'il aura un peu dans le coeur . . . qu'il fera servir son autorité à établir le bonheur des peuples. Que par un heureux hazard il jettera les yeux sur ce livre, que mes idées informes lui en feront

naître de plus utiles, qu'il travaillera à rendre les hommes meilleurs ou plus heureux et que j'y aurai peut-être contribué en quelque chose. Cette chimère m'a mis la plume à la main. . . ." 55

This quotation serves to illustrate the intensity with which Rousseau believed himself to be working for the public good, but the final sentence highlights also the low level of his expectations. He recognises that there are not very many situations in which his ideas can be applied, due to the widespread degeneracy of men and institutions, and even fewer individuals who are prepared to heed his advice. Nevertheless Rousseau is by no means fatalistic or despairing. What optimism he has is based on the belief that there is no fixed "human nature": whilst men have certain natural characteristics in common, their personality and conduct is almost infinitely malleable. History demonstrated to Rousseau that even in the most adverse of circumstances, an individual could distinguish himself by a commitment to truth or service to his fellow men, or that a community could demonstrate the meaning of citizenship. Whilst the ideas of justice and virtue are kept alive, whilst men are not allowed to forget what they might be, the possibility of improvement must exist. The task of the homme de bien - Rousseau counted himself and the Abbé de Saint-Pierre as such - is to nourish these ideas and to display them to best advantage, whether in writing or by living example. Hence the link in Rousseau's mind between the principles he elaborated in his works and the modest and self-sufficient way in which he determined, from the mid 1750's onwards, to live his life.⁵⁶

55 O.C. III, 474.

56 In casting himself as un homme de bien Rousseau was stressing the goodness of his natural inclinations rather than his capacity for virtue, which he admitted was limited. He says frankly in the Réveries du Promeneur solitaire that "Dès que mon devoir et mon

Linking the names of Rousseau and the Abbé de Saint-Pierre serves to underline their position as moralists, but it also demonstrates a contrast which shows the limits to Rousseau's optimism. As will be explained fully in chapter 5, the Abbé was very much a man of the Enlightenment in his sincere belief that the application of increased knowledge to human affairs would bring about a gradual progress in the condition of mankind. This he called the progress of "universal reason" and he doubted not that in due course it would bring an end to war as well as giving rise to forms of government tempered with wisdom and humanity.⁵⁷ Rousseau ridicules this view, which he feels to be based on the assumption that the appeal to reason is enough to convince men of the error of their ways. From his perspective, human passions once awakened are not so easily tamed. Unlike the Abbé, then, Rousseau does not subscribe to the idea of progress, seeing the future essentially as a gloomier version of the past. Gloomier, because when the world was more "youthful", the possibilities for improvement were that much greater. What the future offers, in Rousseau's eyes, is not the prospect of a universal movement towards a more rational and just world, but isolated opportunities for improvement which can and must be seized. This is not the vision of the "age of optimism" but is more akin to the classical view of history as an endless cycle of growth and decay. Rousseau compares the state to the physical being of man, in

56 coeur étoient en contradiction le premier eut rarement le victoire . . . agir contre mon penchant me fut toujours impossible." O.C. I, 1053. He had expressed the same sentiment earlier in a letter to the Abbé de Carondelet: "Heureux celui qui se contenant d'être homme de bien S'est mis dans une position à n'avoir jamais besoin d'être vertueux." 6 January 1764, Correspondance, XIX, 13.

57 See below, ch. 5, pp. 150-53.

that it commences to die from the moment of its birth. The most we can hope for is to prolong its life by giving it the best constitution possible: "Le mieux constitué finira, mais plus tard qu'un autre. . . ." After all, "Si Sparte et Rome ont péri, quel Etat peut espérer de durer toujours?"⁵⁸

In considering Rousseau's stance on the matter of social and political change it is crucial to emphasise his view that once corrupt, there is little or nothing that can be done to redeem either individual or state. All moral action is thus essentially preventive, as can be seen most clearly in the case of Emile. In the Contrat Social Rousseau comments that:

Les Peuples ainsi que les hommes ne sont dociles que dans leur jeunesse, ils deviennent incorrigibles en vieillissant; quand une fois les coutumes sont établies et les préjugés enracinés, c'est une entreprise dangereuse et vaine de vouloir les réformer. . . . 59

It is sometimes possible for a state, after being consumed by civil war, to be "born again from its own ashes", but this is an exceptional circumstance. In general, to attempt reform of a corrupt state is not only to face failure, but to risk increasing the sum of human misery by creating fruitless turmoil. Consequently, Rousseau is at pains to warn those states which have not yet degenerated too far of their peril: "Peuples libres, souvenez-vous de cette maxime: On peut acquérir la liberté; mais on ne la recouvre jamais."⁶⁰ Rousseau

58 Contrat Social, O.C. III, 424. Compare Montesquieu's comment on England that "Comme toutes les choses humaines ont une fin, l'Etat dont nous parlons perdra sa liberté, il périra. Rome, Lacédémone et Carthage ont bien péri." Charles-Louis de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu, L'Esprit des Lois (Paris: le club français du livre, 1967), p. 200. Rousseau's account of the passage from "birth" to "death" of the state in the second Discours and the Contrat Social bears a strong similarity to Montesquieu's.

59 O.C. III, 385.

60 Ibid.

expresses the object of his political writings most clearly in the Dialogues; it was, he said, not

de ramener les peuples nombreux ni les grands Etats à leur première simplicité, mais seulement d'arrêter s'il étoit possible le progrès de ceux dont la petitesse et la situation les ont préservés d'une marche aussi rapide vers la perfection de la société et vers la détérioration de l'espèce. 61

He had worked, therefore, specifically for "sa patrie et pour les petits Etats constitués comme elle" - in other words for Geneva and other small states of the "republican" kind.⁶² The mention of size is by no means accidental, but is a central feature of Rousseau's political thought, for only a small state can have a republican constitution.

It is possible now to see why it would be inaccurate to interpret Rousseau's moralism as embodying an optimism for the future founded in the concept of rational will, whether it be the "universal reason" of Saint-Pierre or the "categorical imperative" as later formulated by Kant. Virtue is indeed the end of man, if all the potentiality latent in him is to be realised, but it is not the end of mankind in the unfolding of human history. Jouvenel's characterisation of Rousseau as the "pessimistic evolutionist" is thus a suitable one, although we should pay due heed to Cassirer's point that he desired to prevent the "spiritual and ethical decay" symbolised by a passive acceptance of man's degenerate condition. Thus Shklar has misinterpreted

61 O.C. I, 935. What Rousseau means by the "perfection of society" is essentially the perfection of artifice at the expense of nature, such that progress in the arts and sciences, advances in the economic and technological spheres, are developments which serve to hasten the degeneration of "the species" - mankind as a moral being. Rousseau had already emphasised in one of his earlier works that as a "vicious" people never returns to virtue, "il ne s'agit pas de rendre bons ceux qui ne le sont plus, mais de conserver tels ceux qui ont le bonheur de l'être." Narcisse, ou l'Amant de lui-même, O.C. II, 972.

62 Rousseau Juge de Jean Jaques, O.C. I, 935.

Rousseau in characterising him as a "utopist". Far from making "passivity" his central principle, he demonstrated the importance of moral action wherever possible, however severe the constraints upon effective solutions to man's predicament. There is no "Golden Age" towards which they can direct their hopes, but men must nevertheless make the most of the opportunities for moral regeneration which present themselves, whether this means a withdrawal from society or joining with others in pursuance of the goal of citizenship.

In his novel La Nouvelle Héloïse, Rousseau offers a further possible situation in which the moral life might be achieved, one in which his commitment to the notion of a simple and self-sufficient life is again clearly demonstrated. Here the family group is the heart of a small community in which there no longer exists that rift between being and seeming, and which cares nothing for the complex and corrupting world beyond. Whilst this does not indicate that Rousseau envisaged some kind of "confederation" between virtuous family groups as the key to a better social order, as Jean Chateau has asserted,⁶³ it underlines his belief that the moral life is only possible in the context of a community which is both self-supporting and which provides an alternative, in the identification of self with the group, to that most destructive of passions, amour-propre. In this imaginative context Rousseau can more readily depict the attainment of a perfect harmony, which is also the end of political association: in the small family group everyone's conduct "est toujours franche et ouverte, parce qu' ils n'ont pas peur que leurs actions démentent leurs discours."⁶⁴

63 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, sa philosophie de l'éducation (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1962), p. 240.

64 La Nouvelle Héloïse, O.C. II, 468.

Starobinski has used the term "transparence" to describe the condition towards which Rousseau's thinking was directed, by which he means that Rousseau sought to render the individual whole, at one with himself and his surroundings, whether human or natural: "Si la transparence se realise dans la volonté générale, il faut préférer l'univers social; si elle ne peut s'accomplir que dans la vie solitaire, il faut préférer la vie solitaire."⁶⁵ Personally, Rousseau valued the solitary life as the only way in which he, because denied the role of citizen, could find some purity of being and a measure of contentment.⁶⁶ Increasingly though, painfully aware of this solitude as his unhappy life neared its end, he looked beyond this life to some solace in the next. In the Dialogues he portrayed his writings as "les méditations

65 Starobinski, La transparence et l'obstacle, p. 62. Nevertheless, Starobinski goes on to comment that "Une transparence solitaire reste une transparence fragmentaire. . . ."

66 Rousseau was in fact more than a little ambiguous as to whether solitude was as desirable as citizenship or a mere second best for one unable to fulfil the duties of citizenship. Rousseau could have returned as a "citizen of Geneva" long before he gained notoriety there with the burning of the Contrat Social and the Emile. As it was he remained rootless, confiding to Malesherbes some six months before the banning of his works that whilst "je haisse souverainement l'injustice et la mechanceté, cette passion n'est pas assez dominante pour me déterminer seule à fuir la société des hommes, si j'avois en les quittant quelque grand sacrifice à faire. Non, mon motif est moins noble et plus pres de moi. Je suis né avec un amour naturel pour la solitude qui n'a fait qu'augmenter à mesure que j'ai mieux connu les hommes." Lettres à Malesherbes, O.C. I, 1131. Fourteen years later, however, and only two years before his death, Rousseau sounded a very different note in the Rêveries du Promeneur solitaire: "Me voici donc seul sur la terre, n'ayant plus de frere, de prochain, d'ami, de société que moi-même. Le plus sociable et le plus aimant des humains en a été proscrit par un accord unanime." O.C. I, 995.

d'un solitaire";⁶⁷ but cut off as he felt from the rest of humanity, and tortured as he was by the sense of injustice which had not only coloured his works but blighted his own life, he maintained his belief in the natural goodness of man, and his commitment to the principles of equality and freedom realisable only within a close community. In solitude, or in this common life, lie man's only hopes of ceasing to thwart his nature, of finding for a time peace within himself and peace with his fellows.

67 Rousseau Juge de Jean Jaques, O.C. I, 932.

CHAPTER 2

FROM STATE OF NATURE TO STATE OF WAR

Rousseau's point of reference in his speculation on politics is the essential nature of man. The moral degradation of mankind, of which war is the prime manifestation, represents the culmination of a long development away from this "nature". As Rousseau puts it:

L'homme est naturellement pacifique et craintif, au moindre danger son premier mouvement est de fuir; il ne s'aguerrit qu'à force d'habitude et d'expérience. L'honneur, l'intérêt, les préjugés, la vengeance, toutes les passions qui peuvent lui faire braver les périls et la mort, sont loin de lui dans l'état de nature. Ce n'est qu'après avoir fait société avec quelque homme qu'il se détermine à en attaquer un autre; et il ne devient soldat qu'après avoir été citoyen. 1

It is the notion of the "state of nature" which, as Eric Weil has put it, provides Rousseau with a "regulative concept"² which serves as a measure by which to judge of the "civilised" condition, and also as a point of departure for a philosophy of history accounting for man's decline. It is to the Discours sur l'inégalité that we must turn for Rousseau's explanation of the "fall" of mankind from an original state of goodness and innocence. The Discours perhaps more than any other of his works makes it apparent that, in the words of Stanley Hoffman, ". . . Rousseau's trenchant critique of world politics and his 'model' or image of states in conflict derive from his most fundamental notions about man and society."³ Rousseau attempts to demonstrate how it is that man, whose nature inclines him to peace and passivity, has come to engage in "les Guerres Nationales, les Batailles, les meurtres, les

1 L'Etat de guerre, O.C. III, 601-2.

2 The term "concept régulateur" is used by Eric Weil in "J.-J. Rousseau et sa Politique," Critique, 8, no. 56 (Jan. 1952), 13.

3 The State of War, p. 56.

represailles, qui font fremir la Nature et choquent la raison. . . ."⁴

The state of nature

In the Discours sur l'inégalité Rousseau is not presenting us with a history of man's path to "civilisation", but with a philosophy of history intended to account in the broadest terms for the development of human society. In other words Rousseau is not concerned with determining the precise details of man's past, by examining actual historical events; his avowed task, and one which he felt to be peculiarly his own, is "éclaircir la Nature des choses. . . ."⁵ In order to achieve this Rousseau starts with, as Starobinski puts it, the "degré zéro"⁶ of the "state of nature": the idea of man as he is in essence, without the manifold changes which society has worked upon him. This state, Rousseau explains, is a condition "qui n'existe plus, qui n'a peut-être point existé, qui probablement n'existera jamais " Nevertheless, he continues, it is necessary to have true ideas of it "pour bien juger de nôtre état présent."⁷ It is in this

4 Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C. III, 178-79.

5 Ibid., 133. Jean Starobinski has commented of the second Discours that it constitutes "une philosophie de l'histoire et fonde la sociologie historique moderne. . . ." "Du Discours de l'inégalité au Contrat Social," Etudes sur le Contrat Social de Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Actes des journées d'étude tenues à Dijon les 3, 4, 5, et 6 mai 1962 (Paris: Société des Belles Lettres, 1964), p. 99.

6 "L'état de nature, nous dit Rousseau, n'a peut-être jamais existé. Soit. Il faut néanmoins le poser par hypothèse, car on ne peut mesurer les distances en histoire qu'à la condition d'avoir préalablement déterminé un 'degré zéro'." Introduction to Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C. III, LVIII.

7 Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C. III, 123. This comment is paralleled by Rousseau's assertion in the Emile that "il faut savoir ce qui doit être pour bien juger de ce qui est." O.C. IV, 836-37.

sense that the state of nature can be seen as a regulative concept, by reference to which we are enabled to pass judgment on man's present condition. The actual origins of mankind must remain conjectural, and Rousseau likens his procedure to that of the "physicist" who forms hypotheses about the formation of the world - his reasonings too are "hypothétiques et conditionnels. . . ." ⁸ His method is to strip man "de toutes les facultés artificielles, qu'il n'a pu acquérir que par de longs progrès. . . ." He wants to consider man, in short, "tel qu'il a dû sortir des mains de la Nature. . . ." ⁹ From this initial premise - a natural man who is solitary and self-sufficient - Rousseau goes on to relate the stages of man's development as they follow logically from this premise. It should be said that Rousseau is by no means averse to the use of "facts" where they support his argument; hence the many, often extensive footnotes to the text of the Discours which make use of material gathered by contemporary voyagers on the condition of "primitive" peoples. However, Rousseau's argument stands without these, and he is not concerned with the empirical proof of his reasonings in historical or contemporary data. For the "proof" that his account of man's development has penetrated to the nature of things is easily found if men will only seek it in the right place: it lies in the contrast between the essential goodness which still resides in every heart and the observable wickedness of men's conduct.

On reading the Discours sur l'inégalité one cannot fail to be struck by the vividness of Rousseau's description of the state of nature. This bears testimony to the importance, in his view, of ascertaining the true nature of things beneath the veils of appearance.

8 Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C. III, 133.

9 Ibid., 134.

He remarks that: "Si je me suis étendu si longtemps sur la supposition de cette condition primitive, c'est qu'ayant d'anciennes erreurs et des préjugés invétérés à détruire, j'ai cru devoir creuser jusqu'à la racine. . . ." ¹⁰ Moreover, Rousseau depicts the natural state with such enthusiasm because it represents for him a harmonious order where, in stark contrast to the condition of "civilized" man, individuals live at one with themselves and their surroundings. The errors and prejudices which Rousseau wishes to destroy are those mistaken conceptions of the state of nature put forward by his predecessors. Whilst he has not rejected all elements of the notion of the natural state as depicted by Grotius and Pufendorf, Hobbes and Locke respectively, his account has an originality which bears the stamp of his desire to "prove" the goodness of man and to establish the philosophical foundation for political equality within the political order. Pufendorf, as one of the first authors Rousseau tackled in the early stages of his self-directed education, provided stimulus to the development of his own conception of the state of nature, but not a picture of the natural condition which he could adopt without modification. Pufendorf had considered it possible to conceive the natural state as a condition not only opposed to the civil state, but as one opposed also to "a life improved by the industry of men." ¹¹ Pufendorf had described man in this imagined condition as follows:

A dumb and ignoble creature, with no power other than to dig up plants and roots, to slake his thirst at any spring, river, or pool he may happen upon, to crawl into caves so as to avoid the inclemency of the weather, to cover his body with moss or grass, to pass the time in an intolerable

10 Ibid., 160.

11 Samuel von Pufendorf, On the Duty of Man and Citizen, trans. Frank Gardner Moore, The Classics of International Law, ed. James Brown Scott, No. 10 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1927), p. 89.

inactivity, to tremble at every sound or at the passing of another animal, and finally to perish of hunger and cold or to be torn to pieces by some wild beast. 12

As Morel has it, "Cette peinture a servi de point de départ à celle de Rousseau."¹³ For despite the unfavourable light in which Pufendorf depicts this imagined state, his description has many features which were taken up by Rousseau and given a very different turn. First, man thus conceived, in isolation from others of his own kind, is little more than an animal (for Rousseau neither ignoble nor noble). Secondly, he subsists merely by gathering such foodstuffs as come to hand, without working on and thereby transforming his environment; as a consequence much of his time is passed in idleness. And finally, man in such a state is timid rather than aggressive.

While Rousseau adopts these features of Pufendorf's characterisation, he sees them as making for a happy state, not a miserable one. In this, his picture of the state of nature is similar to that of Lucretius, quoted at some length by Pufendorf:

But the race of men was much hardier then in the fields, as was seemly for a race born of the hard earth. What sun and rains had brought to birth, what earth had created unasked, such gift was enough to appease their hearts. Among oaks laden with acorns they would refresh their bodies for the most part. But to slake their thirst streams and springs summoned them. 14

Similarly, Rousseau sees natural man "se rassasiant sous un chesne, se désalterant au premier Ruisseau, trouvant son lit au pied du même

12 On the Law of Nature and Nations, trans. C.H. Oldfather and W.A. Oldfather, The Classics of International Law, No. 17 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 152.

13 Jean Morel, "Recherches sur les sources du Discours de l'inégalité," Annales de la Société Jean-Jacques Rousseau, V (1909), 163.

14 On the Law of Nature and Nations, p. 155.

arbre qui lui a fourni son repas, et voilà ses besoins satisfaits."¹⁵

The poetic sentiment evident in both descriptions provides a clear contrast to the wretchedness of the solitary state as imagined by Pufendorf; and indeed, throughout the second Discours Rousseau waxes lyrical on the plenitude of the state of nature. Rousseau's purpose in all this is clear: natural man depicted thus, whose wants are few and easily satisfied, provides a striking contrast to the "civilized" individual whose wants are boundless and who knows no contentment.

When Rousseau criticises Pufendorf for portraying man in the hypothetical state of nature as "toujours tremblant, et prêt à fuir au moindre bruit que le frappe",¹⁶ therefore, he is not suggesting that man is naturally bold and aggressive, but merely that he is possessed of sufficient resourcefulness to hold his own in the natural environment. He is a timid creature, but will, generally, only be fearful of things he does not know; in familiar surroundings he can cope very adequately with whatever dangers may arise.¹⁷ Pufendorf comes in for heavier attack in the Discours, as does Grotius, for his notion of natural sociability, which, despite his apprehension of the possibility of conceiving the state of nature as a solitary state, Pufendorf believed to be necessary as the foundation of natural law. Rousseau considers that both Grotius and Pufendorf make the error of ascribing to natural man ideas of right and justice which are in his

15 Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C. III, 135. Rousseau paints a similar picture in his Essai sur l'origine des langues, a work not yet included in the Pléiade edition of the complete works.

16 Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C. III, 136.

17 "En toute chose l'habitude tue l'imagination, il n'y a que les objets nouveaux qui la réveillent." Emile, O.C. IV, 384. Rousseau suggests that the child should early on become accustomed to encountering strange objects and creatures so that he learns not to fear them.

view only applicable in the civil state. Indeed, he comments scathingly, the moderns, in their disputes on what constitutes natural law, have in the end established it on such metaphysical principles that we must assume natural man, conscious of his submission to such a law, to be "un très grand raisonneur et un profond Metaphisicien."¹⁸ Rousseau had in any case undermined the foundation of natural law as conceived by Grotius and Pufendorf by rejecting the premise of natural sociability, substituting "deux principes antérieurs à la raison"¹⁹ which do not depend for their operation on societal relations. In stressing the asocial character of the natural state, Rousseau is far closer to Hobbes than to any other writer, whilst firmly rejecting his conclusions. For Hobbes, the precepts of natural law oblige only in foro interno in the state of nature and are no counterweight to the overwhelming drive for self-preservation and for the acquisition of material resources which bring men into conflict with one another.²⁰ In the ceaseless struggle over limited resources which constitutes the natural state, it is the natural right of every man to those goods which he can by his own efforts acquire that outweighs the dictates of reason. Add to this the "natural proclivity of men, to hurt each other, which they derive from their passions", and the "war of all men against all men" is a logical conclusion.²¹

18 Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C. III, 125.

19 Ibid., 125-26.

20 "We must therefore conclude, that the law of nature doth always and everywhere oblige in the internal court, or that of conscience; but not always in the external court, but then only when it may be done with safety." Thomas Hobbes, Man and Citizen, ed. Bernard Gert (New York: Doubleday, 1972), p. 149. This is Hobbes' own translation of the work.

21 Ibid., p. 117-18.

Faced with this "horrible system"²² developed by Hobbes and unable to accept the alternative principle of natural sociability, Rousseau proceeded to construct his own interpretation of the natural state. All the errors of his predecessors, he remarks, can be traced to a single source: whilst every one of them saw the necessity of going back to a state of nature, not one actually managed to get there. They have mistakenly "transporté à l'état de Nature, des idées qu'ils avoient prises dans la société; Ils parloient de l'Homme Sauvage et ils peignoient l'homme Civil."²³ It is interesting to note that Montesquieu levels precisely this criticism at Hobbes in L'Esprit des Lois, saying of the latter's assertion that men are naturally in a state of war "Mais on ne sent pas que l'on attribue aux hommes, avant l'établissement des sociétés, ce qui ne peut leur arriver qu'après cet établissement, qui leur fait trouver des motifs pour s'attaquer et pour se défendre."²⁴ Montesquieu had held that the state of nature should be conceived as a peaceful condition; but as soon as men enter into society, they lose the sense of their frailty. Equality then disappears and the state of war commences. Rousseau's account of the course of man's development in the Discours sur l'inégalité is very similar, although he chooses to emphasise the role of property in the genesis and continuance of social conflict. A closer look at Rousseau's conception of the natural condition will reveal the manner in which he explains the transformation of man from an asocial and peaceable being to one in perpetual conflict with his fellows.

22 L'Etat de guerre, O.C. III, 610.

23 Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C. III, 132.

24 L'Esprit des Lois, p. 13.

For Rousseau it is of vital importance that every effort be made to distinguish what is "original" from what is "artificial" in the character of man: "semblable à la statue de Glaucus que le tems, la mer et les orages avoient tellement défigurée, qu'elle ressembloit moins à un Dieu qu'à une Bête féroce",²⁵ so the human soul has been so altered in society that it is hardly recognizable. It was noted in the previous chapter that Rousseau arrives at his notion of natural man by a process of introspection - the "peintre et l'apologiste de la nature" draws his model from his own heart.²⁶ By this method, Rousseau arrives at a picture of natural man as a simple and limited creature, with neither the propensity to reason and to socialise supposed by the natural lawists, nor driven by the lively passions described by Hobbes. Leading an entirely solitary life, he is unconscious of his fellow men and of the morrow: he lives, as Starobinski has aptly said, in a state of immediacy, in complete harmony with the natural world.²⁷

The isolation and self-sufficiency of man in the state of nature is largely a function of the equilibrium which prevails between individuals and natural resources. Men's needs are naturally limited, and while their numbers remain small, resources are plentiful. In such a condition men have no stimulus to progress beyond their primitive simplicity, for their wants and powers are in perfect proportion. No individual desires what he cannot have, nor stands in need of another's help to procure the necessities of life. It is only when new variables are introduced into this situation that the seeds of perfectibility, which Rousseau admits distinguish man from the animals, begin to

25 Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C. III, 122.

26 Rousseau Juge de Jean Jaques, O.C. I, 936.

27 "L'homme ne sort pas de lui-même, il ne sort pas de l'instant présent; en un mot, il vit dans l'immédiat." La transparence et l'obstacle, p. 40.

germinate and grow. It is a curious feature of Rousseau's thought that he sees the potentiality for development as an integral part of man's being, and yet holds that it was "accidental" that this potential came to be realised. This paradox will be examined further below, but for the moment it suffices to note that its basis is Rousseau's belief that the natural state is a happy condition which man would not have left by an act of will; he has to be in a sense forced to progress by a change in the balance between the individual and his means of subsistence. In the first draft of the Contrat Social, Rousseau refers to the breakdown of this equilibrium: "La force de l'homme est tellement proportionnée à ses besoins naturels et à son état primitif, que pour peu que cet état change et que ses besoins augmentent, l'assistance de ses semblables lui devient nécessaire. . . ."28

The state of nature is then a peaceful condition - and it is important to note that the absence of conflict amongst men in this state is not simply a function of their isolation. For however solitary a life Rousseau may have envisaged as natural for mankind, he was nevertheless forced to concede that individuals must come together for the purposes of procreation, and that more than likely they will also, on occasion, meet in pursuit of their sustenance. What will be the nature of these fleeting contacts, and how does Rousseau avoid the Hobbesian assumption of inevitable conflict amongst men who are not bound by ties of kinship and shared customs? In fact Rousseau finds himself in agreement with Hobbes that concern with self-preservation is the primary motivation of man; the error of the English philosopher, however, is to see in this simple motivation "une multitude de passions" which are the work of society and not of nature.²⁹ Rousseau terms this

28 O.C. III, 281-82.

29 Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C. III, 153.

essential drive amour de soi, and defines it as "un sentiment naturel" common to animals as well as to man, inclining them towards their own preservation. It must be clearly distinguished from amour-propre, which is "un sentiment relatif, factice," and which is born in society; Hobbes has mistakenly seen this as a characteristic of man in the natural state.³⁰ Amour de soi is simply a part of man's instinctual apparatus, necessary to him as a physical being beset by dangers to his life and health: it does not lead men to act aggressively towards one another. Thus on the occasions that individuals come into competition for a particular resource (occasions which will, in Rousseau's opinion, be rare due to the abundance of natural resources), dispute would rarely give rise to violence. Prolonged conflict, Rousseau is at pains to emphasise, only occurs when man's pride (amour-propre) is awakened sufficiently to be injured; passion then becomes the source of endless quarrels. "Natural man" will never seek revenge, and will forget a dispute the moment it is over; not so "civilized" man. The same is true of disputes over the possession of a mate, which will not have violent consequences in the state of nature because here men are confined to the "physical" part of love, and have no settled relations. The "moral" part of love, which compares and singles out particular individuals over others, is again a "fictitious sentiment" and has no place in the natural state.³¹

Amour de soi is the primary motivation of man prior to the development of reason, but it is not the sole motivation of man in the state of nature. It is accompanied by another "principle" operating in the human soul which precedes the growth of reason and which marks

30 Ibid., 219.

31 Ibid., 158.

Rousseau's natural man out even more strongly from Hobbes'. This is pitié, or natural compassion, which serves to inspire in man "une répugnance naturelle à voir périr ou souffrir tout être sensible et principalement nos semblables."³² According to Rousseau this natural feeling is even evident in animals, which show disquiet at the sufferings of their kind; it is certainly not the product of reflection, which more often than not, in socialised man, serves to stifle pity for his fellows. "Reason" has turned man's mind back upon itself, dividing him from everything that might afflict him; thus he will ignore a fellow creature in distress, having argued a little with himself "pour empêcher la Nature qui se revolte en lui. . . ."³³ In the state of nature, however, pitié will be an active principle unaffected by such reasonings, and in this condition serves the place of "de Loix, de mœurs, et de vertu," moderating the operation of amour de soi.³⁴ With these two principles guiding their behaviour, men will automatically adhere to what Rousseau terms the "maxim of natural goodness", defined as follows: "Fais ton bien avec le moindre mal d'autrui qu'il est possible." This maxim, he says, is less perfect but more useful than "cette maxime sublime de justice raisonnée; Fais à autrui comme tu

32 Ibid., 126.

33 Ibid., 156. John Charvet has given an interesting account of Rousseau's approach to these problems, and of his attempt to reconcile the problem of man and society generally, in The Social Problem in the Philosophy of Rousseau (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974.)

34 Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C. III, 156.

veux qu'on te fasse. . . .³⁵ The maxim of "rational justice", which ought to characterise men's conduct in the civil state, is fine indeed, but since it is scorned by the majority of men Rousseau cannot help but regret the loss of that negative maxim which although less sublime, at least has an application in the natural state. In society, needless to say, even this maxim ceases to guide men because they are drawn away from nature and into the pursuit of self-advancement.

Having rejected the traditional notion of natural law, Rousseau has substituted his two "principles" which are grounded not in "right reason", but in feeling. This is not to say that Rousseau discards reason altogether in his moral thinking, but he is quite sure that it has no "natural" place as a guarantee of man's goodness. Reason as a guide to conduct comes into its own in the well ordered society, and in this context it is very important, but even so virtue would be unattainable without that other guide, conscience, which again derives from feeling.³⁶ There has been some dispute as to whether Rousseau rejected wholesale the notion of natural law; Vaughan, for instance,

35 Ibid. It is interesting to compare a comment of the Abbé de Saint-Pierre's regarding the "laws" which should govern the behaviour of states in their relations with one another. He asserts that "le premier precepte de la raizon universelle pour vivre en societé c'est, ne faites point de mal a votre voisin comme vous ne voudriez pas qu'il vous en fit. C'est ne traitez pas plus mal les autres que vous voudriez en ete traité." Charles Castel, abbé de Saint-Pierre, "Principes du droit naturel entre Souverains," Bibliothèque de la Ville de Neuchâtel MS 182.

36 The Savoyard priest poses a rhetorical question to Emile: has not God given man "la conscience pour aimer le bien, la raison pour le connoître, la liberté pour le choisir?" O.C. IV, 605. Robert Derathé has given a comprehensive account of the relationship between reason and conscience in Rousseau's thought in Le rationalisme de Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1948).

holds that he did, but more recent commentators, Derathé included, have taken Rousseau's two principles, operative in the state of nature, as his own variant of the natural law position.³⁷ We have seen that what Rousseau is most concerned to counter in the thought of the natural lawists is their stress on reason and sociability as the foundation of natural law as an arbiter of conduct. On the contrary, holds Rousseau, from the two principles of amour de soi and pitié, without it being necessary to introduce the notion of sociability, all "les règles du droit naturel" are derived.³⁸ Rousseau uses the term "right" (droit) rather than "law" (loi) deliberately since it is in the nature of law that "la volonté de celui qu'elle oblige puisse s'y soumettre avec connoissance. . . ."³⁹ Clearly natural man, as conceived by Rousseau, could not be conscious of his submission to natural law and able thereby to modify his actions towards his fellows. The behaviour of man in the state of nature, in Rousseau's view, is governed by feelings alone, equivalent to instinct in the animal world. However, because these feelings spring directly from nature, apply to all beings and make for a harmonious order, he considers it appropriate to see them as the foundation for "natural right".⁴⁰ Rousseau is evidently still

37 Vaughan, The Political Writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, I, 16-17. Derathé's refutation is to be found in his Rousseau et la science politique de son temps, pp. 151-171. In addition, there is a penetrating account of this problem in Franz Haymann, "La loi naturelle dans la philosophie politique de J.-J. Rousseau," Annales de la Société Jean-Jacques Rousseau, XXX (1943-1945), 65-110.

38 Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C. III, 126.

39 Ibid., 125.

40 As Starobinski comments, "Ces 'principes antérieurs à la raison' ne sont pas des impératifs extérieurs; ce sont des 'impulsions intérieures', immanentes à la créature, et déposées en elle par la nature (ou par 'l'auteur de la nature'). Le droit naturel est spontanément vécu par l'homme naturel." Notes, O.C. III, 1299. Even animals partake of natural right because they have sensibilité; Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C. III, 125.

within the natural law tradition here, even though he has moved a long way from the harmonious order dependent upon reason and sociability as conceived by Pufendorf and Locke. Men are guided, in their contacts with other beings, by principles which make for peace and order, and which ultimately (although Rousseau does not make this evident in the second Discours) are ordained by the benevolent wisdom of God.⁴¹ With the development of social relations and the simultaneous growth of reason, nature, and this includes the rules of natural right, is "suppressed". Men must then, with the aid of reason, establish these rules "sur d'autres fondemens"⁴² if they are to live peaceably together: the rational foundation of moral conduct which for Rousseau can only be apprehended when convention has replaced nature, and which, as some commentators have emphasised, prefigures the "moral law" of Kant. In Rousseau's later works he makes it clear that the foundations of a harmonious order amongst men are immanent within the world conceived as the divine creation, and here he comes much closer to the natural law school than in his earlier writings, where he is more concerned to destroy the old "prejudices": " . . . les lois éternelles de la nature et de l'ordre existent. Elles tiennent lieu de loi positive au sage; elles sont écrites au fond de son coeur par la conscience et par la raison; c'est à celles-là qu'il doit asservir pour être libre. . . ."⁴³

⁴¹ The importance of the divine origin of right and justice is not evident in Rousseau's early works, probably due to the fact that these were written at the time when he was most influenced by his fellow Encyclopedists. However, as his thought develops we can see the increasing importance of the notion of a divine order, especially in the Emile.

⁴² Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C. III, 126.

⁴³ Emile, O.C. IV, 857.

Although Rousseau terms compassion the only "natural virtue"⁴⁴ it is, as we have seen, purely spontaneous and entails no element of obligation. Rousseau's primary concern in stressing the goodness of man's natural disposition is to refute Hobbes, and this is why he insists that "savages" must not be seen as bad merely because "ils ne savent pas ce que c'est qu'être bons; car ce n'est ni le développement des lumières, ni le frein de la Loi, mais le calme des passions, et l'ignorance du vice qui les empêche de mal faire. . . ."⁴⁵ The goodness of natural man is therefore perhaps best characterised as innocence, and the parallel with the Biblical account of Eden is of some validity. For men in the state of nature, like Adam and Eve before the fall, are part of a harmonious order ordained by God, in which their unmediated relation to their surroundings has not been broken by the awakening of consciousness. According to Rousseau, the fall of man is, in the moral sense, the corruption of amour de soi into amour-propre, so that he is no longer sufficient unto himself but depends on the praise and esteem of others; and this loss of innocence is, as will become clear below, intimately associated with man's loss of his material independence. We will see later these very characteristics reflected in the states system, where the equivalent of amour-propre and material dependence are the dominating features of states in their relations with one another. For the moment, let us pause to look more closely at the genesis of society and of the state, in order to see how man, naturally peaceably inclined, becomes "un furieux toujours prompt à tourmenter ses semblables. . . ."⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C. III, 154.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ L'Etat de guerre, O.C. III, 605.

The transition to society

The balance prevailing in the state of nature between men's needs and their ability to satisfy them is a very delicate one; the slightest change means that the balance will break down, and thus the material self-sufficiency of men is lost. According to Rousseau, this balance would have remained unbroken had nature continued to supply men with plentiful resources:

Supposez un printemps perpétuel sur la terre; supposez par tout de l'eau, du bétail, des paturage: supposez les hommes sortant des mains de la nature une fois dispersés parmi tout cela: je n'imagine pas comment ils auroient jamais renoncé à leur liberté primitive et quitté la vie isolée et pastorale si convenable à leur indolence naturelle. . . . 47

Man is therefore forced into contact with his fellows due to the pressure of circumstances, and his innate potential for development remains dormant until these circumstances work upon it. We are left with the paradox that whilst man is not naturally made for society, it is as the result of natural forces that he becomes a social being. As Durkheim expresses it:

Ce sont des causes naturelles qui, peu à peu, amènent l'homme à former des sociétés. Mais la société n'est pas pour cela chose naturelle, parce qu'elle n'est pas impliquée logiquement dans la nature de l'homme. L'homme n'était pas nécessité par sa constitution primitive à la vie sociale. Les causes qui ont donné naissance à cette dernière sont extérieurs à la nature humaine; elles sont d'ordre adventice. 48

A large part of the Discours sur l'inégalité is devoted to an account of the development from the peaceable and happy condition of the state of nature to the growth of social relations and thence to the formation of the body politic. Rousseau depicts this development as a very gradual movement, having criticised Hobbes for proceeding directly

47 Essai sur l'origine des langues, ed. Charles Porset (Paris: A.G. Nizet, 1970), pp. 107-109.

48 "Le Contrat Social de Rousseau," pp. 15-16.

from the state of nature to the birth of government without taking account of the time which must have elapsed before the concept of "government" could have had any real significance for men. As noted earlier, Rousseau's account amounts to a philosophy of history, and whilst he has made it clear that his reasonings are "hypothetical and conditional", it is quite obvious that he does have a developmental view of man's past which he feels is best explicated in these terms. In order to trace the roots of conflict amongst men it will be necessary to follow Rousseau in his description of the movement from state of nature to civil state, beginning with the initial breakdown in the balance between needs and available resources.

The earth is sadly not blessed with a "perpetual springtime" and conditions inevitably become less hospitable for natural man. "Des années stériles, des hyvers longs et rudes, des Etés brulans qui consument tout"⁴⁹ make it increasingly difficult for him to continue living in the isolated and indolent way to which he is accustomed. As these obstacles present themselves, so the isolation of the natural state begins to break down as it becomes necessary for men to compete for their means of subsistence: first with animals, and then with others of their own kind. This process is exacerbated by the increase in the human population, another "natural" development, in Rousseau's view. Gradually, men lose their primitive simplicity, cease to be mere gatherers and are forced into "une nouvelle industrie" - they learn the techniques of hunting and fishing.⁵⁰ As Starobinski comments, "L'homme oisif de l'origine sous l'instigation des circonstances extérieures,

49 Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C. III, 165.

50 Ibid.

découvre la nécessité et l'efficacité du travail."⁵¹

With this first step away from nature, which, it should be emphasised, is essentially a change in man's material circumstances, a parallel "moral", or psychological change occurs, even though men have not yet abandoned their solitary way of life. The "repeated relevance" of other beings to himself, whether of his own kind or not, leads man to begin that favourite pastime of the "civilized" individual, the making of comparisons. Thus concepts such as "great", "small", "strong" and so on begin to have a meaning, and from perceiving these differences in the beings around him as they relate to himself, it is but a short step to man's realization of his own superiority over the animals. "C'est ainsi que le premier regard qu'il porta sur lui-même, y produisit le premier mouvement d'orgueil. . . ."⁵² This is the dawning of self-consciousness, which is, for Rousseau, inevitably accompanied by the beginnings of the perversion of amour de soi into amour-propre. Man ceases to live entirely "within himself" and begins to know himself in the opinion of others.

I have emphasised that the crucial aspect, according to Rousseau, of the "fall" of man is his loss of independence and self-sufficiency, which changes him from a being who is whole and at one with himself to one incessantly torn by inner conflict; from one, moreover, who once indifferent to those around him now finds himself in constant need of his fellows and in perpetual conflict with them. It should be emphasised that the continuing loss of material self-sufficiency and the growth of amour-propre are, as it were, the two sides of the same coin. As man's relationship with the natural world alters, so he is

51 Introduction to Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C. III, LXII.

52 Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C. III, 166.

increasingly unable to support himself without the aid of other men, and forms ever closer ties with them. Thus does he become more and more dependent on the good opinion and praise of these others. In the process, appetites, both physical and psychological, are stimulated so that men have ever increasing "needs" and ever more dependence on their fellows in order to satisfy them;⁵³ the two factors become compounded, moreover, in that material wealth soon takes precedence as the best way of securing the esteem and service of others. The more dependent man becomes on his neighbours, then, the more his dependency grows so as to dominate his whole being: greed and vanity usurp the simple motivations of the natural state and all semblance of peace and order is lost. But this is to anticipate, and in this first stage of the movement away from nature we can observe merely the initial signs of this degeneration, the beginning of that complex interplay between material and "moral" factors which, it will become evident below, is equally important in conflict of a more institutionalised kind, between those organised associations of men which mark the farthest point away from the natural state of man.

Men's first advances in the way in which they procure their subsistence lead to others, and they gradually become more inventive and industrious. A "first revolution" comes about when men begin to build huts and to associate in families, a move which is inevitable once their original isolation has passed. With this an elementary form of property is introduced, the source of "biens des querelles et de

53 These are "needs" which know no bounds because they are entirely artificial. Marx later identified this as a characteristic of capitalist society, and it is a theme which has more recently figured prominently in the writings of Herbert Marcuse.

Combats."⁵⁴ The institution of property plays a crucial role in Rousseau's account of conflict amongst men, and the celebrated comment which opens the second part of the Discours illustrates the force of his conviction:

Le premier qui ayant enclos un terrain, s'avisa de dire, ceci est à moi, et trouva des gens assés simples pour le croire, fut le vrai fondateur de la société civile. Que de crimes, de guerres, de meurtres, que de misères et d'horreurs, n'eût point épargnés au Genre-humain celui qui arrachent les pieux ou comblant le fossé, eût crié à ses semblables. Gardez-vous d'écouter cet imposteur; Vous êtes perdus, si vous oubliez que les fruits sont à tous, est que la Terre n'est à personne. . . ." 55

An eloquent statement indeed of the pernicious effects of the first accumulation of material goods, the full significance of which, in terms of the foundation and end of the body politic, will emerge in the next chapter.

United in family groups, with the use of a few implements and with their needs still very limited, men still have plenty of leisure time, which they employ to provide themselves with some of the "conveniences" of life. In this men inadvertently impose a yoke upon themselves, for, according to Rousseau, these small luxuries soon become perceived as real "needs", whilst at the same time losing much of their power to please. The want of these things is then far more painful than the possession of them pleasurable. In his attitude towards luxury, which was a subject much discussed at the time, Rousseau is of course at variance with most of his contemporaries, and certainly with such an unashamed advocate of the comforts of civilization as Voltaire. There is no denying that Rousseau had a Spartan conception

54 Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C. III, 167.

55 Ibid., 164.

of life by comparison, although we should note that he saw the natural state of man as one of abundance - but abundance of nature's fruits, not the various artificial devices and superfluities characteristic of "civilized" life which he saw as only generating greed, envy and dissatisfaction. This attitude, then, reflects both his critique of contemporary society, and his assessment of how it is that the men of his day, effete and morally degraded as most of them are, have come to be so. In acquiring these new "needs", men have moved a further step away from their initial balanced relationship with their environment, and have vastly increased the sources of potential conflict amongst themselves. Competition for the possession of luxuries is inevitably attendant on their introduction, as are the destructive passions associated with their acquisition.

As families become more established, they in turn begin to come together to form larger communities - but at this stage the family is still providing all its own needs, and men remain relatively self-sufficient materially. However, amour-propre develops considerably in this rudimentary form of society, for the new settled manner of life gives rise to activities which encourage it. Men now engage in social activities such as singing and dancing, so that to the simple comparisons which they began to make in the first stage of the development away from nature are added the ideas of beauty and merit. The "moral part" of love thus arises, and all manner of perceived distinctions between individuals fuel men's vanity and form the first step towards inequality. From these initial distinctions between men, Rousseau says, "nâquirent d'un côté la vanité et le mépris, et de l'autre la honte et l'envie,"⁵⁶ a combination fatal to innocence and happiness. With passions thus

56 Ibid., 170.

awakened, man becomes much more like the "natural man" as described by Hobbes; for vanity and envy are far more potent causes of dispute than was simple need. Man is now prepared to exact vengeance on his fellows, and becomes bloody and cruel. This, comments Rousseau, is the state reached by most of the "savage nations" of the day, and it is by failing to make a proper distinction between such nations and the truly natural state that so many writers have concluded that "l'homme est naturellement cruel et qu'il a besoin de police pour l'adoucir. . . ."57 The state of nature proper, then, has been left behind (it will be recalled that Rousseau's use of this hypothetical condition is as one not simply opposed to the civil state, but also to a "life improved by industry") and men are in what Stanley Hoffman has aptly characterised as "de facto society",58 lacking laws and government. There is a stage yet to come before men hang these particular chains upon themselves, and before considering this we must pause to remark a paradox in Rousseau's thought.

The paradox is that while this first association of men has many regrettable consequences, it also produces certain worthy features of human life in society which Rousseau cannot help but applaud. What this reflects, of course, is the wider paradox in Rousseau's thought, referred to earlier, whereby he at once despises the social life and institutions which have so morally degraded man, and at the same time upholds society as that which raises man above the brutes and enables him to realise all the possibilities which would otherwise lie dormant within him. It is in this early stage of society, therefore, that the relations established between individuals give rise to "les plus doux sentimens qui soient

57 Ibid.

58 The State of War, p. 57.

connus des hommes, l'amour conjugal, et l'amour Paternel."⁵⁹ More importantly, moral action is now possible, for the natural inclinations of man having been obscured, they are nevertheless sufficiently conscious to choose their course of conduct. All things considered, Rousseau concludes that this stage in man's development represents the "veritable jeunesse du Monde", since although there has been a diminution of man's natural compassion, amour-propre has not yet reached the lively activity of later epochs, and men manage to coexist relatively happily. Rousseau remarks that men must have been impelled to leave this condition by some "funeste hazard",⁶⁰ otherwise they would have remained in it. We see once again, therefore how reluctant he is to ascribe to man's perfectibility an inbuilt momentum, and must instead have recourse to external environmental factors to explain the continuing path towards "civilization".

Rousseau does not tell us explicitly what the "fatal accident" might have been which encouraged men to progress further in their mutual relationships, but, whatever the stimulus, the effects of this further development are serious indeed. In the phase just described, there was no specialization or differentiation of functions within the community: each family unit managed to procure its own means of subsistence. However, all this changes when man discovers the two "arts" of agriculture and metallurgy.⁶¹ Rousseau describes this "great

59 Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C. III, 168.

60 Ibid., 171.

61 Rousseau suggests that the discovery of metallurgy, which is the first step in this more sophisticated phase of man's development, must have been occasioned by the extraordinary accident of some volcano ejecting metallic substances and giving men the idea of iron working. He sees agriculture as developing subsequent to this, because until it became necessary to support others who were not growing food men would not have been inclined to undertake such

revolution" in suitably emotive terms in the Discours: while men restricted themselves to what they could accomplish alone, he says, they lived relatively free and happy lives. However,

dès l'instant qu'un homme eut besoin du secours d'un autre; dès qu'on s'aperçut qu'il étoit utile à un seul d'avoir des provisions pour deux, l'égalité disparut, la propriété s'introduisit, le travail devint nécessaire, et les vastes forêts se changeront en des Campagnes riantes qu'il falut arroser de la sueur des hommes, et dans lesquelles on vit bientôt l'esclavage et la misère germer et croître avec les moissons. 62

What is most significant about the development of these two arts is that they bring about what we have come to know as the division of labour: metallurgy necessitates this innovation and agriculture facilitates it. This is an unwelcome development, in Rousseau's view, because it vastly increases men's dependence on one another, and because it leads to much greater inequality amongst men. This might not have been the case, he comments, had the talents of individuals been equal, and had the use of iron and the consumption of commodities exactly balanced each other - but this is clearly impossible. Hence the strongest or the more skilful produce the most, and these individuals prosper whilst others labour equally hard but make insufficient to support themselves. Just as in the realm of amusement, then, where some distinguish themselves by being particularly good at singing or dancing, and thus rise above their fellows, so purely physical differences of strength, dexterity and so on become the source of "moral" inequality, whereby the most favoured individuals come to enjoy superiority over their less fortunately endowed neighbours which is out of proportion

61 laborious work. Ibid., 172-73. This serves to emphasise once again the importance, in Rousseau's view, of changes in man's material environment as the spur to changes in social and economic relations.

62 Ibid., 171.

to the natural differences between them.⁶³

The "progress" in man's material circumstances produces a further degeneration in moral terms, because with the increased struggle for the necessities of life, a truly competitive ethos is introduced:

" . . . ambition dévorante, l'ardeur d'élever sa fortune relative, moins par un veritable besoin que pour se mettre au-dessous des autres, inspire à tous les hommes un noir penchant à se nuire mutuellement

. . . . "⁶⁴ Property becomes one very important way of commanding the respect of others, and this, together with the continuing desire of men to win the esteem of others by dint of their talents, beauty, wit and so on, means that amour-propre has now reached the "petulant activity" which has become the mark of "civilized" man.⁶⁵ Hence arises the gulf between "being" and "seeming" which forms a crucial element of

Rousseau's condemnation of his contemporaries; it is now to the advantage of men to appear what they are not, whether to hide their weakness or their malicious designs. Man's perpetual pursuit is henceforth that of attempting to interest others in his lot, and in making them perceive their advantage in promoting his own. Every man is now dependent on others in some degree; even the master is in a sense a

63 Rousseau comments at the beginning of the Discours that "Je conçois dans l'Espece humaine deux sortes d'inégalité; l'une que j'appelle naturelle ou Phisique, parce qu'elle est établie par la Nature, et qui consiste dans la différence des âges, de la santé, des forces du Corps, et des qualités de l'Esprit, ou de l'Ame; L'autre qu'on peut appeller inégalité morale, ou politique, parce qu'elle dépend d'une sorte de convention, et qu'elle est établie, ou du moins autorisée par le consentement des Hommes." O.C. III, 131. In the closing paragraph of the work he concludes that "l'inégalité morale, autorisée par le seul droit positif, est contraire au Droit Naturel, toutes les fois qu'elle ne concourt pas en meme proportion avec l'inégalité Physique. . . ." Ibid., 193-94.

64 Ibid., 175.

65 Ibid., 171.

slave, for he cannot do without the services of those who are subject to him. As time goes on the manifold differences and distinctions among men become subsumed into one glaring division, that between rich and poor. Material wealth having been perceived as the key to power, the rich, not slow to taste "le plaisir de dominer",⁶⁶ think of nothing but subduing and enslaving their neighbours. With continual "usurpations" by the rich, and robberies by the poor, men are in a state of perpetual conflict, and have come at last to that "horrible état de guerre"⁶⁷ which Hobbes had so graphically described as the natural state of man. For Rousseau, we have seen, this is a condition far from natural, and one which could not have arisen before the advent of property, as Rousseau quotes the authority of "the wise Locke" to testify: "il ne sauroit y avoir d'injure, où il n'y a point de propriété."⁶⁸ It is worth commenting on a further difference between the ideas of Hobbes and Rousseau on the causes of the "state of war". Hobbes' "war of all against all" is in part at least a direct result of the equality which obtains amongst men. It is precisely because all men have an equal right to those goods which they can by their own strength acquire, and because their ability to do so, and to defend themselves against attack in the process, is roughly equal, that such a state of strife exists. But for Rousseau, it is only when the natural equality of men breaks down (or to be more precise, when the initially insignificant physical inequalities of the natural state are translated into much greater "moral" inequalities) that the state of war emerges.

66 Ibid., 175.

67 Ibid., 176. Although Rousseau uses the term "état de guerre" in this context, he uses the term "la guerre" elsewhere in a more clearly defined sense - see below, ch. 4. pp. 105-8.

68 Ibid., 170. This is not to say that Rousseau agrees with Locke

The founding of the body politic

Just as Hobbes' natural men were impelled, due to the intolerable nature of the situation in which they found themselves, to consult their reason and to agree upon "articles of peace",⁶⁹ so, in the de facto society which is Rousseau's state of war, men are forced to seek some more secure means of conducting their affairs. In both cases, then, the birth of the body politic comes about as a direct consequence of an anarchical situation which is intolerable to the individuals concerned. But there is a very important difference in the interpretations which Hobbes and Rousseau respectively put upon this conventional origin of political society.

The motive force behind the establishment of the state comes, according to Rousseau, from a particular group of men within the already existing association, namely, the wealthy.⁷⁰ It is these men above all who find the constant conflict and insecurity insufferable, for they have most to lose - not only do they fear for their lives, but their possessions are always under threat of seizure. In Rousseau's graphic description, the rich thus devise "le projet le plus réfléchi qui soit jamais entré dans l'esprit humain": that is, the notion of a supreme power which will maintain order and transform mere possession into the secure right to property. In short, says Rousseau, the rich man attempts to win over those who struggle against him, and to give

68 that the right to property is a natural right; on the contrary, for Rousseau this can only be a civil right.

69 Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, ed. Michael Oakeshott (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957), p. 84.

70 Rousseau uses the terms "état", "société", "corps politique", "société politique" and "société civile" interchangeably, although he does make some attempt to distinguish the proper usage of such terms in the Contrat Social, O.C. III; 361-62.

them institutions which are as favourable to him as "le Droit naturel lui étoit contraire."⁷¹ Rousseau goes on to depict the imagined approach which the rich man makes to his poorer neighbours; having emphasised the defects of their present condition, he speaks forcefully of the benefits of association:

"Unissons-nous . . . pour garantir de l'oppression les foibles, contenir les ambitieux, et assurer à chacun la possession de ce qui lui appartient: Instituons des réglemens de Justice et de paix auxquels tous soient obligés de se conformer, qui ne fassent acception de personne, et qui réparent en quelque sorte les caprices de la fortune en soumettant également le puissant et le foible à des devoirs mutuels. En un mot, au lieu de tourner nos forces contre nous mêmes, rassemblons les en un pouvoir suprême qui nous gouverne selon de sages Loix, qui protège et défende tous les membres de l'association, repousse les ennemis communs, et nous maintienne dans une concorde éternelle." 72

This passage deserved quoting in full because it illustrates very clearly two of Rousseau's central principles: firstly, the conventional origin of the state, a view which he shares with Hobbes and the natural lawists, and secondly, an idea which puts him squarely in the more radical tradition which was to become increasingly important from the nineteenth century on, the view that the root of this convention is the insecurity of those who are, in material terms, an élite group. This dimension of Rousseau's thinking marks him out very clearly both from the natural lawists (best represented in terms of the analysis of property relations and their importance for the foundation of the state by Locke) and from Hobbes, for whom all men share an equal interest in the establishment of political society.

71 Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C. III, 177.

72 Ibid.

The culmination of the movement away from nature, then, is the pact or contract by which all agree to unite in order to set up a supreme power to rule over and above them - for the arguments of the rich are persuasive enough to men made barbarous by the conflict already described. By disguising their own interest as the common interest, the rich succeed in securing their superior position by means of "law". The existing relationships of power and subservience are thereby cemented, and the institutions thus created serve, as far as the poor are concerned, merely to bind "new fetters"⁷³ on them and to make their position unalterable. Rousseau goes on, having accounted for the origin of the body politic in this way, to say that he is aware that others have given different explanations of its origin, such as the conquest of the powerful, or the association of the weak, but that this appears to him to be the most natural. The reasons he gives here are similar to those found in the Contrat Social, where he refutes Grotius' assertion that conquest gives the victor the right to rule over the vanquished; Rousseau's assertion is that the two parties in question must still be envisaged as in a state of war, and thus no agreement between them is possible unless the vanquished are restored to the full possession of their liberty. Moreover, he continues, the terms "rich" and "poor" are more appropriate in this context than are the terms "strong" and "weak" because "en effet un homme n'avoit point avant les Loix d'autre moyen s'assujétir ses égaux qu'en attaquant leur bien, ou leur faisant quelque part du sien."⁷⁴ And finally, the association of the weak is not so feasible an explanation since it is

73 Ibid., 178.

74 Ibid., 179.

more likely that something has been invented by those to whom it would be of service than by those who stood to lose from it.

The pact by which the state of war is ended, it will be quite apparent, is far from that embodiment of the rational will as represented in the Contrat Social; on the contrary, it is, as Maurice Cranston has remarked, a "fraudulent social contract",⁷⁵ which demonstrates the force of self-interest and the moral degradation consequent upon man's departure from nature. Moreover, the pact does not eliminate conflict - it could not, for the causes remain unchanged - it merely enables the dominant few to ensure its suppression, within the association created, for their own benefit. It is true of the "Leviathan" also that within it, conflict is suppressed or contained rather than its cause eradicated; men are not purged of their passions, but restrained in their pursuit of the goals to which these passions drive them. With the latter under control, Hobbes' object is fulfilled, in that the great obstacle to "commodious living",⁷⁶ the lack of order amongst men, is removed. For Rousseau, however, order has been bought at the cost of oppression, and the vice and misery which originated as men first came together in social groupings are built into the very foundations of the state. The peace which comes through despotism is "la tranquillité de la mort; elle est plus destructive que la guerre même."⁷⁷ Moreover, the creation of the body politic gives rise to conflict of an entirely new order, on which rulers thrive because it serves their greed and desire for

75 Jean-Jacques (London: Allen Lane, 1983), p. 303. Cranston comments that Rousseau has brought about "a startling transformation of Locke's concept of the social contract as a mutually advantageous contract between fair-minded men into a fraudulent agreement imposed by the rich on the poor as a means of perpetuating their privileges and dominion." Ibid., p. 248.

76 Leviathan, p. 84.

77 Emile, O.C. IV, 633.

glory and command without demanding of them any personal cost. This is the true "state of war", and its consequences, whilst accepted as inevitable by the majority of men, are for Rousseau intolerable:

J'ouvre les livres de droit et de morale, j'écoute les savans et les jurisconsultes et pénétré de leurs discours insinuans, je déplore les misères de la nature, j'admire le paix et la justice établis par l'ordre civil, je bénis la sagesse des institutions publiques et me console d'être homme en me voyant citoyen. Bien instruit de mes devoirs et de mon bonheur, je ferme le livre, sors de la classe, et regarde autour de moi; je vois des peuples infortunés gemissans sous un joug de fer, le genre humain écrasé par une poignée d'opresseurs, une foule affamée, accablée de peine et de faim, dont le riche boit en paix le sang et les larmes, et partout le fort armé contre le foible du redoutable pouvoir des loix. 78

78 L'Etat de guerre, O.C. III, 608-9.

CHAPTER 3

TYRANNY AND WAR: "THE WORST SCOURGES OF HUMANITY"

The birth of the body politic, according to Rousseau, represents the culmination of that unfortunate movement away from the independence of the natural state to the dependency and conflict of social relations. Rousseau's account of the origins of the state, despite its hypothetical character, is central to his political thought for two reasons. First, because it provides the foundation for Rousseau's argument that the state is in no sense natural but is the work of artifice, and second, because it illustrates his view that if not inherently unjust the body politic is typically so. In describing the origin of the state in contractual terms Rousseau was remaining firmly within the natural law tradition, but the use to which he put the notion of contract set him apart from his predecessors. Comparison with Hobbes is again instructive, since Rousseau's account of de facto society is so similar to the "state of nature" as described by the former. According to Hobbes, there are passions operative in the natural state which "incline men to peace"; reason suggests the "articles" by which men found the body politic.¹ Here individuals are coming together as equals to give themselves a common sovereign, and all share the same interest in the institution of the Commonwealth, regardless of the distribution of power or wealth. As indicated in the previous chapter, the same can hardly be said of those who come together in Rousseau's description of the birth of political association. For him the rationale, consciously articulated by the dominant actors in the scene he so vividly depicts, is the self-interest of those few, disguised as the common interest. The

¹ Leviathan, p. 84. The passions in question are "fear of death; desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living; and a hope by their industry to obtain them."

notion of contract is used by both writers to indicate consent, which for Hobbes paves the way to order through submission to an all powerful sovereign; there is here no disjunction between the "is" and the "ought" save the difficulty of constraining men's natural passions. For Rousseau the "consent" given by the majority cannot give rise to a legitimate political order whilst it represents submission, and an altogether different kind of "contract" is required if men are to exchange tyranny for a condition in which justice can be combined with order.

Property and inequality

Both Hobbes and Rousseau, then, see the birth of the state as a direct consequence of the competitive nature of unregulated social life, competition in which the struggle for possession is paramount. However, the presupposition of the social contract, for Hobbes, is an aggregation of individuals perceived as equals, whatever the physical differences between men. Indeed, it is precisely this equality of rights and powers which in the natural state makes conflict both inevitable and intolerable. In Rousseau's view it is inequality which gives rise to the pact by which the dominant few secure and legitimise their position: "usurpation" is cleverly converted into "un droit irrévocable".² It is a "pact of subjection" but one which cannot be sanctioned by an appeal to the need for order or excused by the consent given by the majority, since they have been duped, and simply have their subservience "legalised":

Telle fut, ou dut être l'origine de la Société et des Loix, qui donnèrent de nouvelles entraves au foible et de nouvelles forces au riche, détruisirent sans retour la liberté naturelle, fixèrent pour jamais la Loi de propriété et de l'inégalité . . . et pour le profit de quelques

2 Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C. III, 178.

ambitieux assujétirent désormais tout le Genre-humain
au travail, à la servitude et à la misère. 3

"The law of property" is henceforth "eternally fixed": this phrase indicates the central place of property in Rousseau's account, his attitude towards which marks a clear contrast with that of Hobbes, but also in this instance with the stance taken by Locke. For the latter had similarly emphasised the role of property in prompting the foundation of the body politic, in that the insecurity of the state of nature threatens men's "Lives, Liberties, and Estates".⁴ Political association provides the solution to this problem because it establishes law conceived as an impartial standard by which mens' "property" can be secured. Inequality matters not, for it is enough that the legislative power "govern by promulgated establish'd Laws, not to be varied in particular cases, but to have one Rule for Rich and Poor, for the Favourite at Court, and the Country Man at Plough."⁵ Rousseau dismisses this interpretation because he views law, where there is material inequality, as an instrument of oppression. In considering the matter of political association, Rousseau was later to comment in the Discours sur l'économie politique, people have generally failed to take into account

des utilités que chacun retire de la confédération sociale, qui protege fortement les immenses possessions du riche, et laisse à peine un misérable jouir de la chaumiere qu'il a construite de ses mains. Tous les avantages de la société ne sont-ils pas pour les puissans et les riches? 6

3 Ibid.

4 John Locke, The Second Treatise of Government, in Two Treatises of Government, ed. Peter Laslett (New York: Mentor Books, 1965), p. 395.

5 Ibid., p. 409.

6 O.C. III, 271.

Again the gulf between the "is" and the "ought" is apparent in Rousseau's thought, for the "social confederation" can be of advantage to all if properly founded. History demonstrates, however, that this has rarely been the case; hence Rousseau's characterisation in the second Discours which indicates, as Starobinski notes, that "La consolidation contractuelle de la propriété acquise au dernier terme de l'état pré-social est donc pour Rousseau l'une des erreurs majeures de l'histoire humaine."⁷

Rousseau's concern with the question of property derives from his conviction that the striving for material gain, inevitably at the expense of others, is the most potent sign of man's corruption, and from his perception of the intimate link between economic and political power. These attitudes lead him to depart expressly from Locke's view that the right to property, as merely an extension of a man's right over his own person, is authorised by natural law, despite his adoption of Locke's notion that property arises as a result of man having "mixed his Labour" with whatever "he removes out of the State that Nature hath provided. . . ."⁸ In Rousseau's view, the act of acquisition can only become a right after the establishment of political society - and even then it will not be a right in the proper sense of the term unless the society has been legitimately constituted. The rich man of the symbolic scene in the second Discours is told indignantly by his fellows that it is no use his protesting that he acquired all he has by his own industry: " . . . il vous falloir un consentement exprès et unanime du Genre-humain pour vous approprier sur la

7 Notes, O.C. III, 1350.

8 Second Treatise, p. 329.

subsistance commune tout ce qui alloit au-delà de la votre."⁹ Perhaps this was intended as a direct riposte to Locke's comment that nobody can deny a man's right "to those Acorns or Apples he thus appropriated" (i.e. by his own labour) simply because "he had not the consent of all Mankind to make them his."¹⁰ For Rousseau, each man has the natural right to that which is necessary for his subsistence, and no more. The right to property can only arise from "convention et d'institution humaine"¹¹ and in a legitimate political order must be given substance for the majority by means of law instrumental to this end. If this is not the case, then the terms of the social pact between the "two estates" of men (rich and poor) can be expressed as follows:

Vous avez besoin de moi, car je suis riche et vous êtes pauvre; faisons donc un accord entre nous: je permettrai que vous ayez l'honneur de me servir, à condition que vous me donnerez le peu qui vous reste, pour la peine que je prendrai de vous commander. ¹²

It is clear that Rousseau identifies the form of state given theoretical justification by Hobbes and Locke with the tyranny he perceived in absolutist France and the other "princely" states of his day, and saw such states as inherently oriented towards conflict. Thus despite his acceptance of the individualist premises of his predecessors, his critique of "the state" as outlined in the second Discours and the Discours sur l'économie politique, which serves to secure order and to protect property by laying the "fetters" of law upon the poor, puts Rousseau in a radical tradition of political

9 Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C. III, 176-77.

10 Second Treatise, p. 330.

11 Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C. III, 184.

12 Discours sur l'économie politique, O.C. III, 273. Not surprisingly, Marx quotes this passage in vol. I of Capital.

thought which can be seen in Thomas More, and which runs through the work of his contemporaries Meslier, Morelly and Mably to the Utopian Socialists and Marx. More, for example, had expressed the same view in very similar terms: in every commonwealth, he remarks,

I can perceive nothing but a certain conspiracy of rich men procuring their own commodities under the name and title of the commonwealth. They invent and devise all means and crafts, first how to keep safely, without fear of losing, that they have unjustly gathered together, and next how to hire and abuse the work and labour of the poor for as little money as may be.

These devices, he goes on, when decreed to be kept and observed, "then they be made laws."¹³ Rousseau does not acknowledge any debt to More or to those of his contemporaries who were advancing similarly radical ideas, but his sympathy with this position sets him apart from the more eminent figures of the Enlightenment who although they recognised the oppressive uses to which absolutist rulers could put the institution of law, thought that in general the majority were better off under law than in the insecure condition of the state of nature. D'Alembert, for example, depicts the origin of law and of political association in the desire of the weak to afford themselves greater protection:

La force du corps ayant été le premier principe qui a rendu inutile le droit que tous les hommes avaient d'être égaux, les plus foibles, dont le nombre est toujours le plus grand, se sont joints ensemble pour la réprimer. Ils ont établi par le secours des lois et des différentes sortes de gouvernements, une inégalité de convention dont la force a cessé d'être le principe. ¹⁴

Rousseau likewise thinks that law replaces force, at least within the state, but it does so as a means of suppression in the interests of the dominant minority. He comments that "en effet un homme n'avoit point

¹³ Thomas More, Utopia (New York: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1974), pp. 132-33.

¹⁴ Jean le Rond d'Alembert, Discours préliminaire de l'Encyclopédie (Paris: Editions Gonthier, 1965), p. 53.

avant les Loix d'autre moyen d'assujétir ses égaux qu'en attaquant leur bien, ou leur faisant quelque part du sein";¹⁵ once laws are enforced the position of the rich is much improved because they have a legitimised control, with a monopoly of force in their hands which for the most part can remain latent. Rousseau emphatically rejects the liberal notion that laws, as conditions of conduct are, as Oakeshott has put it, "indifferent (not merely impartial) to the satisfaction of substantive wants. . . ." ¹⁶ In so doing he had laid the foundations for an entirely different conception of political association within which law would be expressive not of the will of a few, but of the general will.

In the latter part of the Discours sur l'inégalité Rousseau describes in greater detail the evolution of political association, and the likely trend towards despotism of the worst kind. He subdivides the development of institutions into three phases, which mark the increasing "progress of inequality": the first is the establishment of the laws and the right of property, the second the institution of the magistracy, and the third and final phase the conversion of "lawful" into completely arbitrary power. The different forms of government, in this analysis, owe their origin to the differing degrees of inequality prevailing at the time of their introduction. If one man is predominant, a monarchy will result; if the few, an aristocracy, and if a group has "deviated less from the state of nature" and still maintains a degree of equality, a democracy will be formed.¹⁷ The last of the forms demonstrates that

15 Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C. III, 179.

16 Michael Oakeshott, On Human Conduct (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 243

17 Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C. III, 186.

oppression is not a necessary characteristic of political association, and Rousseau even admits that monarchy or aristocracy can arise because one man or a group of individuals are pre-eminent in virtue rather than riches. This might, however, seem to invalidate Rousseau's "hypothesis" regarding the origins of the state as a means of securing the interests of an élite. Rousseau clearly anticipates this criticism, for he comments in the second Discours that other explanations of the origin of political societies have been given, but that his seems to him to be the most natural; and that in any case "le choix entre ces causes est indifférent à ce que je veux établir. . . ." ¹⁸ What he wishes to establish in the Discours is primarily that inequality is not natural amongst men, despite the fact that it is a universal characteristic of human society, and that far from being "authorised by natural law" it is to be roundly condemned. ¹⁹ Historical and contemporary evidence that a few political associations have, and do embody greater equality amongst their members does not affect Rousseau's argument that in the main, political society best serves the interest of the dominant group, and that the motive of protection of property plays a key role in this. The general rule, amply supported by contemporary example, is that the state is founded to serve, and continues to foster, the interests of a powerful minority, however the "contractual" arrangement may have been viewed by the majority.

It should also be borne in mind that the birth of one state gives rise to all the others: faced with organised associations, even individuals who are still closer to "nature" will be forced to come

¹⁸ Ibid., 179.

¹⁹ The title proposed by the Academy of Dijon, to which Rousseau's essay was addressed, was "Quelle est l'origine de l'inégalité parmi les hommes, et si elle est autorisée par la Loy naturelle".

together to "be protected against other men",²⁰ as Hobbes had earlier pointed out. The state is thus born of competition and conflict and itself breeds further rivalry and dispute. Moreover, even within those associations which were well constituted to begin with, there is an inexorable trend towards inequality and oppression. In badly ordered society men become ever more corrupt and depraved, and the "progress of inequality" referred to above culminates in unmitigated despotism, where all semblance of right disappears, and force alone keeps men in subjection. In this condition men become no more than masters and slaves:

C'est ici le dernier terme de l'inégalité, et le point extrême qui ferme le Cercle et touche au point d'où nous sommes partis . . . C'est ici que tout se ramene à la seule Loi du plus fort, et par conséquent à un nouvel Etat de Nature différent de celui par lequel nous avons commencé, en ce que l'un étoit l'Etat de Nature dans sa pureté, et que ce dernier est le fruit d'un excès de corruption. 21

This is reminiscent of Montesquieu's comment that in both republican and despotic states men are equal: " . . . dans le premier, c'est parce qu'ils sont tout; dans le second, c'est parce qu'ils ne sont rien."²² When the majority are reduced to nothing, or to the abject condition of slavery, social and political relations lose even the appearance of legitimacy, and if in these circumstances the despot is overthrown by force then this is but a consequence of the dissolution of the "contract of government" by despotism.²³ From rulers who have such scant regard for their subjects, Rousseau concludes, little can

20 Leviathan, p. 113.

21 Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C. III, 191.

22 L'Esprit des Lois, p. 95.

23 Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C. III, 191. In a fragment Rousseau actually refers to tyranny and slavery as a "state of war", and remarks that without liberty, "il n'y a aucune paix véritable." O.C. III, 523.

be expected in their dealings with foreign powers, and the claims of "humanity" will be ignored in favour of the quest for greater wealth and power. Tyranny and war go hand in hand.

War as the consequence of despotism

The archetypal state as characterised by Rousseau will be inevitably oriented towards war for three main reasons. Firstly, because state policy will be directed by rapacious individuals who have tasted the pleasure of command and aggrandizement; secondly, because the state as an artificial body knows no natural bounds, and thirdly because international "society" provides no effective means of maintaining order amongst states. These factors will be discussed at greater length in chapters 4 and 5 below, but the nature of princely rule as described by Rousseau must first be surveyed. Rousseau's most explicit remarks on the conduct of princes and ministers are to be found in his Jugement on the Abbé de Saint Pierre's peace project. Here he puts forward as the greatest obstacle to the implementation of the project the self interest of princes, which is invariably at odds with the general interest or common good. The entire life of such rulers, Rousseau notes wryly, is devoted to two objects: " . . . étendre leur domination au dehors et la rendre plus absolue au dedans."²⁴ There is thus a clearly stated link between tyrannical rule and war as a means of policy pursued by tyrants:

Il est facile de comprendre que d'un côté la guerre et les conquêtes et de l'autre le progrès du Despotisme s'entr'aident mutuellement; qu'on prend à discretion dans un peuple d'esclaves, de l'argent et des hommes pour en subjuguier d'autres, que réciproquement la guerre fournit

²⁴ O.C. III, 592.

un prétexte aux exactions pecuniaires et un autre non
moins spécieux d'avoir toujours de grandes armées pour tenir
le peuple en respect. 25

All this, moreover, goes on under the pretext of the "good of the community" or the "glory of the Nation", but behind it is the self-interest of the ruling élite.²⁶ Riches and power are the goals which rulers continually put above all others, and since the costs of war in such systems, in monetary terms and in human life, can be borne entirely by their subjects, they are readily disposed to engage in conflict to further these ends. Indeed, the waging of war is perceived by sovereigns as a "right" which can be employed where "necessary" in the cause of strengthening the state. A prince, embarking upon a war, "n'expose guères que ses sujets"; hence tyranny and war are inseparable.²⁷

In his comments on these matters Rousseau is not concerned with proving his case by citing historical or contemporary examples, although he does so where it suits his purpose. In general, his method is the one used in the second Discours where he gives a "hypothetical" account of the transition to society calculated "à éclaircir la Nature des choses."²⁸ However, Rousseau's conception of "the state" is clearly situated in his own political milieu, one in which he could justifiably see the politics of absolutism as a grim vindication of Machiavelli's counsel that "A prince . . . should have no other object or thought, nor acquire skill in anything, except war, its organization, and its discipline. The art of war is all that is expected of a ruler. . . ."²⁹

25 Ibid., 593.

26 Ibid., 592.

27 Ibid., 593-94.

28 Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C. III, 133.

29 Niccolò Machiavelli, The Prince, trans. George Bull (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1961), p. 87.

As indicated above, Rousseau has a clear awareness of the inherently expansionist nature of the absolutist state, in which the prince was constantly concerned with extending his rule, and in which taxes were increasingly levied on the peasantry in order to finance military adventures and to fund the growing standing armies which Rousseau found despicable. Not only did such armies represent an extension of the ruler's power to control his subjects, they also contained a large proportion of mercenaries, the most rootless and morally degraded of individuals, in Rousseau's eyes. The Europe of his time was thus dominated by oppressive political systems in which, in order that the prince and his ministers might pursue their personal aggrandizement, the poor man is hardly left in quiet possession of the cottage "qu'il a construite de ses mains."³⁰ Rousseau gives a vivid illustration of the iniquity of such a system in the Confessions, where he recalls an incident in which he asked for hospitality at a French peasant's dwelling. The peasant was clearly frightened and suspicious and produced only a coarse loaf; but when he had ascertained that Rousseau was not a spy for the tax-collectors he descended to the cellar and brought out some more wholesome fare, which he confided that he kept hidden because of the duties he would otherwise have to pay. This incident, apparently, made a very strong impression on Rousseau: it was, he states, "le germe de cette haine inextinguible qui se developpa depuis dans mon coeur contre les vexations qu'éprouve le malheureux peuple et contre ses oppresseurs."³¹

Just as law serves as the means by which the ruling group protects its own interests whilst claiming that it serves the interest of all,

³⁰ Discours sur l'économie politique, O.C. III, 271.

³¹ O.C. I, 164.

so this same group appeals to the notion of "national interest" in order to justify military adventures. In reality such adventures are pursued because they offer the prospect of material gain or increased power, or more likely both. Whilst rulers see their advantage in pursuing these ends in the guise of serving the national interest Rousseau thinks it extremely unlikely that they may be persuaded, as the Abbé de Saint-Pierre hoped they might be, of the benefits of joining an association which would outlaw war amongst them. Rousseau was not of course alone in this view; Saint-Lambert wrote in the Encyclopédie that "there will always be wars in Europe; we can rely here on the interests of ministers. . . ." ³² Nevertheless Rousseau went further than most in his condemnation of the nature and effects of oligarchical rule, and refused to believe, along with the philosophes, that despotism might be tempered and made more humane.

Princes and their ministers are, in Rousseau's view, extreme examples of the corruption of man's nature which touches all in human society: in particular, they have grossly inflated "needs", or more properly desires, which demand immediate and constant satisfaction. Ministers perpetually encourage war in order to make themselves indispensable to their master and as a means of gratifying their passions, oppressing the people "sous prétexte des nécessités publiques" ³³ The conduct of princes illustrates that the pursuit of riches and the taste for command are inseparably connected:

Le Prince fait toujours circuler ses projets; il veut commander pour s'enrichir et s'enrichir pour commander; il sacrifiera tour à tour l'un et l'autre pour acquérir celui des deux qui

32 Denis Diderot, The Encyclopedia, selections edited and translated by Stephen J. Gendzier (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), p. 164.

33 Jugement sur le Projet de paix perpétuelle, O.C. III, 595.

lui manque, mais ce n'est qu'afin de parvenir à les posséder enfin tous les deux ensemble qu'il les poursuit séparément; car pour être le maître des hommes et des choses il faut qu'il ait à la fois l'empire et l'argent. 34

Once inflated to this level, desires become almost limitless, as

Rousseau emphasises again in L'Etat de guerre:

Celui qui n'a rien désire peu de chose; celui qui ne commande à personne a peu d'ambition. Mais le superflu éveille la convoitise; plus on obtient, plus on désire. Celui qui a beaucoup veut tout avoir; et la folie de la monarchie universelle n'a jamais tourmenté que le cœur d'un grand roi. 35

The pleasure of command is relatively easily satisfied as long as the Prince is secure in his position; the thirst for a continuing abundance of material satisfactions, and new luxuries, may be less so, depending on the size and economic prosperity of the state. Much will have to be acquired by commerce or, more forcibly, by conquest or expansion into new territories. The latter is evidently conducive to a continuing state of war between powers, but even commerce, in Rousseau's view, breeds unhealthy dependence and conflict. This point will be discussed further in the next chapter, and it will suffice to note here that the stimulus to war which arises from material greed is seen by Rousseau as a direct consequence of the "progress of inequality" which comes with the breakdown of man's natural independence and self-sufficiency, culminating in autocratic or oligarchical rule which benefits only the few. As Stelling-Michaud comments,

Rousseau ne croit pas que le commerce porte naturellement à la paix et que la développement des affaires soit la meilleure défense contre la guerre, car la soif de richesse et le désir de puissance sont précisément les grands mobiles de la politique de conquête, combattue si violemment par lui. 36

34 Ibid., 594.

35 O.C. III, 612.

36 Introduction to *Ecrits sur l'abbé de Saint-Pierre*, O.C. III, CXLII.

The "politics of conquest" can be seen as typical of the age of absolutism, but Rousseau's view contains the germ of an analysis of imperialism which could only later be fully developed. For Rousseau recognises that an economic system geared towards the acquisition of ever expanding wealth results directly in a foreign policy of territorial expansion and domination. This he sees as the inevitable consequence of state policy being determined by élites permanently interested in consolidating and improving their material advantage over subject populations. Since there is a limit to what can be acquired within the confines of a single state, ruling oligarchies are essentially rivals in the ceaseless competition for increased material wealth. Dire indeed will be the situation of a small nation in possession of valuable resources, or one which has accumulated substantial wealth - Rousseau warns Corsica that if she becomes prosperous then she will attract the attention of her neighbours and become: "Objet continuel de convoitise pour les grandes puissances et de jalousie pour les petites. . . ." ³⁷

Rousseau was not able to foresee the impact of the development of industrial capitalism, but in his own terms he did perceive, as Marx and Engels were later to put it, that the dominant classes have always "sought to fortify their already acquired status by subjecting society at large to their conditions of appropriation." ³⁸

It is worth remarking one final point regarding the nature of the "princely" state which Rousseau takes as his model. Not only is it inherently disposed towards war, it is also inherently unstable, and therefore vulnerable to attack. The state as such is an artificial body, created and maintained solely by convention, as Rousseau's

37 Projet de Constitution pour la Corse, O.C. III, 903; hereafter cited as Constitution pour la Corse.

38 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Manifesto of the Communist Party, in Collected Works, 6 (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1976), 495.

analysis in the second Discours makes clear. The strength of the state will depend not on its physical or material characteristics but on the strength of the social bond. As will be evident from the foregoing, in the princely state the majority are oppressed and will be constrained by force, even if latent; and as the "progress of inequality" continues apace, the gulf between the "two estates" will become so wide that the relationship is equivalent to that of master and slave. In this situation the state, although perhaps superficially powerful, is weak, because it is rotten in its very core, and because in the final analysis it is held together by force. The more the prince expands his territories and the larger the state becomes, the weaker will be the social bond. All this contributes to international tension because the prince mistakenly believes he is strengthening the state, and thereby his own position, by territorial expansion, and because other powers are tempted by the vulnerability of neighbours whose people are manifestly near rebellion or at least indifferent towards their present rulers. Where the "citizens" have no allegiance to the state, then the social bond is maintained solely by oppression, and is easily sundered; safety from predatory powers can lie only in the commitment to the state of its citizens, in their determination to resist attack. Indeed, such devotion to the community exemplifies for Rousseau the moral life which the state alone facilitates. The tragedy is that history provides instead a sorry spectacle of political associations in which power hungry rulers dominate a depraved mass, and of a perpetual state of war between these associations. The state of war in international society is thus a terrible reflection of the violence and oppression built into the political system. Fragmented into artificial "communities", men find themselves in "cette association partielle et imparfait qui produit la tyrannie et la guerre", as Rousseau comments

in the Emile, going on to ask rhetorically, "et la tyrannie et la guerre ne sont-elles pas les plus grands fléaux de l'humanité?"³⁹ The natural state having been left behind, men now have the worst of both worlds: they live under supposedly "peaceful institutions" which simply legitimate tyranny, and suffer the most bloody wars which are no part of their making.⁴⁰ In all respects they are slaves to violence and degradation.

39 O.C. IV, 848.

40 Rousseau rises to his most eloquent in his depiction of man's terrible condition: "J'élève les yeux et regarde au loin. J'apperçois des feux et des flammes, des campagnes désertes, des villes au pillage. Hommes farouches, où traînez-vous ces infortunés? J'entens un bruit affreux; quel tumulte! quels cris! J'approche; je vois un théâtre de meurtres, dix mille hommes égorgés, les morts entassés par monceaux, les mourans foulés aux pieds des chevaux, partout l'image de la mort et d'agonie. C'est donc là le fruit de ces institutions pacifiques!" L'Etat de guerre, O.C. III, 609.

CHAPTER 4

A NEW STATE OF NATURE

With the establishment of political societies, the violence which characterised de facto society is henceforth suppressed within them - but not eliminated, for the state rests on unjust foundations whereby "une adroite usurpation firent un droit irrévocable. . . ." And since the birth of one political association gives rise to all the others, there is soon hardly a corner of the earth left in which man could "s'affranchir du joug. . . ." The consequence of this transformation of loose societies of men into distinct "Corps Politiques" is that these bodies confront each other as independent units, knowing no superior: "restant ainsi entr'eux dans l'Etat de Nature. . . ." ¹ A new "state of nature" has thus emerged, analogous to the original state of man in that there is no power, no law over and above these political associations. However, Rousseau soon makes it clear that the analogy with the state of nature proper goes no farther than this, for "bodies politic" do not mirror the isolated and peaceful way of life of natural man; on the contrary, their foundation gives rise to "les Guerres nationales, les Batailles . . . les représailles" and numerous acts of the most dreadful ferocity. ² This new state of nature, in short, is a state of war, and represents for Rousseau not the resolution or melioration of that conflict the origins of which we traced in the preceding chapters, but rather its awful culmination. For the irony of man's situation is that "en nous unissant à quelques hommes, nous devenons réellement les ennemis du genre humain." ³

1 Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C. III, 178.

2 Ibid.

3 Extrait du Projet de paix perpétuelle de Monsieur l'Abbé de Saint-Pierre, O.C. III, 564. Hereafter cited as Extrait.

The state of war

The conflict which is inherent in the international state of nature can be seen as the culmination of the conflict amongst individuals which arises in de facto society precisely because its seeds are in artifice and not in nature. The state is the most artificial of all man's innovations, and it serves as the vehicle for "institutionalising" violence and for crushing the natural sentiments which make men, as individuals, shrink from inflicting hurt on others even when they are driven by amour-propre. The states system, in other words, is not the cause of conflict amongst men, but the formation of the state is the cause of war, defined as organised conflict among fixed groups of men. The rise of political associations, then, has not provided a solution to the problem of conflict but has merely served to amplify it in scale and to make it an enduring feature of social life. Thus " . . . cet Etat devint encore plus funeste entre ces grands Corps qu'il ne l'avoit été auparavant entre les individus dont ils étoient composés."⁴ But why, the question arises, given Rousseau's conception of the state of nature amongst men, cannot states recapture that same independence and freedom from conflict which characterised that original condition - why must this new state of nature necessarily be a state of war? Part of the answer to this question resides in what has been said already: that war, as the most devastating form of human conflict, has its roots in the movement from nature to society and from society to state. But Rousseau has more to say about the nature of the state, and about its relations with other states, which explains more fully why we cannot expect the international state of nature to be a peaceful condition.

⁴ Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C. III, 178.

Before we look at Rousseau's account in detail, however, it will help to clarify his position if we compare it again with that of Hobbes. The prime concern of Hobbes is the problem of order; and since his political ideas are founded on the premise of man as a self-seeking and passionate being bound to come into conflict with his fellows, it is imperative that there be some kind of coercive power which will effectively force men to coexist. The "Leviathan" is Hobbes' answer to the problem of order as he conceives it; doubtless effective as a means of controlling civil disturbances, but no panacea for those disputes arising from the passions and the "right of all to all"⁵ which will henceforth be manifest in the form of organised conflict. Indeed, Hobbes makes it clear that men unite in political associations not only to maintain order amongst themselves (i.e. those with whom they are already associating with in loose groupings, as in the de facto society of Rousseau), but so as to have a better means of defence against other associations:

And it so happens, that through fear of each other we think it fit to rid ourselves of this condition [the war of all against all], and to get some fellows; that if there needs must be war, it may not yet be against all men, nor without some helps. 6

The result of the formation of such political associations, as with Rousseau, is a condition analogous to the state of nature whereby each state enjoys perfect independence of action, and there is "perpetual war."⁷ But for Hobbes, this is both inevitable and tolerable:

5 The Citizen, p. 117.

6 Ibid., p. 118. Rousseau likewise recognises the prospect of a common defence against enemies as a motive in the establishment of political society: the rich man offers his fellows the prospect of "un pouvoir suprême" which will "repousse les ennemis communs." Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C. III, 177.

7 "For as amongst masterless men, there is perpetual war, of every man against his neighbour. . . ." Hobbes, Leviathan, p. 140.

inevitable because " . . . the dispositions of men are naturally such, that except they be restrained through fear of some coercive power, every man will distrust and dread each other. . . ." ⁸ It is a tolerable condition since in the midst of war states are nevertheless able to "uphold . . . the industry of their subjects"; hence "there does not follow from it, that misery, which accompanies the liberty of men." ⁹ Moreover, states are not subject to the completely anarchical violence characteristic of the state of nature amongst men: Hobbes remarks that " . . . in the war of nation against nation, a certain mean was wont to be observed." ¹⁰ It appears that he is here talking of the associations which preceded the formation of the state as such, and it emerges that a "mean" was observed by men out of regard to their own glory, that their cruelty might not be deemed a mark of fear. It is then logical to assume that the state may also moderate its activities in such a fashion, even if the law of nature still obliges only in foro interno.

It would seem from this that the international state of nature, as far as Hobbes is concerned, bears more similarity to that condition where "men have lived by small families," or associations of a primitive kind than to the pure state of nature which knows not even "laws of honour." ¹¹ In this, Rousseau follows Hobbes, for the new state of nature to which he refers is characterised not by the mutual isolation and indifference of political bodies, but by links and bonds of

8 The Citizen, p. 99.

9 Leviathan, p. 83.

10 The Citizen, p. 166.

11 Leviathan, p. 109.

various kinds, and thus is similar to de facto society. The crucial difference is that whilst Hobbes sees the observation of certain rules by states as meliorating that state of war which obtains between them, for Rousseau the fact that states have mutual interrelationships has entirely negative consequences; the closer are the bonds between them, the more frequent and savage will be wars.¹² Thus for both Hobbes and Rousseau the independence of states, in the lack of a coercive power over and above them, is what may be termed the "permissive" cause of war:¹³ its root cause, however, goes deeper. For the former the fundamental cause of war, we have seen, is the nature of man and his pursuit of those rights which are naturally his; for Rousseau, it is the artificial dependencies and inequalities (both material and "moral") which arise as man develops as a social being. Despite the fact that the state is independent in the sense that it has control over its internal affairs and is bound by no positive law in its behaviour externally, it is in reality, according to Rousseau, just as much in need of its fellow states, materially and "morally", as is "civilized" man.¹⁴ To demonstrate why this inter-dependency amongst states is so important, we must look more closely at what Rousseau has to say about it.

It is in the fragment L'Etat de guerre that Rousseau gives an explicit account of why states are so interdependent, having described briefly how it is that men unite in "une concorde artificielle"¹⁵ and

12 See below, ch. 5, pp. 128-32, for explanation of this point in connection with Rousseau's treatment of Saint-Pierre's plan for a European league.

13 This is a term used by Kenneth Waltz in his Man, the State and War, p. 232.

14 Rousseau comments in L'Etat de guerre that whilst nature appears to have been annihilated amongst men, it reveals itself again among states: "L'indépendance qu'on ôte aux hommes se réfugie dans les sociétés. . . ." O.C. III, 604.

15 Ibid., 603.

hence complete the movement from nature to artifice. Why is it, he asks, that states should come into confrontation with one another - are they not able to supply for themselves all that they need, and if not, must trade be a source of inevitable discord? Rousseau's answer to these questions devolves on the nature of the state as an artificial body. It is because it is an artificial institution that the state knows no limits either in its size or in its needs: both are boundless, in the sense that they can expand endlessly. Thus although we might suppose that the state is far more capable of self-sufficiency than is man, comments Rousseau, in practice it is quite the reverse; the size and strength of a man is naturally limited, and although he can "s'élever en idée, il demeure toujours petit." The state, on the contrary, "étant un corps artificiel n'a nulle mesure déterminé, la grandeur qui lui est propre est indéfinie, il peut toujours l'augmenter, il se sent foible tant qu'il en est de plus forts que lui."¹⁶ Because the size of the state is purely relative, it is always looking outside of itself so as to judge its own strength and security; expansion will necessarily be at the expense of neighbouring states, and the system provides no security. Unlike the original state of nature, and as in the de facto society which this condition parallels, there is no equality. Just as in de facto society some individuals had managed to increase their power over others by the acquisition of a large stock of possessions, so states must ceaselessly strive to expand and gain dominance over others - but here the parallel ends, for while there is a limit to the control which one individual can exercise over other men, theoretically, one state alone can grow until it absorbs all the others. Whilst each state could well subsist on its own resources and ignore its neighbours,

16 Ibid., 605.

this is a rare thing, and states generally try to strengthen themselves at the expense of others. Even if a state has no need for provisions not to be found within its own borders, says Rousseau, it will nevertheless be engaged in a perpetual search for new members. Materially, then, the state is not independent, and like the badly socialised man, is locked in a continuing struggle to acquire and to preserve what it has from the encroachments of others. Neither is the state independent "morally", for it has no perception of itself apart from what it perceives others to be; or, as Rousseau puts it, "il est forcé de se comparer sans cesse pour se connoître. . . ." ¹⁷ The state thus has a "relative" existence as does "civilized" man; amour-propre finds its counterpart at the international level, and it is this "passion" which constitutes the vigour of the state. Without this, indeed, the state would be nothing but a corpse, without life and movement; the tragedy is, that this movement is in a destructive direction, and as a consequence man is made into a "savage" full of enmity against those he does not know.

We might infer from all this that the state, because of the artificiality which Rousseau takes as its central characteristic, is necessarily dependent on "tout ce qui l'environne", ¹⁸ and hence that whilst the state as such exists, war will logically follow. And indeed, this impression might be confirmed by his statement in L'Etat de guerre that his concern is not with actual events, but with "la nature des choses", ¹⁹ as in the second Discours. What Rousseau is trying to do in each case is to account for the depravity and conflict

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid., 604.

which he observes around him in terms of the common principle obscured by a multiplicity of particular causes. He is thus not attempting to explain the factors which have triggered particular wars - disputes over succession and so on - but to explain why the "state of war" as such exists. It does not follow, however, that because most states are drawn inexorably towards war, there is no alternative possibility, just as while the majority of men are drawn into vice we should not assume them incapable of acting otherwise. This might seem to be a faulty analogy, since men are naturally good and have been corrupted with the development of artifice; the state is necessarily artificial and characteristically rests on unjust foundations. The similarity resides in the fact that all moral possibilities are dependent on the perfection of artifice; indeed, it is only within the state that man can achieve virtue. The state's artificiality alone, therefore, is not sufficient to determine its status as a corrupt and destructive institution: this will depend on whether or not it has legitimate foundations. The majority of states, needless to say, have not, and hence their proclivity towards war. It will emerge below that the perfection of artifice can produce a state which is not so inclined, and this by reference to those "principles of political right" outlined in the Contrat Social.

We have yet to consider why it is that in Rousseau's view, trading and other links between states serve to foster, rather than to minimise the risk of war. The reason is that he sees such links as entanglements, not mutually beneficial, but rather sapping the ability of the state to withstand involvement in disputes. Underlying Rousseau's antipathy towards inter-state relations is his conviction that dependence is inherently undesirable. Amongst men, dependence on others not only leads to a decline in their faculties and capabilities, it is also the

doorway to vice since it leads to duplicity, envy and all the manifold ills which are so evident in society. Amongst states, the result will be very much the same, in that the closer the bonds with other states, the more deeply rooted will become that tendency towards "comparison" which fuels greed, adventurism and ambition in foreign affairs. At a more basic level, the more states are involved with one another, the less likelihood there is of any one or number of them avoiding being drawn into disputes arising amongst their neighbours. Where states come into contact with one another, their particular interests, like those of men, will inevitably conflict, and in the lack of any sure and effective means of reconciling these conflicting interests, the "state of war" will necessarily result. Organised conflict is thus the culmination of the clash of interests which all social relations entail:

La constitution de cet univers ne permet pas que tous les êtres sensibles qui le composent concourant à la fois à leur bonheur mutuel, mais le bien-être de l'un faisant le mal de l'autre, chacun selon la loi de nature se donne à lui même la préférence et quand il travaille à son avantage ou bien au préjudice d'autrui à l'instant la paix est troublée . . . quand un être intelligent voit que ce mal lui vient par la mauvaise volonté d'un autre, il s'en irrite et cherche à le repousser. De là naissant la discorde, les querelles, quelquefois les combats et point encore la guerre. 20

This brings us back once more to the fact of international society as a "state of nature" because lacking that "force coactive, qui ordonne et concerte les mouvemens de ses Membres,"²¹ no member of this society has any security or any guarantee that others will recognise his "rights" and interests. This should not surprise us, remarks Rousseau, since "toute société sans loix ou sans Chefs, toute union formée ou maintenue par le hasard, doit nécessairement dégénérer en querelle et

20 Guerre et Etat de guerre, O.C. III, 1902.

21 Extrait, O.C. III, 569.

dissention à la premiere circonstance qui vient à changer. . . ."22

Rousseau does not give any intimation, then, that in this society which lacks both laws and rulers there can be a real and lasting accommodation amongst states, based on adherence to mutually recognised rules. He is dismissive of international law as an effective restraint, because states will only recognise it when it suits their interest to do so:

Quant à ce qu'on appelle communément le droit des gens, il est certain que, faute de sanction, ses loix ne sont que des chimères plus foibles encore que la loi de nature. Celle-ci parle au moins au coeur des particuliers au lieu que, le droit des gens n'ayant d'autre garant que l'utilité de celui qui s'y soumet, ses décisions ne sont respectées qu'autant que l'intérêt les confirme. 23

It is the lack of any sanction in international society which means that international law is ineffective, a point which Hobbes had made regarding the operation of natural law amongst men. Under the heading: "That the laws of nature are not sufficient to preserve peace," Hobbes comments that whenever men "shall see a greater good or less evil likely to happen to them by the breach than the observation of the laws, they will wittingly violate them."²⁴ Moreover, according to Rousseau, this will hold true even if states desire to be just in their dealings with others; while they have no guarantee that their neighbours will behave fairly towards them states which do attempt to observe the

22 Ibid., 568.

23 L'Etat de guerre, O.C. III, 610. The law of nature which "speaks in the hearts of individuals" is what Rousseau terms elsewhere conscience. There is no equivalent for the state because it is a purely artificial body which must necessarily advance its own interest. In practice, as demonstrated in chapter 3, the "national interest" will most often be the interest of the dominant few, who are best served by political institutions.

24 The Citizen, p. 165.

rules of international law may simply be putting themselves at a grave disadvantage. This viewpoint is to be found expressed most clearly in the first draft of the Contrat Social, where Rousseau is taking issue with the article Diderot wrote for the Encyclopedia entitled "Droit naturel". He says: "Il est faux que dans l'état d'indépendance, la raison nous porte à concourir au bien commun par la vue de notre propre intérêt . . . ";²⁵ on the contrary, private interest and the common good are mutually exclusive. It follows from this that the advantages of law would be undeniable, "si tandis que je l'observerois scrupuleusement envers les autres, j'étois sur qu'ils l'observeroient tous envers moi. . . ." In the state of "indépendance", however, there is no such surety, and he who is strongest will prevail. This would be as true of a society of "enlightened and independent" men as it is of states, and this is precisely the reasoning that statesmen employ, Rousseau remarks, since they are accountable only to themselves.²⁶

In an illuminating comment in the Extrait du Projet de paix perpétuelle Rousseau indicates that even if all parties desire to be just, each will have his own interpretation of the law, and because there are no "general principles" firmly established states will inevitably be guided by self-interest. Nor should we assume this to be irrational, for "la raison sans guide assuré, se pliant toujours vers l'intérêt personnel dans les choses douteuses"; hence "la guerre seroit encore inévitable, quand même chacun voudroit être juste."²⁷

25 O.C. III, 284.

26 Ibid., 285.

27 O.C. III, 569. Rousseau is here speaking of "le Droit public de l'Europe", which was a term not used by Saint-Pierre but is found in the work of both Montesquieu and Burlamaqui. In the concluding chapter of the Contrat Social Rousseau makes reference to both "le droit public" and its counterpart "le droit des gens". O.C. III, 470.

In addition to the contradictions which men suffer in society, there is "une contradiction manifeste" in the condition of mankind:

D'homme à homme, nous vivons dans l'état civil et soumis aux loix; de peuple à peuple, chacun jouit de la liberté naturelle: ce qui rend au fond notre situation pire que si ces distinctions étaient inconnues. Car vivant à la fois dans l'ordre social et dans l'état de nature, nous sommes assujettis aux inconvénients de l'un et de l'autre, sans trouver la sûreté dans aucun des deux. 28

It is the international state of nature, or as Rousseau calls it in this passage "la condition mixte", which gives rise to "des calamités publiques",²⁹ or to war as a distinct phenomenon, and since Rousseau was careful to distinguish war from other forms of conflict as something peculiar to states, I shall now examine the nature of war in more detail.

The nature of war

The term "la guerre", as far as Rousseau is concerned, has a very specific meaning, and cannot be applied indiscriminately to conflicts of a lesser kind between individuals. No doubt this is why he does not generally speak of de facto society as a state of war, even though as a condition it bears a strong similarity to the situation in which states coexist.³⁰ As Lassudrie-Duchêne has noted, in his insistence on a circumscribed use of the term Rousseau is consciously taking issue with the ideas of Grotius. This is most evident in the important

28 L'Etat de guerre, O.C. III, 610.

29 Ibid.

30 Rousseau is not entirely consistent in this matter. As noted above (ch. 2, note 67) in the second Discours Rousseau does on occasion speak of de facto society as a "state of war". He also uses this phrase to express the relationship between masters and slaves, citing the example of Sparta; L'Etat de guerre, O.C. III, 608. In the Emile, Rousseau comments that the poverty of the language makes it impossible to use terms always in the same sense; O.C. IV, 345.

chapter "De l'Esclavage" in Book 1 of the Contrat Social, where he refutes the ideas of Grotius (and also of Hobbes and Pufendorf) on the connection between conquest and slavery, and puts forward his own ideas on the nature of war, ideas which are further elaborated in L'Etat de guerre and in the associated fragment Guerre et Etat de guerre.

Grotius had employed a threefold classification of war, distinguishing between private, public and mixed wars. Thus conflicts amongst individuals, amongst states, and also disputes between the state and individuals, were all forms of war. Of these three, Rousseau recognises only "public" war as being war in the proper sense. Rousseau's insistence on the need to make this distinction between war and lesser forms of conflict is not purely semantic; he only takes the trouble to delimit the use of the term "war" because important consequences follow from doing so. Before I consider these consequences, it is necessary to look more closely at Rousseau's definition of war.

The fragment L'Etat de guerre commences with a reference to "cet état de guerre universelle de chacun contre tous" as depicted by Hobbes which Rousseau has already explicitly rejected in the Discours sur l'inégalité.³¹ Rousseau's refutation of the Hobbesian position is two-fold: firstly, man is not naturally disposed to make war on his fellow men, but is peaceful and timid until society works its changes upon him. Secondly, and this is the point which concerns us at this juncture, the chance quarrels which arise from time to time in the state of nature do not constitute war, which is "un état permanent qui suppose des relations constantes. . . ." ³² Hobbes had also seen war as a "state" or condition, as evidenced by his remark in Leviathan that "the nature

31 O.C. III, 601.

32 Ibid., 602.

of War, consisteth not in actual fighting; but in the known disposition thereto, during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary."³³

In Rousseau's view, the "known disposition" to fighting could not characterise the natural state, because this is to suppose individuals imbued with a consciousness of their situation, and with passions which they simply do not possess until "constant relations" have been established. Even in de facto society it is incorrect to speak of war, since relations between individuals are "dans un flux continuel"³⁴ and do not have the more enduring character of inter-state relations.

There is therefore no war between man and man, either in the natural or in the civil state. In the fragment Guerre et Etat de Guerre Rousseau emphasises that

la guerre ne consiste point dans un ou plusieurs combats non prémédités, pas même dans l'homicide et le meurtre commis par un emportement de colère, mais dans un volonté constante, réfléchie et manifestée de détruire son ennemi. . . . ³⁵

Within the state, the sovereign acquires the power to dictate life or death, and duels and such like between individuals do not constitute a state of war because they are specific events, limited in time and space as are quarrels in the state of nature. As to whether kings can have private wars between themselves, Rousseau dismisses this question with the caustic remark that they are not in the habit of engaging in combat personally; moreover, this would depend on whether the prince

33 Leviathan, p. 82. Rousseau distinguishes between "war" and the "state of war" as follows: "Quand on se tient reciproquement en haleine par de continuelles hostilités, c'est proprement ce qu'on appelle faire la guerre. Au contraire quand deux ennemis déclarés demeurent tranquilles et ne font l'un contre l'autre aucun acte offensif, leur relation ne change pas pour cela, mais tant qu'elle n'a point d'effet actuel elle s'appelle seulement état de guerre." Guerre et Etat de guerre, O.C. III, 1903. As Bernard Gagnebin remarks, Rousseau is here formulating a notion closely resembling the twentieth century conception of "cold war". O.C. III, 1899.

34 L'Etat de guerre, O.C. III, 602.

35 O.C. III, 1903.

is himself subject to the laws of the state. If he is, then his life, like that of any citizen, "appartient à l'état"; if, on the other hand, the prince is held to be above the laws, then he lives in "le pur état de nature" and is accountable to no-one, neither subject or foreigner.³⁶

The implicit criticism of absolutism, although at this point in Rousseau's text an aside, is, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, by no means accidental to his analysis of the causes of war, and this is a theme he pursues with some vigour in his works relating to the Abbé de Saint-Pierre. Kings do generally assume themselves to be above the law of the state, and treat the lives of their subjects as pawns in their own deadly games. Rousseau's primary concern in establishing war as something peculiar to states is to demonstrate that there can and should be limits to war deriving from a recognition of its true nature, even if there can be no end to the state of war which characterises international society.

In the Contrat Social Rousseau introduces a factor into his discussion of the nature of war to which he does not make explicit reference in L'Etat de guerre. This factor is property, which plays so important a part in Rousseau's account of conflict amongst men in the second Discours, and here he makes it clear that when he speaks of constant relations, he means not simply social, but also property relations:

Par cela seul que les hommes vivant dans leur primitive indépendance n'ont point entre eux de rapport assez constant pour constituer ni l'état de paix ni l'état de guerre, ils ne sont point naturellement ennemis. C'est le rapport des choses et non des hommes qui constitue la guerre, et l'état de guerre ne pouvant naître des simples relations personnelles, mais seulement des relations

36 L'Etat de guerre, O.C. III, 603.

réelles, la guerre privée ou d'homme à homme ne peut exister, ni dans l'état de nature où il n'y a point de propriété constante, ni dans l'état social où tout est sous l'autorité des lois. 37

The "relation between things" arises as man emerges from the original isolation and self-sufficiency of the state of nature, but does not assume a constant form until the establishment of political societies, for the right to property is a civil, not a natural right. Indeed, as Rousseau's analysis of the origins of the state in the second Discours shows, the need to make property a right by establishing its basis in law is the prime motive for the foundation of the state. Henceforth property relations are fixed within the state, but outside of it there is no power which can restrain competition over material resources. In this sense states, as perceived by Rousseau, are in a similar situation to that faced by the Hobbesian natural man: each has a right to all, or assumes that it has, and will struggle ceaselessly to assert this right. The consequence of "ownership", and of the competing claims of states to territory and resources which inevitably accompany it, is the culmination in organised conflict of those disputes which arose as men first began to acquire material possessions. We may recall here the plea in the second Discours which man's failure to heed has caused endless violence and misery: "Vous êtes perdus, si vous oubliez que les fruits sont à tous, et que la Terre n'est à personne. . . ." ³⁸ Since there is no going back to a condition where property relations are non-existent, man must live with the unfortunate consequences of these relations, whilst recognising

37 O.C. III, 356-57.

38 Discours sur l'inégalité, O.C. III, 164.

that he can at least put them on a legitimate foundation within the state. For when he speaks of "l'autorité des Loix" Rousseau begs the question of whether this authority is merely that usurpation converted to "right" of which he speaks in the second Discours or the expression of the general will. Despotism is inherently inclined to war because their chief "object" will be aggrandizement, and this in turn because such states are internally divided between rich and poor, rulers and ruled.³⁹

What Rousseau wishes to establish is that whilst war has its origins in conflict amongst individuals, such conflict does not in itself constitute war, which is only "natural" among states.⁴⁰ For only in war do we see men fighting each other for reasons which they scarcely know or understand, not as personal enemies but as representatives of the state. It is precisely this which Rousseau wants to make fully explicit, in the hope that to expose war as the confrontation of artificial bodies will eliminate the persistent idea that it is "natural" to man and thus provide the theoretical justification for its limitation. Hence his unambiguous statement that:

La guerre n'est donc point une relation d'homme à homme, mais une relation d'Etat à Etat, dans laquelle les particuliers ne sont ennemis qu'accidentellement, non point comme hommes ni même comme citoyens, mais comme soldats; non point comme membres de la patrie, mais comme ses défenseurs. ⁴¹

39 Rousseau speaks of the "object" of states, following Montesquieu, in the Contrat Social. Thus, for example, the object of the Athenians was letters, that of Rome virtue, and that of Sparta war. O.C. III, 393.

40 Rousseau affirms in L'Etat de guerre that in his interpretation, "l'état de guerre est naturel entre les puissances. . . ." O.C. III, 607.

41 Contrat Social, O.C. III, 357.

The implications of this definition of war are two. First, as war is a relation between state and state, and since the state is an artificial body, war can be conducted without depriving anyone of their life. Secondly, where loss of life is necessary, this must be strictly limited to those who are acting as the "defenders" of the state: war gives no licence to kill ordinary citizens, nor to deprive them of their livelihood. Rousseau explains in L'Etat de guerre that he considers war as something which is waged between "les personnes publiques". As "une personne publique" or "une personne morale", the state is merely "un être de raison", the essence of which is the "convention publique" or social pact.⁴² If the pact is broken, then the state will be destroyed, without the necessity for a single death. Rousseau is here taking the conventional nature of the state, an assumption which he shares with the natural law thinkers, to its logical conclusion, for clearly if the "convention" breaks down, then the state is no more, or rather is reduced to a mere aggregate of men. For although superficially the state might resemble a natural body, it is actually held together by nothing more than consent (whether voluntary or forced), and "le moindre accident peut tout désunir."⁴³ It follows logically from this that the strength of the state will reside not in large numbers of men or vast expanses of territory, but in the strength of the social bond: "Le principe de vie du corps politique, et si l'on peut parler ainsi le cœur de l'Etat est le pacte social par où sitôt qu'on le blesse, à l'instant il meurt, tombe et se dissout. . . ."⁴⁴

42 O.C. III, 608.

43 Ibid., 606.

44 Rousseau continues "mais ce pacte n'est point une chartre en parchemin qu'il suffise de déchirer pour le détruire, il est écrit dans la volonté generale et c'est là qu'il n'est pas facile de l'annuler." Guerre et Etat de guerre, O.C. III, 1900. The full significance of this latter point concerning the general will as the key to the strength of the state will emerge in ch. 6.

If, as Rousseau holds, the object of war is the destruction, or at least the weakening of the enemy state, then the object of attack is not individuals as such, but the convention which forms the foundation of the state and the will which gives it life. Viewing war in this way as conflict between "moral persons" raises important questions concerning the manner in which it is conducted, questions given passing consideration by Rousseau in his political writings, but not addressed at length.

The "laws of war"

Rousseau was not the first to speculate on "laws of war", but he did put forward ideas which were not widely accepted at the time, ideas which can be seen to derive directly from his view of the nature of war. Unfortunately he wrote little on the subject, which he intended to treat along with other questions of international politics in his planned work the Institutions politiques, which never came to fruition. The Contrat Social, which forms one part of this proposed work, ends with a comment on the necessity, having established the foundations of the state in political right, for going on to consider "le droit des gens, le commerce, le droit de la guerre et les conquêtes, le droit public, les ligues, les négociations, les traités etc."⁴⁵ Likewise towards the end of the Emile, where Rousseau gives a summary of the argument of the Contrat Social, he concludes this summary by saying that the final matter for his pupil's consideration will be the subject of leagues and confederations (including an appraisal of the practicability of Saint-Pierre's project) which in itself will lead on to questions of international law, and to the laying down of "les

⁴⁵ O.C. III, 470.

vrais principes du droit de la guerre," at the same time examining "pourquoi Grotius et les autres n'en ont donné que de faux."⁴⁶ Clearly Rousseau thought this an important area of study, and one which followed naturally from a consideration of the internal politics of states; but because he felt that all this formed "un nouvel objet trop vaste pour ma courte vue",⁴⁷ the work was never completed. All that he has to say on the laws of war, then, is to be found in brief references in the Contrat Social and L'Etat de guerre, and in a few fragments which were perhaps early outlines of, or supplements to these references.

It is no contradiction to find Rousseau considering how war can be made more "legitimate" alongside passages in which he gives impassioned condemnations of the state of war, lamenting its futility and barbarity. This is because Rousseau was realistic enough to assume that although there might be partial and temporary escapes from the state of war, there was no final solution to the problem. In his capacity as a moralist he felt bound not only to denounce war, but also to show how, on the basis of his theoretical propositions concerning war, it might be limited in its effects. "War is a relation between state and state": from this simple but important assertion flow Rousseau's ideas concerning the laws of war. To appreciate the importance of this statement one has to look at the views of the natural law thinkers who had previously dealt with this question, views which Rousseau is expressly intending to refute. Grotius, who saw the members of international society

⁴⁶ O.C. IV, 849.

⁴⁷ Contrat Social, O.C. III, 470. Elsewhere, Rousseau comments that because the work would require several years more labour, he had not the "courage" to continue with it. Confessions, O.C. I, 516.

ultimately as individuals, viewed war as taking place between individuals, or groups of individuals. The implication of this view for the conduct of war was that hostilities could rightly be extended to the whole populace of the state. People rather than public persons were the real enemies in war.⁴⁸ Amongst later thinkers, writing at a time when the "states system" as we know it was taking shape, and who therefore put greater stress on the sovereign state as the basic unit of international society, the notion of war between individuals was nevertheless still pervasive. Emerich de Vattel, for example, who was writing contemporaneously with Rousseau, followed Grotius in holding that

Quand le conducteur de l'Etat, le souverain, déclare la guerre à un autre souverain, on entend que la nation entière déclare la guerre à une autre nation. Car le souverain représente la nation et agit au nom de la société entière, et les nations n'ont affaire les unes aux autres qu'en corps, dans leur qualité de nations. Ces deux nations sont donc ennemis, et tous les sujets de l'une sont ennemis de tous les sujets de l'autre. L'usage est ici conforme aux principes. (My emphasis)⁴⁹

It is precisely this assumption that all the subjects of opposing states are enemies which Rousseau finds unacceptable, and inconsistent with his view of the nature of war; it sets individuals against one another when they have no reason for being so, and means that whole populations can be slaughtered in the name of a "just cause" of which they know nothing. His assertion, which stands in clear contrast, is

48 Referring to "the right to kill and injure all who are in the territory of the enemy", Grotius holds that "it extends not only to those who actually bear arms, or are subjects of him that stirs up the war, but in addition to all persons who are in the enemy's territory." On the Law of War and Peace, trans. Francis W. Kelsey, The Classics of International Law, No. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1925), p. 646.

49 Quoted in Lassudrie-Duchêne, Rousseau et le Droit des gens, p. 247. Vattel's Le Droit des Gens was published in 1758.

that "chaque Etat ne peut avoir pour ennemis que d'autres Etats et non pas des hommes, attendu qu'entre choses de diverses natures on ne peut fixer aucun vrai rapport."⁵⁰ Thus whilst Grotius and Vattel had held that in war all inhabitants of the state could rightfully be attacked (although they did suggest that women and children should be spared, in the interests of humanity), Rousseau contends that hostilities can rightfully extend only to soldiers in their capacity as representatives of the "public persons" which are the enemies in war. Moreover, this applies to defenders of the state only whilst they are bearing arms. As soon as their arms are laid down, men are no longer acting in this capacity, and "ils redeviennent simplement hommes et l'on n'a plus de droit sur leur vie."⁵¹ In this Rousseau is also rejecting the "right of slavery" which Grotius and others claimed originated in conquest. Grotius had asserted that the victor in war, having the right to kill the vanquished, could grant them their lives in return for the surrender of their liberty. Rousseau turns this proposition around by utilising his own definition of war: if states and not men are the enemies in conflict, then the victorious party, having achieved the aim in defeating the enemy state, cannot possibly have the right to take any more lives.⁵²

The laws of war which, Rousseau claims, "dérivent de la nature des choses, et sont fondés sur la raison,"⁵³ thus stipulate clearly that all the citizens of a state are not legitimate targets, and that

50 Contrat Social, O.C. III, 357.

51 Ibid.

52 Rousseau also asserts that there is no right of slavery because a man cannot renounce his liberty without renouncing "sa qualité d'homme." Ibid., 356.

53 Ibid., 358.

conquest authorises neither the killing nor the enslavement of the conquered. If war is to be legitimate, it must be limited, and this not simply by a recognition of the claims of humanity. Vattel had admonished: "N'oublions jamais que des ennemis sont des hommes,"⁵⁴ but Rousseau's point is that precisely because the enemies are not men, but states, the sacrifice in human terms must be strictly confined. Indeed, it is quite conceivable for Rousseau that no lives need be taken at all for a war to be successfully waged: "Quelquefois on peut tuer l'Etat sans tuer un seul de ses membres. . . ."⁵⁵ Lassudrie-Duchêne has drawn attention to the similarity between the ideas of Rousseau and Montesquieu on this point, and there is every reason to suppose that Rousseau had taken note of his predecessor's comments when he read L'Esprit des Lois. Montesquieu too asserts that "les auteurs de notre droit public" have fallen into great errors, and have "supposé dans les conquérants un droit, je ne sais quel, de tuer. . . ." On the contrary,, he goes on, "lorsque la conquête est faite, le conquérant n'a plus le droit de tuer, puisqu'il n'est plus dans le cas de la défense naturelle, et de sa propre conservation."⁵⁶ This assertion reflects Montesquieu's view of war as being authorised only by that right of self-preservation which states, like men, possess. Once this goal is attained, no further acts of violence can be justified. It also reflects that same emphasis on the nature of war as peculiar to states which Rousseau takes as the proper foundation for the laws of war. Montesquieu says that the natural lawists have mistakenly assumed that the destruction of the

⁵⁴ Quoted in Lassudrie-Duchêne, Rousseau et le Droit des gens, p. 252.

⁵⁵ Contrat Social, O.C. III, 357.

⁵⁶ L'Esprit des Lois, pp. 169-70.

state entails the destruction of the men who compose it, but this does not follow:

"Car, de ce que la société serait anéantie, il ne s'ensuivrait pas que les hommes qui la forment dussent aussi être anéantis. La société est l'union des hommes, et non pas les hommes; le citoyen peut périr, et l'homme rester." 57

Although Montesquieu is not as explicit as Rousseau, who calls the state merely "a thing of reason", the argument is the same. Since the state is born of convention, and as a collectivity is something different from a mere aggregation of individuals, its destruction requires only the removal of the "public convention". Montesquieu comments that in former times, small and defenceless polities lost through conquest "non seulement la puissance exécutive et la législative, comme aujourd'hui, mais encore tout ce qu'il y a de propriété parmi les hommes." And in a note he adds that by "property" he means: "Liberté civile, biens, femmes, enfants, temples et sépultures même."⁵⁸ In other words, in more barbarous times, warfare did not stop at that which is necessary for the annihilation of the state, the destruction of its legislative and executive power, but also entailed gross loss of life, liberty and the means of subsistence.

The question of whether in war the property of citizens could rightfully be seized was another which those concerned to put forward laws of war had considered. Grotius had made no distinction between ^{and "private"} "public" goods, and had included pillage and looting in the rights of the victor. Rousseau, however, in accordance with his view of war as a "public act", does make such a distinction. Whilst a "just

57 Ibid., p 170.

58 Ibid., p 158.

prince" may rightfully lay hands on "tout ce qui appartient au public," he will respect "la personne et les biens des particuliers. . . ."59

The same concern can be seen in Rousseau's insistence that in order to be legitimate, war must be declared:

Les déclarations de guerre sont moins des avertissemens aux puissances qu'à leurs sujets. L'étranger, soit roi, soit particulier, soit peuple, qui vole, tûe ou détient les sujets sans déclarer la guerre au prince, n'est pas un ennemi, c'est un brigand. 60

The natural law thinkers had likewise claimed that war should be declared, but Rousseau's object is once again to specify war as a relation between "public persons" and to limit its effects upon individuals. In one of the fragments on war Rousseau amplifies this point by saying that the state of war can only arise from the "free choice" of the belligerents, and that if one party attacks and the other chooses not to defend himself, "il n'y a point d'état de guerre mais seulement violence et agression. . . ."61 War, in short, is the most artificial and "conscious" form of conflict, because calculated as an integral part of the policy of states. It must be recognised as such, and not viewed as the inevitable result of "human nature" at work, so that it might be more effectively proscribed or limited. Rousseau unhesitatingly condemns the attitude of those princes who treat war as their natural prerogative, and sacrifice the lives of their subjects for their every whim, and urges: "Ne cherchons point ce qu'on a fait mais ce qu'on doit faire et rejetons de viles et mercenaires autorités qui ne tendent qu'à rendre les hommes esclaves,

59 Contrat Social, O.C. III, 357.

60 Ibid.

61 O.C. III, 615.

méchans et malheureux."⁶² Rousseau had little hope that the tyrants who then dominated political life would be much interested in seeking to settle their claims with greater justice and humanity; nevertheless he thought it important to urge acceptance of "laws of war" which would at least provide some standard by which the policies and practices of ~~statesmen~~ might be judged. A related matter which Rousseau also thought worthy of consideration was the notion of a confederation of states, which would link states by some kind of bond similar to, but looser than, the bond linking individuals within the body politic. This was a possibility which was brought to the forefront of his attention in the context of his reading of the works of the Abbé de Saint-Pierre, whose works he agreed to edit. The Abbé had devoted many years of effort to devising a plan for a European confederation which he hoped would put an end to war in Europe, perhaps then being extended more widely. As Rousseau had become acutely aware of the problems inherent in an unregulated society of states, he was interested in Saint-Pierre's idea, and readily recognised in the Abbé's work the endeavours of a fellow moralist. It is to Rousseau's consideration of Saint-Pierre's Projet de paix perpétuelle that I shall now turn.

62 Ibid., 616.

CHAPTER 5

ROUSSEAU AND THE ABBÉ DE SAINT-PIERRE

There is good reason to suppose that whilst Rousseau had mixed motives for undertaking to present the Abbé de Saint-Pierre's work in more readable form, he was genuinely interested in the plan for a European confederation, conceived by the Abbé as the first step in the establishment of a lasting peace throughout the world.¹ In the Discours sur l'inégalité Rousseau had already outlined the two aspects of the problem which made the plan for confederation worth considering: first, international society is akin to the state of nature in that lacking laws and rulers, it provides no means of conciliating the conflicting interests of states. Second, these conflicting interests, which exist necessarily because states confront each other as so many particular wills, are channelled into the most destructive of directions by the greed and unscrupulousness of those who direct state policy. The Abbé had hoped to reconcile the conflicting interests of European states by joining them in a confederation which would secure the designs of princes by guaranteeing their territory and status as rulers. Rousseau believed the plan worthy of serious consideration not because he viewed it as a likely solution to the problem of war, but because it was addressed to this problem in terms to which he was disposed to respond, given the tenor of his own thinking. He also found himself much in sympathy with the ideals of a fellow moralist so patently concerned with the well being of mankind. Since Rousseau's

1 I have used the term "confederation" throughout because it is used by Rousseau in his abstract of the Abbé's peace plan, and occasionally by Saint-Pierre himself. In terms of the nature of the union as conceived by Saint-Pierre, it would be more appropriate to call the association a "federation", since it would impose considerable limitations on the sovereignty of its members. For further comment, see below, note 26, and ch. 6, pp. 187-88.

Extrait du Projet de paix perpétuelle and accompanying Jugement sur le Projet de paix perpétuelle are his only completed works on the subject of international politics, it is a matter of some importance for the commentator to assess these works in the context of his political thought as a whole.

Rousseau took on the task of abridging Saint-Pierre's diffuse and repetitive works on the suggestion of Madame Dupin, for whom he worked for a time as a secretary. Saint-Pierre had died in 1743, and Rousseau tells us that Madame Dupin, at whose salons the Abbé had been a regular visitor, "conservoit pour la mémoire du bon homme un respect et une affection qui faisoient honneur à tous deux, et son amour-propre eut été flatté de voir ressusciter par son secrétaire les ouvrages morts-nés de son ami."² In the Confessions Rousseau gives us no indication of why he agreed to undertake the work, but we know, on his own account, that he held Madame Dupin in high regard; he may, of course, have been further influenced by the fact that he had met the Abbé at her salons ("J'avois un peu vu l'Abbé de Saint-Pierre dans sa vieillesse. . . .")³ What degree of familiarity Rousseau had with Saint-Pierre's ideas at this time we do not know, but he must have been aware of the Abbé's reputation as a moralist and of his lifelong attempts to secure various reforms conducive to the betterment of mankind.⁴ Whatever his motivation, Rousseau was duly given seventeen volumes of Saint-Pierre's collected works and six cartons of manuscripts, which he took with him in 1756 to the country retreat made available to him by Madame d'Epinay,

2 Confessions, O.C. I, 407.

3 Ibid., 423.

4 In a fragment from a biography of Saint-Pierre which Rousseau left unfinished, he comments of the Abbé: "J'écris la vie d'un homme simple, honnête et vrai. Ces qualités me l'ont fait aimer et le feront aimer sans doute aux lecteurs." O.C. III, 657.

his intention being to devote himself to the task immediately. He soon realised what he had taken on: reading and selecting from so many "volumes diffus, confus, pleins de longueurs, de redites, de petites vues courtes ou fausses, parmi lesquelles il en falloit pêcher quelques unes grandes, belles et qui donnoient le courage de supporter ce pénible travail."⁵ It was only through a sense of obligation to those who had suggested the work that he carried on with it; even so, he accomplished just two extracts from the Abbé's works, on those subjects which he felt to be most important. The Extrait du Projet de paix perpétuelle was the first to be completed, after Rousseau had steeled himself to read "absolument tout ce que l'Abbé avoit écrit sur ce beau sujet, sans jamais me rebuter par ses longueurs et par ses redites."⁶ Then he turned to the Polysynodie before finally abandoning the work, admitting that it was an enterprise on which he should never have embarked. Rousseau nevertheless felt compelled to write a "judgement" on each work since the circumstances in which he had undertaken to abridge and "translate" Saint-Pierre's volumes had demanded a sympathetic treatment of the Abbé's ideas, yet Rousseau was loath to give his name to this enterprise without making his own position clear. Moreover, given the utopian nature of the Abbé's thinking: "Passer à l'auteur ses visions c'étoit ne rien faire d'utile. . . ."⁷ Thus Rousseau conceived the plan of

5 Confessions, O.C. I, 408. Rousseau worked from the seventeen volumes of the Ouvrages de Morale et de Politique (Rotterdam: Beman, 1729-1741), and from six cartons of manuscripts, the contents of which he catalogued. In comparing Rousseau's treatment of Saint-Pierre's works with the original, I have consulted these two sources (the manuscripts being housed at Neuchâtel) and the Projet pour rendre la paix perpétuelle en Europe, 2 vols. (Utrecht: Antoine Shouten, 1712); hereafter the published works will be cited as Ouvrages and Projet.

6 Confessions, O.C. I, 423.

7 Ibid., 422.

giving Saint-Pierre's ideas and his own separately, a "judicious" course of action not only in that he could then take pains to show the Abbé's schemes off at their best, but also in that his Jugements were intended to appear later, after the abstracts had made their impact.⁸ The finished products indicate that Rousseau was unable to maintain the rigid distinction between "translator" and critic, and perhaps this contributed, along with the sheer tedium of the work, to his decision to abandon the undertaking. The reason Rousseau himself gives is that he realised it might be dangerous for him to have his name linked with Saint-Pierre's controversial ideas, lacking as he did the Abbé's status and being of Genevan rather than French origin.

The Project for Perpetual peace

Rousseau admits in the Confessions that his approach to the task he had undertaken was not that of merely "translating" the Abbé's pedestrian and discursive exposition. He comments that

en ne me bornant pas à la fonction de traducteur, il ne m'étoit pas défendu de penser quelquefois par moi-même, et je pouvois donner telle forme à mon ouvrage, que bien d'importantes vérités y passeroient sous le manteau de l'Abbé de St. Pierre encore plus heureusement que sous le mien. 9

This admission is substantiated by the reactions of some of Rousseau's contemporaries to the finished Extrait. The first publisher to see the work asked Rousseau if it should not be printed in his name, since "l'Analiste est ici créateur à bien des égards."¹⁰ Rousseau replied that he had indeed sometimes adopted a different viewpoint from that

8 Neither of the Jugements were published in Rousseau's lifetime.

9 O.C. I, 408.

10 Avant-propos de M. de Bastide, O.C. III, 1542.

of the Abbé, but he did not want "une gloire usurpée."¹¹ In the Confessions, referring to the way in which he had decided to tackle the work, Rousseau says that as far as the extracts were concerned, his intent was "d'entrer dans ses vues, de les éclaircir, de les étendre, et de ne rien épargner pour leur faire valoir tout leur prix" (my emphasis).¹² He felt that he had sufficient licence, then, to "extend" the Abbé's ideas, but also felt compelled to attach his own "judgements" on these ideas so as to dispel any impression that he subscribed wholeheartedly to the Abbé's standpoint. This did not prevent some contemporaries, and various commentators, failing to distinguish between the views of Saint-Pierre and Rousseau on the question of "perpetual peace".¹³ Indeed, a recent study of Saint-Pierre's work indicates that this position still has its adherents. M.L. Perkins suggests that Rousseau's creative role in the treatment of the Abbé's ideas has been over emphasised, and holds that the differences between the extract and the original are "inconsequential", largely a matter of style.¹⁴ Moreover, Perkins concludes that Rousseau's Jugement exhibits "few adverse criticisms of the 'Paix perpétuelle'. . . ."¹⁵ Enthusiasts for the notion of peace through leagues or confederations have similarly blurred the distinction between the ideas of the two authors, but closer studies of Rousseau's ideas have

11 Ibid.

12 O.C. I, 422-23.

13 Voltaire, for example, in a letter to Jean Robert Tronchin written on the 19th March 1761, commented tersely: "Ils ont dit la paix, la paix et il n'y avait point de paix, et ce fou de Diogene Rousseau propose la paix perpétuelle." Voltaire's Correspondence, ed. Theodore Besterman (Geneva: Institut et Musée Voltaire, 1953-1965) XLV, 223. For a more recent example, see Introduction, note 6.

14 Merle L. Perkins, The Moral and Political Philosophy of the Abbé de Saint-Pierre (Geneva: Librairie E. Droz, 1959), p. 112.

15 Ibid., p. 107.

been more scrupulous.¹⁶ The most recent scholarship, to be found in the Pléiade edition of Rousseau's works, is represented by Sven Stelling-Michaud's assessment that whilst Rousseau owed a considerable debt to the ideas of his predecessor, differences between the two authors are substantial and clearly manifest.¹⁷

That Rousseau has transformed the style and presentation of Saint-Pierre's project is evident from the most cursory comparison of the extract with the original.¹⁸ Saint-Pierre, in accordance with his notion that there would be a "science of government"¹⁹ and that this entailed treating political problems as one would do mathematical ones, stating propositions and then "proving" them, wrote in a way unlikely to inspire his readers. Repetition, he said, was necessary because most readers were not sufficiently attentive to bear in mind all the essential points from one section of a work to the next, and he was

-
- 16 In particular, the works by Windenberger, Hinsley and Hoffman discussed in Chapter 7, but the distinction between the ideas of Saint-Pierre and Rousseau is also recognised and made explicit in Vaughan, The Political Writings of Rousseau, and in C.W. Hendel, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Moraliste, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934). An earlier work on Saint-Pierre had underlined the differences between the two authors: "A chaque instant on reconnaît la pensée de ^{Rousseau} Saint-Pierre à côté de celle du bon abbé. . . ." Georges de Molinari, L'abbé de Saint-Pierre (Paris, 1857), p. 99.
- 17 Introduction to Ecrits sur l'abbé de Saint-Pierre, O.C. III, CXXX-CLVIII.
- 18 The Extrait bears most similarity to the Abrégé du Projet de paix perpétuelle, (hereafter cited as Abrégé) which forms volume one of the Ouvrages, but for the purpose of comparison with the Abbé's ideas, reference will also be made to the two volume Projet, which gives a more lengthy exposition of the peace plan. It is worth noting that in his treatment of the other work he abridged, the Polysynodie, Rousseau is much more faithful to the original. Presumably this is because, in his own words: "De tous les ouvrages de l'Abbé de St Pierre, le Discours sur la Polysynodie est, à mon avis, le plus approfondi, le mieux raisonné, celui où l'on trouve le moins de répétitions, et même le mieux écrit. . . ." Jugement sur la Polysynodie, O.C. III, 635.
- 19 The Abbé speaks of "la siance du gouverneman" as that which "est plus importante au bonheur des peuples . . ."; Neuchâtel MS 226.

most concerned that his "proofs" should have their full impact. There is little disputing Rousseau's assessment that this approach makes for very tedious reading, and in his treatment of the work Rousseau dispensed with this mode of discourse altogether, substituting a tightly argued essay which, in characteristically eloquent style, makes a powerful impression. As to the substance of the Extrait, Rousseau immediately makes it clear to the alert reader that he has entered into the spirit of the Abbé's thinking and yet that he maintains a sceptical attitude towards the specific proposals he is about to describe. This he achieves with great skill:

Comme jamais Projet plus grand, plus beau ni plus utile n'occupa l'esprit humain, que celui d'une Paix perpétuelle et universelle entre tous les Peuples de l'Europe, jamais Auteur ne mérita mieux l'attention du Public que celui qui propose des moyens pour mettre ce Projet en exécution. Il est même bien difficile qu'une pareille matiere laisse un homme sensible et vertueux exempt d'un peu d'enthousiasme; et je ne sçais si l'illusion d'un cœur véritablement humain, à qui son zele rend tout facile, n'est pas en cela préférable à cette âpre et repoussante raison, qui trouve toujours dans son indifférence pour le bien public le premier obstacle à tout ce qui peut le favoriser. 20

The key to understanding Rousseau's position is the phrase "illusions of a generous spirit", which conveys at once his scepticism and his enthusiasm for what the Abbé has attempted. As a moralist, he has given unqualified support to the Abbé's efforts, but at the same time he has prepared the ground for his subsequent criticisms, founded on his appraisal of the realities of domestic and international politics.

Rousseau then proceeds to consider at some length the reasons which necessitate the "European society" proposed by Saint-Pierre. As both Vaughan and Stelling-Michaud have pointed out, this constitutes Rousseau's own introduction to the project; to quote from the latter, "La première partie appartient en propre à Rousseau qui, ne faisant

que de légers emprunts à l'abbé, y a exposé ses idées personnelles."²¹

Comparison with the original shows the extent to which Rousseau has used the opening section as a vehicle for the expression of his own view of the European states system. Rousseau agrees with the Abbé that "Les Souverains d'Europe, faute de Société permanente entre eux, ont bien senti qu'ils étoient exposés nécessairement aux malheurs d'une Guerre presque perpétuelle. . . ."²²

Saint-Pierre's analysis of the reasons for this sorry condition owes much to Hobbes: European sovereigns inhabit a world akin to that of "savages" who live unconstrained by society or laws, hence subject to perpetual disputes and lacking all security.²³ It is Rousseau rather than the Abbé who uses the term "state of nature" to describe this condition, and he no doubt recognised the similarity between Saint-Pierre's account of this condition and the "war of all against all" as depicted by Hobbes. As a description of international "society", this was perfectly acceptable to Rousseau, although as was made clear in Chapter 2, he did not regard this as a parallel to the natural state of man; the second Discours expressly rejects the notion of the "savage" condition as a state of war. For Rousseau the international "state of nature" is qualitatively different from the true state of nature, and he wishes to make this manifest in the Extrait whilst apparently simply doing the job of explaining the reasoning behind the Abbé's idea for a European confederation.

21 Notes, O.C. III, 1548. Vaughan comments that: "The long introduction . . . itself a brilliant historical essay, is all his own . . ."; The Political Writings of Rousseau, I, 360. Likewise, the first chapter of Rousseau's abstract of the Polysynodie can be regarded as his own introduction.

22 Projet, 2, 314.

23 Saint-Pierre shares Hobbes' view that in the natural state men live in "continual fear, and danger of violent death . . ."; Leviathan, p. 82.

Rousseau's intention is to emphasise the "constant relations"²⁴ between states which make their condition quite different from that of individuals in the state of nature. The state of war is a function, then, not only of the selfish design of princes unfettered by a superior power, amply demonstrated by Saint-Pierre, but of a situation where links between, and dependencies among states make conflict both perpetual and severe. The closer the links, the worse the situation will be:

. . . l'antique union des Peuples de l'Europe a compliqué leurs intérêts et leurs droits de milles manieres: ils se touchent par tant de points, que le moindre mouvement des uns ne peut manquer de choquer les autres; leurs divisions sont d'autant plus funestes, que leurs liasons sont plus intimes; et leurs fréquentes querelles ont presque la cruauté des guerres civiles. 25

For Saint-Pierre, on the other hand, whilst he recognises the potent contribution of princely quarrels and entanglements in maintaining "une Guerre presque perpetuelle", close links between states, especially in the form of commercial relations, are to be encouraged, for they show the way forward to a more complete union of states in which war as a means of settling disputes will be consciously eschewed. In this hope Saint-Pierre was to be followed, of course, by numerous writers and statesmen up to the present; Rousseau was a good deal more sceptical and saw mutual dependencies at the international, as at the domestic level, as destructive - the way to breed rather than to reduce conflict. Saint-Pierre's hope, that dependence on the law could bring about perpetual peace just as it provided settlement of disputes within the domestic political order, he was unable to share, and he hints at this from the outset in the Extrait. In this context it is worth noting

²⁴ L'Etat de guerre, O.C. III, 602.

²⁵ Extrait, O.C. III, 568.

that, as F.H. Hinsley points out, in common with other contemporary advocates of "peace plans" (in particular William Penn and John Bellers) Saint-Pierre very probably viewed Europe as a unity derived from the Holy Roman Empire rather than as a mere aggregate of separate states. It may have seemed a relatively small step from this to the notion of a workable confederation, consolidating those bonds already in existence.²⁶ Whilst Rousseau obviously shared to some degree the intellectual milieu in which Saint-Pierre formulated his ideas, his own political thinking had been nourished especially by his early reading of the ancients. Rousseau's Enlightenment contemporaries had considerable veneration for the ancients particularly on account of their learning, their culture and the sophistication of their arts and sciences; Rousseau's, on the other hand, was founded on his vision of their political achievements, not least on the spirit of independence and self-sufficiency which he saw both in the writings of the Stoics and in the political practice of the Greek polis. The Greeks might have had their Amphictyons and the Achaean League, as he comments in

26 F.H. Hinsley, Power and the Pursuit of Peace, p. 40. Hinsley goes on to comment of Saint-Pierre and his contemporaries that: "They had not decided whether the need was for the better organisation of a single community which was losing its ancient bonds or for the imposition of a new organisation upon individual and competing component states. . . . It was not that they were uncertain as between the merits of a federal and a confederal solution. They appealed to separate sovereignties; they also assumed that these sovereignties coexisted in what was already a single community, or had been until recently. For them there were separate states, but the states were not sufficiently separate for the choice between federal and confederal schemes to arise"; p. 42. Hinsley recognises the Abbé's proposed association as a federation because it "was to permit no right of secession and was to have the power of intervening in the internal affairs of member states." Ibid., p. 53. Rousseau's comments make it clear that he is well aware of the problems raised by this limitation of sovereignty: applied to Princes, such a prospect could hardly be expected to secure their approval, and applied to legitimate states, a federation would in principle be undesirable.

the Extrait,²⁷ but such he would have seen as recognition of the necessity to preserve the integrity of the independent city state rather than the attempt to diminish independence by setting up a superior power which would destroy "the right of sovereignty".²⁸

Thus although in the first part of the Extrait Rousseau gives a masterly survey of the European states system, displaying, in the words of Stelling-Michaud, a "vif sentiment . . . de la réalité européenne,"²⁹ he paints the picture of a Europe which has in many senses its own cultural and political identity only to highlight the dreadful effects of this "société sans loix ou sans Chefs. . . ."³⁰ Nothing like Rousseau's lengthy description of the "société des Peuples de l'Europe"³¹ appears in Saint-Pierre's works, and Rousseau uses this, as he does also in l'Etat de guerre, to underline the terrible state of war which such a "society" perpetuates, a state not amenable, as the Abbé believes, to a practicable transition to a society with laws and "rulers" (the European diet). Having asserted that Europe is not merely an assemblage of peoples with a name in common, but "une société réelle", Rousseau goes on with devastating eloquence:

A voir, d'un autre côté, les dissensions perpétuelles, les brigandages, les usurpations, les révoltes, les guerres, les meurtres, qui désolent journellement ce respectable séjour des Sages, ce brillant asyle des Sciences et des Arts; à considérer nos beaux discours et nos procédés horribles, tant d'humanité dans les maximes et de cruauté dans les actions, une Religion si douce et une si sanguinaire intolérance, une Politique si sage dans les Livres et si dure dans la pratique,

27 O.C. III, 564.

28 Rousseau speaks of the need to investigate how far the rights of the confederation could be stretched without diminishing sovereignty in the Emile, O.C. IV, 848.

29 Introduction to Ecrits sur l'abbé de Saint-Pierre, O.C. III, CXLII.

30 Extrait, O.C. III, 568.

31 Ibid., 565.

des Chefs si bienfaisans et des Peuples si misérables, des Gouvernemens si modérés et des guerres si cruelles: on sait à peine comment concilier ces étranges contrariétés; et cette fraternité prétendue des Peuples de l'Europe ne semble être qu'un nom de dérision, pour exprimer avec ironie leur mutuelle animosité. 32

Rousseau has, in admirably skilful fashion, demonstrated not only the terrible features of the European states system, but has also undermined the premise upon which the Abbé's scheme was based: that sufficient identity of interests exists among sovereigns in Europe for a confederation to be built. The common cultural ties which Rousseau observes in Europe, and which he concedes owe their derivation in part to the legacy of the Roman Empire, are not, in his view, enough to facilitate the transcendence of the particular interests of its states, or of its princes in relation to their subjects. The strong sense of a "European identity" which prevails is not a pointer to a positive way forward; it is a damning criticism of the nature of European states. Rousseau was to comment later in his Considérations sur le Gouvernement de Pologne that:

Il n'y a plus aujourd'hui de François, d'Allemands, d'Espagnols, d'Anglois même, quoiqu'on en dise; il n'y a que des Européens. Tous ont les mêmes goûts, les mêmes passions, les mêmes mœurs, parceque aucun n'a reçu de forme nationale par une institution particulière. Tous dans les mêmes circonstances feront les mêmes choses; tous se diront disintéressés et seront fripons; tous parleront du bien public et ne penseront qu'à eux-mêmes. . . . 33

Such cosmopolitanism is not a mark of progress, but of degeneracy, since it denotes the absence of love for one's country, one's fellow citizens.

The conclusion which Rousseau draws from his analysis of the mutual dependencies which bind the peoples of Europe so closely

32 Extrait, O.C. III, 567-68.

33 O.C. III, 960. Hereafter this work will be cited as Gouvernement de Pologne.

together is that any attempt to construct a closer union on such foundations is doomed to failure: a conclusion which he does not make fully explicit in the Extrait for obvious reasons. The concepts of dependence and independence are, as explained above, central to Rousseau's thought, figuring prominently in all Rousseau's major works. He must have considered with some interest, then, the way in which Saint-Pierre employed these concepts in arguing the case for a European league. The Abbé is most concerned to reassure princes that the apparent loss of independence which they will suffer in joining a confederation is in reality a release from the onerous dependence on the recourse to arms to which they are habituated. Saint-Pierre "proves" this point by elaborating the analogy with the "savage" life, in which independence is likewise more apparent than real. For in such a condition, whilst depending on no laws,

à cause des necessitez de la vie, ils dépendent extremement des Saisons; ils dépendent même des bêtes féroces, et ce qui est de plus terrible dans leur dépendence, ils dépendent de leurs voisins qui font autant de bêtes féroces qui peuvent tous les jours leur ôter impunément leurs biens et la vie même. 34

The lesson is clear: just as men were forced out of this state of nature in which their security was so dependent on factors largely outside of their control, entailing a constant struggle which cost them dear, so European sovereigns should realise that this is precisely their position, though they falsely call it independence. True independence will be secured by their recognition that co-operation and, where necessary, constraint, serves their best interest. It is evident that Saint-Pierre's reasoning owes a great deal to that of Hobbes, a debt the Abbé openly acknowledged, although Hobbes, believing the international state of nature to be more tolerable than the state

34 Projet, 2, 317.

of nature proper, had not been led to the idea of confederation. Rousseau was familiar with Hobbes' reasonings well before his acquaintance with the works of the Abbé, and had firmly rejected them, substituting an analysis of the origins of the state which took into account not only conflict but also social inequality. The dependence on arms which Rousseau likewise recognises in the policies of European sovereigns is, in his account, attributable in the first instance to the manner in which they, or more precisely their ancestors, gained power. Such dependence persists partly because their "usurpation" has to be defended, and partly because aggressive policies pander to their inflamed passions, fuelled by the entanglements with other similar powers which provide ample stimulus for conflict. Because it is primarily his subjects who suffer from the perpetual state of war, there is no real incentive for the prince to seek a lasting peace.

Even where he moves on to relate the substance and the detail of the Abbé's plan, Rousseau allows himself the liberty of slipping in the odd phrase indicating his own scepticism:

Les causes du mal étant une fois connues, le remede, s'il existe, est suffisamment indiqué par elles. Chacun voit que toute société se forme par les intérêts communs; que toute division naît des intérêts opposés; que mille événemens fortuits pouvant changer et modifier les uns et les autres, dès qu'il y a société, il faut nécessairement une force coactive, qui ordonne et concerte les mouvemens de ses Membres. . . . 35 (my emphasis)

In his presentation of the precise details of the plan for confederation Rousseau is, however, faithful to the original apart from some minor changes. In the Abrégé du Projet de paix perpétuelle, despite the fact that there are still a great many repetitions and digressions, Saint-Pierre had abridged the Projet substantially, reducing the original "fundamental articles" to which princes would be obliged to subscribe

35 Extrait, O.C. III, 569.

from twelve to five. In the Extrait Rousseau has made little change in these articles, merely summarising details which Saint-Pierre had given at greater length in his "explanations" and combining certain points which the Abbé had made separately. Rousseau himself comments that the five articles are "abrégés et couchés en regles générales. . . ." ³⁶ As to those sovereigns which are to be included in the Diet, each to have an equal voice, Rousseau again follows the Abrégé rather than the Projet in listing nineteen, only changing the order in which they are listed. ³⁷

Having given the outlines of the plan Rousseau goes on, as did the Abbé, to consider objections to the scheme; but substituting two for the large number related by Saint-Pierre (thirty in the Abrégé, seventy in the Projet) so as not to lose himself, and the reader, in "des volumes de riens. . . ." ³⁸ Two questions, he says, have to be considered: first, would the confederation fulfil its purpose and ensure a lasting peace, and second, is it in the interests of the sovereigns concerned to establish such a body? In answer to the first question, Rousseau asserts, after an admirably lucid and succinct account of the various advantages and safeguards elaborated by Saint-Pierre, that peace would certainly be maintained by the confederation "une fois établie. . . ." ³⁹ Which leads to the second question, at which point Rousseau can no longer maintain the guise of mere "translator": "Prouver que la Paix est en générale préférable à la guerre, c'est ne rien dire à celui qui croit avoir des raisons de préférer la guerre à

³⁶ Ibid., 576.

³⁷ Ibid., 577; Abrégé, 247-48. In the Projet, Saint-Pierre had listed 24 sovereigns.

³⁸ Extrait, O.C. III, 576.

³⁹ Ibid., 580.

la Paix. . . ."⁴⁰ What the confederation will do, he goes on, is to take from sovereigns the "right" of being unjust - and what will they receive in return? Rousseau makes his own position clear:

Je n'oserois répondre avec l'Abbé de Saint-Pierre: Que la véritable gloire des Princes consiste à procurer l'utilité publique, et le bonheur de leurs Sujets; que tous leurs intérêts sont subordonnés à leur réputation; et que la réputation qu'on acquiert auprès des sages, se mesure sur le bien que l'on fait aux hommes; que l'entreprise d'une Paix perpétuelle étant la plus grande qui ait jamais été faite, est la plus capable de couvrir son Auteur d'une gloire immortelle; que cette même entreprise étant aussi la plus utile aux Peuples, est encore la plus honorable aux Souverains; la seule surtout qui ne soit pas souillée de sang, de rapines, de pleurs, de malédictions; et qu'enfin le plus sûr moyen de se distinguer dans la foule des Rois, est de travailler au bonheur public. Ces discours, dans les cabinets des Ministres, ont couvert de ridicule l'Auteur et ses projets: mais ne méprisons pas comme eux ses raisons; et quoi qu'il en soit des vertus des Princes, parlons de leurs intérêts. ⁴¹

The sort of comment which Rousseau claims has made Saint-Pierre an object of ridicule, and to which he cannot put his name, is typified by the Abbé's answer to the sixty-ninth "objection" in the Projet, that the interest of sovereigns will be opposed to that of their subjects:

. . . le plus habile de tous les Princes, c'est-à-dire, qu'il verra clairement ce qui est conforme à ses plus grands intérêts; . . . il verra clairement que son plus grand intérêt, c'est de faire sentir sans cesse à ses sujets les effets de sa justice, de sa bonté et de sa prudence. ⁴²

In wishing to confine his comments to the interests of princes Rousseau clearly does not accept Saint-Pierre's hopeful assertion that a

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 580-81. Rousseau had been urged by the censor to replace "Je n'oserois répondre" with "J'oserois répondre." Rousseau's reply to his publisher Bastide was: "Je ne puis absolument pas dire j'oserois attendu qu'il n'est pas vrai que j'oserois." He proposed that the text should be left as it was, with the alteration added as a correction in the errata. Thus: "Le texte sera ma pensée; l'errata celle du Censeur." Quoted in Notes, O.C. III, 1550.

⁴² Projet, 2, 252.

sovereign's best interest lies in treating his subjects well; however rational in theory, this is so obviously at variance with political practice that it undermines any credibility the Abbé's scheme might have. Having betrayed his differences with the author of the Projet Rousseau returns to a straightforward elaboration of the advantages of the proposed confederation, arguing, as Saint-Pierre does, on the basis of the benefits which would accrue to princes in terms of saving the costs of war and conquest, and in being secure from the rebellion of his subjects. The people would benefit also in that spared the costs of war, more of the national budget could go to useful projects and pursuits.⁴³ However, having made a seemingly very effective case, Rousseau ends the Extrait with a flourish of ambiguous rhetoric, which again, for those sensitive to his own perspective, reveals his scepticism. Having summarised the main lines of the argument, asserting that a peace established on such a basis would indeed be solid and lasting, Rousseau concludes:

Sans doute, ce n'est pas à dire que les Souverains adopteront ce Projet; (Qui peut répondre de la raison d'autrui?) mais seulement qu'ils adopteroient, s'ils consultoient leurs vrais intérêts: car on doit bien remarquer que nous n'avons point supposé les hommes tels qu'ils devraient être, bons, généreux, désintéressés, et aimant le bien public par humanité; mais tels qu'ils sont, injustes avides, et préférant leur intérêt à tout. La seule chose qu'on leur suppose, c'est assez de raison pour voir ce qui leur est utile, et assez de courage pour faire leur propre bonheur. Si, malgré tout cela, ce Projet demeure sans exécution, ce n'est donc pas qu'il soit chimérique; c'est que les hommes sont insensés, et que c'est une sorte de folie d'être sage au milieu des fous. ⁴⁴

43 Extrait, O.C. III, 584-85.

44 Ibid., 588-89. Rousseau had of course explicitly taken men "tels qu'ils sont" as his object in the Contrat Social, O.C. III, 351. He remarked in a fragment concerning Saint-Pierre that: "C'eut été un homme très sage s'il n'eut eu la folie de la raison. Il sembloit ignorer que les princes comme les autres hommes ne se ménent que par leurs passions et ne raisonnent que pour justifier les sottises qu'elles leur font faire." O.C. III, 657-58.

Rousseau has managed to present a cogent outline of Saint-Pierre's plan, with a convincing account of its manifold advantages to sovereigns, without actually committing himself to endorsing the Abbé's faith that European sovereigns will in due course resolve to pursue their true interest and found a confederation. He has a deep admiration for a man whose "madness" was to believe that the rationality of a scheme had only to be exhaustively demonstrated to convince, sooner or later, those with sufficient power to implement it, and who had the moral courage to persist despite indifference and derision. But in his view this is a "kind of madness" in a world where men are demonstrably "senseless", wrenched away from their true nature to pursue blindly their immediate self-interest and to gratify every passion, and where states are led by those in whom these characteristics have reached their extreme. Saint-Pierre could not have had a more eloquent "translator", nor, probably, a moral consciousness more in sympathy with his own; on the other hand, it would be difficult to find a more effective critic. Once Rousseau is freed from the constraints imposed upon him by the task of recasting the Abbé's work, the full force of his critical intelligence is brought to bear on the peace plan, with devastating effect.

Rousseau's Jugement

Rousseau intended his Jugement to appear after the Extrait so that the latter could have its full impact, particularly, as he comments in the Confessions, since his treatment would entail substantial criticism of the Abbé's ideas.⁴⁵ In fact, the work only appeared posthumously in 1782, which no doubt accounts in some measure at least for the failure to distinguish between the ideas of the Abbé

⁴⁵ O.C. I, 423.

and those of Rousseau; Voltaire, for example, never one to miss the opportunity of a jibe against his intellectual rival, ridiculed both writers for their chimerical notions.⁴⁶ Rousseau commences his Jugement on as ambiguous a note as he concluded the Extrait, combining praise of the Abbé's efforts in devising the peace plan and in constantly working for its acceptance with remarks as to "l'évidente impossibilité du succès" due to the inevitable resistance of princes. He asserts again that once realised, the plan would be effective; nevertheless there is no hope of its implementation. Hence "l'ouvrage de l'Abbé de Saint-Pierre sur la paix perpétuelle paroît d'abord inutile pour la produire et superflu pour la conserver. . . ." However, he admonishes, this should not lead to the conclusion that the work is "une vaine spéculation": on the contrary, it is "un livre solide et pensé, et il est très important qu'il existe."⁴⁷ The work is not merely empty theorising, in Rousseau's view, because whatever its shortcomings, it manifests a determination to better man's condition, and to substitute right for brute force and domination. In this sense the Abbé's work fulfils a similar function to the Contrat Social, although admittedly Rousseau did hope that his "principles of political right" might be applicable in isolated cases. Limited though the hope of improvement might be, " . . . il faut savoir ce qui doit être pour bien juger de ce qui est."⁴⁸

⁴⁶ See above, note 13. Voltaire's judgement was severe: "The only perpetual peace which can be established among men is tolerance: the peace imagined by a Frenchman named the abbé de Saint-Pierre is a chimera which will no more prevail among princes than among elephants and rhinoceroses, among wolves and dogs." Quoted in Merle L. Perkins, "Voltaire's Concept of International Order," Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century, ed. Theodore Besterman, XXXVI (1965), 110.

⁴⁷ O.C. III, 591.

⁴⁸ Emile, O.C. IV, 836-37.

Rousseau's obvious respect for the Abbé's intentions and efforts makes his criticisms no less powerful. Why, he asks, if it is so much in the interest of sovereigns to adopt the plan for confederation, have they not done so already? In answer to this question, Rousseau makes a distinction between real and apparent interest:

. . . le premier se trouveroit dans la paix perpétuelle, cela a été démontré dans le projet, le second se trouve dans l'état d'indépendance absolue qui soustrait les souverains à l'empire de la loi pour les soumettre à celui de la fortune, semblables à un pilote insensé qui, pour faire montre d'un vain savoir et commander à ses matelots, aimeroit mieux floter entre des rochers durant la tempête que d'assujettir son vaisseau par des ancrs.⁴⁹

Kings, Rousseau goes on, devote their lives to extending their rule beyond their frontiers and to making it more absolute within them; they are, then, hardly likely to take kindly to a plan which would favour neither end. For, he says, it is not possible to guarantee the prince against the rebellion of his subjects without at the same time securing the subjects from the tyranny of the prince, who will find himself forced to be just not only towards other states but also with his own subjects.⁵⁰ Rousseau had amply demonstrated the close link between tyranny and war in the second Discours, and in this context he is pursuing a line of thought which had only marginally concerned the Abbé. Saint-Pierre, anxious as he was to persuade princes of the benefits of his plan, had indeed made the point that the confederation would give them greater security in domestic as well as in international terms. As to the possible effect of this on the people, he had given brief consideration to the matter in his fifty-ninth "objection" in the Projet:

Il est certain que dans le Système de la Société Européenne les Souverains augmenteroient très considérablement

⁴⁹ Jugement, O.C. III, 592.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 593.

leur autorité sur leurs Sujets; mais aussi ils auront un frein de moins pour les empêcher de devenir tyrans, c'est qu'il ne craindront plus les séditions, les révoltes, les Guerres Civiles; de sorte que s'ils gagnent à cet établissement, leurs Sujets y perdront. 51

His response to the objection was that subjects would benefit from the increased riches, the better laws and institutions that peace would bring; that there was no reason to suppose that tyranny would be worse in such conditions, and that finally, even if tyranny were to continue, better tyranny with peace than a wise government in times of war. The Abbé leaves his readers in no doubt, then, of his primary concern, to eliminate war, and of his belief that an end to war must ipso facto benefit subjects, whatever the type of rule. Not surprisingly, he does not go on to suggest guarantees for subjects against the tyranny of the prince; although when the plan is taken in conjunction with the Polysynodie a new dimension is added. The latter work suggested a system of councils to aid in the running of state policy; hardly a move towards democracy, but at least an argument against absolutism and arbitrary rule. This issue, which highlights the deep differences between the political perspectives of the aristocratic Abbé and Rousseau as self-styled champion of "the people", will be discussed in greater detail below; it suffices to comment here that Rousseau has taken the Abbé's "objection" much more seriously than his predecessor, as would be expected given his republican principles. This leads to his assertion that a confederation would have to safeguard the people from tyranny, but he elaborates no further - presumably because he considers this impossible to achieve. He has nevertheless emphasised the point that as conceived by the Abbé, the effect of the league would be to consolidate existing inequalities and injustices.

51 Projet, 2, 194-95.

Rousseau goes on to cite further dimensions of the "apparent interest" of princes which will prevent their acceptance of the plan. Pride, pronounced enough in men of lesser stature, will hardly dispose the prince to take his claims to the European Diet. The prince believes he has the right to take up arms, a right in pursuance of which he is accountable "à Dieu seul"; he is, moreover, unwilling to sacrifice his desire to be "le maître des hommes et des choses. . . ."52 As to the Abbé's constant assurances of the manifest advantages of his plan, particularly for commerce, Rousseau comments:

Ajoutons, enfin, sur les grands avantages qui doivent résulter pour le commerce, d'une paix générale et perpétuelle, qu'ils sont bien en eux-mêmes certains et incontestables, mais qu'étant communs à tous ils ne seront réels pour personne, attendu que de tels avantages ne se sentent que par leurs différences, et que pour augmenter sa puissance relative on ne doit chercher que des biens exclusifs. 53

In L'Etat de guerre Rousseau indicates that the quest for relative advantage is not merely a consequence of princely pride and avarice, it is an inherent characteristic of the state, which only "knows itself" by comparison with others. Wealth and extent of territory are the measures commonly used. Any solution to the problem of conflict in international society, then, in Rousseau's view, cannot be conceived in terms of satisfying princely ambitions by other means. Apart from the fact that this is doomed to be failure for the reasons given above, it would not offer any solution to the dynamic of a competitive "society" of states. Only the state which, on the determination of its people, consciously withdraws from this competitive milieu, can be genuinely expected to seek peace. This in itself would do nothing to solve the problem of the general state of war.

52 Jugement, O.C. III, 594.

53 Ibid.

Rousseau does not acknowledge the fact that Saint-Pierre had himself made the distinction between real and apparent interest, presumably because the Abbé's awareness that sovereigns might not be disposed to follow their real interest did not appear to undermine in any serious way his optimism that one day the confederation would be established. Saint-Pierre had said of Sovereigns that:

"Je pretans montrer que leur faux interet est de demeurer comme ils font dans des societez et des alianses parsiales, passajeres . . . et que leur vrai interet est de sortir de cette pernissieuse situation. . . ." 54

In the Projet he was more expansive about the distinction between the two kinds of interest:

J'appelle un intérêt veritable, celui que les plus sages suivent ordinairement pour augmenter leurs richesses, leur reputation et leur pouvoir, pour affirmer et agrandir, ou leur Maison, ou leur Etat. J'appelle intérêt apparent, un intérêt passager peu solide, qui vient ou de quelque passion passagere, ou de quelque esperance frivole et mal fondée. . . ." 55

Thus whilst the Abbé declares that he is not guaranteeing that sovereigns will follow their real interest, he clearly has the expectation that in the course of time, when the arguments have been sufficiently rehearsed, even the most short sighted of princes will perceive the abiding advantages to be secured. It may well though, he concedes, be sovereigns of the weakest and most vulnerable states who provide the initiative, since they will be readier to grasp these advantages. Rousseau remained unconvinced, and a further look at the above quotation from the Projet reveals a larger gulf between his position and that of the Abbé. Saint-Pierre's definition of "real interest" is essentially a utilitarian one: the securing of greater, more enduring material or personal gains. His wider intention, of

54 Abrégé, 5.

55 Projet, 1, 48.

course, is to secure a moral end, that of a permanent peace; but it is a peace to be founded on the incentive of the "greatest good" conceived as a more comfortable and prosperous life. In this sense Saint-Pierre is more realistic than Rousseau gave him credit for, suggesting as he did that the Abbé's plan was founded purely on an appeal to "reason", without taking account of men's passions. Rousseau's criticism reflects his view that princes are unlikely to be persuaded by any number of "propositions" telling them how much better off they were likely to be as members of a confederation. Moreover, he no doubt found the Abbé's utilitarian conception of "real interest" at variance with his own more ascetic style of moralism, and the appeal to the greed and vainglory of princes repugnant. Such incentives, held out to those who already obtain most from the existing political system, are not in his view the basis on which to found a legitimate political and social order.

Rousseau has two final criticisms to level at Saint-Pierre in the Jugement: the impossibility of ever finding the right moment for the implementation of the plan ("même avec la bonne volonté que les Princes ni leurs Ministres n'auront jamais. . ." ⁵⁶) and that the only really feasible way of bringing the confederation into being would be by the use of force. Then the task facing the advocate of peace, Rousseau remarks wryly, is no longer to write books but to raise armies, and he concludes the Jugement thus:

On ne voit point de Ligues fédératives s'établir autrement que par des revolutions, et sur ce principe qui de nous oseroit dire si cette Ligue Européenne est à désirer ou à craindre? elle feroit peut-être plus de mal tout d'un coup qu'elle n'en préviendrait pour des siècles. ⁵⁷

56 O.C. III, 595.

57 Ibid., 600.

In the preceding passages, Rousseau has made it clear that the near success of Henry IV and Sully in attempting to establish a "Christian Commonwealth" proves his point rather than reinforces Saint-Pierre's hope of setting up a confederation "avec un livre."⁵⁸ For despite the skill with which these statesmen had convinced a number of sovereigns of the benefits of their plan, by cleverly appealing to the particular interests of each, in the final analysis, according to Rousseau, the establishment of such a Commonwealth would have been brought about by the war to end all wars which Henry was planning, until his death put paid to his ambitions. Saint-Pierre had of course waxed enthusiastic about the "Great Design" of which Sully was the main architect, and he had openly accepted that the application of force might be necessary to bring the confederation into being, again an element of realism which Rousseau fails to acknowledge. Saint-Pierre had stipulated that once several states had signed the articles establishing the confederation, those refusing to do likewise would be treated as "enemies" of the league and could be coerced into joining:

Si après la Société formée au nombre de quatorze voix,
un Souverain refusoit d'y entrer, elle le declarera ennemi
du repos de l'Europe, et luy fera la Guerre jusqu'à ce qu'il
y soit entré, ou jusqu'à ce qu'il soit entierement dépossédé. 59

The Abbé thought that in this way even the most powerful princes would be disposed to consent "à pène d'être traité comme ennemi par la grande aliance. . . ."⁶⁰ Saint-Pierre does not go on to consider the possible consequences of this proposition, and was evidently hopeful that force would not be necessary; Rousseau is less sanguine and can more readily imagine the frightful upheavals of such a "revolution". Even were the

58 Ibid., 599.

59 Projet, 1, 309.

60 Abrégé, 35.

end to be achieved, who may judge whether such means could be justified? In this instance, Rousseau, soon to be seen as an enemy of the established order, displays more caution and conservatism than his predecessor, who had moved so easily in court circles; but it was not untypical of him. His primary concern, in political terms, after all, was "sa patrie et . . . les petits Etats constitués comme elle", as he asserted in the Dialogues. Contrary to popular opinion, Rousseau went on, he had "toujours insisté . . . sur la conservation des institutions existantes, soutenant que leur destruction ne feroit qu'ôter les palliatifs en laissant les vices et substituer le brigandage à la corruption."⁶¹

Rousseau's critique of rationalism

Rousseau's general criticism of Saint-Pierre, which we find repeated in several places, is that he misunderstands the nature and motivation of men, and is hence over optimistic in political and moral matters. A passage from the Confessions provides a good example of Rousseau's criticism. He remarks that a thorough examination of the Abbé's political works

ne me montra que des vues superficielles, des projets utiles mais impracticables par l'idée dont l'auteur n'a jamais pu sortir que les hommes se conduisoient par les lumières plutôt que leurs passions. La haute opinion qu'il avoit des connoissances modernes lui avoit fait adopter ce faux principe de la raison perfectionnée, base de tous les établissemens qu'il proposoit, et source de tous ses sophismes politiques. Cet homme rare, l'honneur de son siècle et de son espèce, et le seul peut être depuis l'existence du genre humain qui n'eut d'autre passion que celle de la raison, ne fit cependant que marcher d'erreur en erreur dans tous ses systèmes, pour avoir voulu rendre les hommes semblables à lui, au lieu de les prendre tels qu'ils sont et qu'ils continueront d'être. Il n'a travaillé que pour des êtres imaginaires en pensant

⁶¹ Rousseau Juge de Jean Jaques, O.C. I, 935.

travailler pour ses contemporains. 62

It was Rousseau's claim in the Contrat Social that he had deliberately taken men "tels qu'ils sont" as his starting point; having neglected to do this, the Abbé had condemned his efforts to failure. But was Rousseau accurately representing Saint-Pierre in charging him with having viewed men as led by their reason rather than by their passions? This is an important question because this fundamental criticism underlay all the more specific points of difference which set Rousseau apart from the Abbé. In his study of Saint-Pierre's thought, M.L. Perkins holds that Rousseau fails to do his predecessor justice, and that in fact he had a much greater affinity with Saint-Pierre's ideas than he cared to admit. Indeed, as indicated above, reference to the Abbé's works shows that he does give the passions an important place, and that as Perkins points out, he has a view of man very similar to that of Hobbes.⁶³ In the second volume of the Projet, for example, Saint-Pierre comments that "Les passions naissent des choses sensibles, et l'interet ordinaire des hommes, c'est la satisfaction de leurs passions; peu se gouvernent par raison et par des motifs de Religion."⁶⁴ In proposing his plan, therefore, he has "opposé passion vulgaire à passion vulgaire. . . ."⁶⁵ The two dominant passions are fear and desire, passions which will provide the motives for the establishment of the confederation without it being necessary to assume princes to

62 O.C. I, 422. Similarly, Rousseau comments in the Jugement sur la Polysynodie that "le défaut ordinaire à l'Abbé de St Pierre . . . est de n'appliquer jamais assez bien ses vûes, aux hommes, aux tems, aux circonstances. . . ." O.C. III, 637.

63 The Moral and Political Philosophy of Saint-Pierre, pp. 53-56.

64 Projet, 2, 92.

65 Ibid., 93.

have attained a high degree "de sagesse, de raison, d'équité, de bonté pour leurs Peuples. . . ." In this passage, to which Rousseau's remarks at the end of the Extrait bear some similarity, Saint-Pierre says that lest it be thought that the setting up of the league requires princes to be as they ought to be (in which case the Project would be "entièrement inutile" anyway), he wishes to emphasise that "il suffit qu'ils soient précisément tels qu'ils sont."⁶⁶ It is enough, in other words, that sovereigns desire to become richer and to perpetuate their family line; and that they fear being invaded by those who are more powerful, and the possibility of sedition and civil war. Saint-Pierre is thus at great pains to "prove" that the selfish passions of princes, far from being an impediment to the success of his plan, guarantee its implementation. Further "proof" of this lies in the practical example of the Germanic Union, which people no doubt thought a "chimerical" notion before it came into being,⁶⁷ and which has nevertheless lasted more than 600 years. Indeed, society itself has arisen on such foundations:

Il ne faut point revenir à dire que les hommes ne sont point assez sages pour prendre un parti si raisonnable, qu'ils sont trop livrés à leurs passions, pour écouter la raison, que leurs intérêts sont trop opposés, qu'ils sont trop sujets à la jalousie, à la vengeance, à l'ambition, à l'injustice: il ne s'agit pas de ces lieux communs tant rebatus, qui ne concluent rien, parce qu'ils concluent trop: ils iroient à conclure que les hommes ne pourroient jamais parvenir à faire entr'eux aucune sorte de Traité, aucune sorte de Société permanente, ce qui est démenti par l'expérience." ⁶⁸

Sharing as he does Hobbes's view of the nature of man, Saint-Pierre

66 Projet, I, 83. Saint-Pierre had commented of princes that "s'ils étoient tous qu'ils devraient être, ils n'auroient pas besoin, pour vivre toujours en Paix, d'autre Loi, que celle de la raison, et alors le Projet deviendrait entièrement inutile." *Ibid.*, 80.

67 *Ibid.*, 80.

68 *Ibid.*, 140.

adopts a similar interpretation of the origins of "permanent society" amongst them. Fear of the evils of the continuation of the "savage" state and hope of greater benefits to be derived from association lead men to unite: the passions are the spur to the establishment of society, and the role of reason is to provide the necessary "articles" of association.⁶⁹ The setting up of a European confederation would be an exact parallel, and there is no question, it seems, that the Abbé appeals to the passions of sovereigns rather than their reason: "Rien ne peut retenir les hommes dans leur devoir envers les autres. Rien ne les peut faire agir, que l'esperance des avantages ou la crainte des malheurs à venir, et les Princes ne sont après tout que des hommes."⁷⁰ The more reasonable sovereigns are, the more readily they will appreciate the benefits of such association; in the case of those who are "étourdi, téméraire, malconseillé", appeal must be made to "la crainte des grands malheurs."⁷¹

It may still be argued after all this, as Rousseau does, that Saint-Pierre relies upon the realisation on the part of princes that joining a confederation will better further their desires, or allay their fears, than remaining in a state of independence, and that this does constitute an appeal to reason. Nevertheless he is manifestly not justified in claiming that Saint-Pierre ignores the role of the passions in human motivation, as even the most cursory examination of the Abbé's work shows. As Rousseau testifies, he conducted a "thorough examination" of Saint-Pierre's political writings, and can thus hardly have missed this very obvious dimension. Why then did Rousseau choose

69 "And reason suggesteth convenient articles of peace, upon which men may be drawn to agreement." Hobbes, Leviathan, p. 84.

70 Projet, I, 307.

71 Ibid., 307-8.

to portray Saint-Pierre's work in this way, depicting the Abbé as a "child" in his judgment of men, and in so doing reinforce for posterity a picture of Saint-Pierre as a well meaning, harmless eccentric so out of touch with the realities of political life that he made himself a laughing stock in the very circles in which he wished to exert most influence?⁷² This question takes us to the root of the difference between Saint-Pierre and Rousseau as political thinkers, for it is notable that Rousseau makes a distinction between the former's "moral writings", which he applauds, and the "political works", which in his opinion exhibit only "des vues superficielles."⁷³ Whilst the two writers share the conviction that change in a world beset by evil and violence is a moral imperative, the fundamental difference between them lies in their radically divergent interpretations of what can and will be achieved in such a world. For Saint-Pierre, recognition of the primacy of the passions as the motivating force in man is not a cause for pessimism, since he believes there to be a rational, divinely ordained scheme of the world in which the passions have their due place. Saint-Pierre believes in the progress of human society in accordance with the development of "universal reason."⁷⁴ The fact that only a few enlightened minds, amongst which he numbered his own, are aware of this, and that the rest move blindly in response to their passions, does not hinder the gradual progress of society, a progress which can be hastened

72 For example, Rousseau comments in a fragment of his unfinished biography that: "L'abbé de St Pierre bien faisant et sans passion sembloit un Dieu parmi les hommes mais en voulant leur faire adopter ses principes et leur faire goûter sa raison desinteressée il se rendoit plus enfant qu'eux." O.C. III, 659.

73 Confessions, O.C. I, 422.

74 "Les hommes pour entretenir la société et pour se conserver tous les avantages qu'ils retirent de cette société sont dans la nécessité d'observer entre eux la justice et d'éviter l'injustice; c'est un precepte de la raison universelle." Neuchâtel MS 182.

by the application of "scientific" knowledge. When Rousseau attacks Saint-Pierre for assuming that men are led "par les lumières" then, he indicates a wholesale rejection of the Abbé's faith in the progress of human kind, the progress of "universal reason." He knew from his reading of Saint-Pierre's works that the Abbé was aware of the difficulties of implementing his plans, and of his awareness that men's passions were not always so easily channelled into constructive directions; nevertheless Saint-Pierre manifestly expected his plans to be realised at some stage because he believed that a rational social order must prevail. Rousseau was unable to share this faith in a better future for all mankind, however deep his commitment to the notion of the rational will.

With certain qualifications it is possible to conclude that Saint-Pierre stood a great deal closer to Rousseau's contemporaries, the philosophes, than Rousseau did himself, once his political thinking had matured. In the work entitled Observations sur le Progrès continuel de la Raizon Universelle Saint-Pierre declares that God has, in providing man with the passions of fear and hope, given him the means of being reasonable and happy; but for this to be achieved these passions need to be "fortified" with the rules and institutions of government.⁷⁵ Why is it, he asks, that one can see thousands of brute savages existing contemporaneously with a man of such calibre as Descartes? Precisely, he answers, because of the vast differences in the culture into which these different men were born; indeed, if the savages had been born into the culture in which Descartes was raised, they would have had an equal chance of distinguishing themselves in the scientific field. Saint-Pierre thus elevates "scientific" knowledge and its application to

75 Ouvrages, 11, 302.

society in the form of culture and institutions. Progress in the "sciences" of politics and morals can only increase the sum of human happiness. It is the task of enlightened reformers to hasten this by recognising that men are governed by the desire for pleasure and the fear of evil, and to apply their knowledge in devising schemes which will build on these foundations. As Kingsley Martin has commented, Saint-Pierre was "perhaps the first systematic Utilitarian."⁷⁶ It is his concern with the application of knowledge to improve human society, and his belief in progress, which at once sets Saint-Pierre alongside the philosophes and apart from Rousseau. For the Abbé there was no divorce between theory and practice, even though men may be slow in moving towards the realisation of "universal reason": ". . . l'augmentation de la Sagesse de speculation bien démontrée peut beaucoup servir à augmenter, mais peu à peu, la Raison ou la Sagesse pratique parmi les hommes."⁷⁷ Thus to take the example of his European peace plan, he comments that

Il est vrai que c'est un Projet, dont peut-être, ni vous, ni moi ne verrons aucun fruit; mais par reconnaissance de ce que nous avons reçu de biens de nos Ancêtres, ne devons-nous pas tâcher d'en procurer d'encore plus grands à nôtre Posterite. ⁷⁸

The "heavenly city"⁷⁹ can perhaps be built on earth; Saint-Pierre certainly seems to be optimistic that once his European confederation is established, it may in time extend world wide:

On peut dire meme que cete union est le seul moien de faire regner l'Europe et la police Europeaine dans toutes les parties

⁷⁶ French Liberal Thought, p. 61.

⁷⁷ Observations sur le progrèz continuel de la Raizon Universelle, Ouvrages, 11, 264.

⁷⁸ Projet, 2, 358.

⁷⁹ This is Carl Becker's phrase. He comments of the Abbé: "How industriously this priest labored in the secular vineyard of the Lord!" The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1932), p. 39.

du monde, et de faire ainsi en peu de siècles un progrès prodigieux à la raison humaine universelle, pour l'augmentation du bonheur du genre humain.

Cette paix perpétuelle de l'Europe peut facilement s'étendre de proche en proche dans les autres parties du monde. 80

The truth of these considerations, the Abbé asserts, "est fondée non seulement sur la nature des hommes, mais encore appuyée par les expériences de tous les siècles rapportées dans les histoires. . . ."81

In Rousseau's eyes, the experience of the centuries, and the nature of men "as they are" offers quite a different prospect for the future - whilst the possibility of change for the better exists, there can be no permanent or universal harmony on this earth.

Saint-Pierre was a genuine reformer; he believed that the value of a book or institution could be assessed on the extent to which it "augmented" the happiness of the greatest number of men.⁸² His aim was thus eminently practical, as he saw it, and he sought an appropriate audience for his schemes. Throughout his works, the Abbé addresses himself to princes and ministers, as those alone capable of implementing his plans and thereby increasing not only their own happiness but also that of their subjects. In this his approach is similar to that of the philosophes who believed that "enlightened despots" could be encouraged not only to act as patrons but also to foster the progress of the arts and sciences in general, and apply new ideas within their own domains. Rousseau, on the other hand, wrote first and foremost as a critic, and where he did have constructive proposals to make, they were certainly

80 Abrégé, 295.

81 Ibid.

82 In the manuscript entitled "Projet d'histoire universelle morale", Saint-Pierre remarks "quelle entreprise est plus digne d'un écrivain bienfaisant que de chercher par son travail à augmenter le nombre des plus utiles à sa patrie et à diminuer le nombre des méchants." Neuchâtel MS 167.

not intended as schemes to be taken up by monarchs of their ministers. Saint-Pierre's self assigned task was to persuade; Rousseau's, to illuminate the truth, however uncomfortable this might prove for himself or his readers.⁸³ In a letter to Madame Dupin in 1759, before he had sent the Extrait du Projet de paix perpétuelle to the publisher, Rousseau commented that:

En rédigeant cet abrégé, je savois que le projet étoit impracticable, et que quand il ne l'auroit pas été par lui-même il le seroit devenu par la forme que je lui ai donnée; mais j'écrivois pour le public et non pour les ministres. J'espère que de ma vie, je n'aurai rien à écrire pour ces gens-là. ⁸⁴

By this time, having undertaken his "reform" of lifestyle, Rousseau felt himself far removed from the milieu in which Saint-Pierre had moved; physically, spiritually and intellectually, Rousseau now identified himself as a "man of the people", having rejected utterly the glitter and the superficiality of salon and court life, with which he had flirted in earlier days. Saint-Pierre, by contrast, had purchased a place at court in order to observe the workings of government, and had become one of a number of notables in this circle concerned with practical political reform. The circle included such

83 Saint-Pierre explains his style and approach at the outset in the Projet: ". . . j'ay compris que si je commençois moy-même par faire semblant d'être incertain sur la solidité de ces moyens, et de douter de la possibilité de l'exécution, les Lecteurs les mieux disposez en faveur du Système en douteroient réellement eux-mêmes, et que leur doute réel iroit peut-être encore plus loin que mon doute affecté. Il n'en est pas des choses où il est question de déterminer les hommes à l'action, comme des choses de pure spéculation: le Pilote qui paroît luy-même incertain du succès de son voyage n'est pas propre à déterminer le Passager à s'embarquer. . . . Ainsi j'ay mieux aimé hasarder de me donner un ridicule en prenant un ton affirmatif, et en promettant dans le titre tout ce que j'espère tenir dans l'Ouvrage, que de risquer par un faux air de modestie et d'incertitude de faire le moindre tort au public, en empêchant les gens de bien de regarder ce Système comme un Projet sérieux et possible dans l'exécution, lorsque je ne le propose moy-même que dans la vûe qu'il soit un jour exécuté." 1, 19-20.

84 6 May 1759, Correspondance, VI, 90.

eminent figures as Fenelon, Vauban, Boulainvilliers and Saint-Simon, all of them critical of elements of Louis XIV's domestic and foreign policies. Saint-Pierre was thus not alone in urging an end to costly wars and in proposing a different style of government: Fenelon in particular put forward very similar ideas. Saint-Pierre seems to have been regarded as something of an incurable visionary even in these circles, but the Polysynodie in particular indicates that he shared with his fellow critics of absolutist policies a frame of mind which in political terms, looked back to the ancient constitution of France in which the nobility had held their proper place in government. In no sense did they embrace the notion of popular sovereignty, which was to become so central to Rousseau's thought. The system of councils which the Abbé advocated in the Polysynodie, designed to curb the powers of the monarch, was to be composed of the nobility and the magistrates, and although Saint-Pierre declared himself in favour of men being distinguished by merit and virtuous conduct rather than by birth, he suggested that individuals so distinguished should be enobled. Existing social hierarchies would remain unchanged, but there would be a greater number of well meaning noblemen with a voice in government: thus would human happiness be augmented.

Saint-Pierre's schemes, therefore, related to political practice in the most direct sense; indeed, a system of councils similar to that proposed in the Polysynodie was introduced in the Regency period following Louis XIV's death, as a concession to the nobility. In addition, the reformers had been nurturing in the Duc de Bourgogne, the King's grandson to whom Fenelon was tutor, a protégé whom they hoped would accede to power and implement the plan for a European confederation. These hopes were frustrated by the untimely death of the Duke. The Abbé de Saint-Pierre, despite setbacks, was persistent: in 1719 he wrote a

summary of the peace plan which he gave to Cardinal Dubois, in the hope that the Quadruple Alliance could be extended to include all European states.⁸⁵ Rousseau's brief experience of political practice, as secretary to the French Ambassador in Venice, encouraged a very different philosophical disposition. Whilst kindling an intense interest in "the nature of government"⁸⁶ (it was at this juncture that he conceived the writing of the Institutions politiques), the experience convinced him of the injustice of hierarchies founded on birth and wealth. It was a relatively small step from this to the republican sentiments which came to characterise his mature thought, and which made him look with scorn upon the Abbé's hopes of successful reform of, in his eyes, a fundamentally corrupt system administered by the effete and depraved concerned only with the gratification of immediate self-interest. Hence Rousseau comments in his Jugement sur la Polysynodie that it is hardly credible for Saint-Pierre to attempt to persuade the monarch of the benefits of a system of councils by appealing to the sentiments of "l'amour de la patrie, le bien public, le desir de la vrai gloire, et d'autre chimères évanouies depuis longtems, ou dont il ne reste plus de traces que dans quelques petites républiques." He should have realised, he goes on, "que rien de tout cela put réellement influencer dans la forme d'un gouvernement monarchique"⁸⁷ Saint-Pierre was sadly deluded, then, according to Rousseau, in presenting projects designed to serve the public good to the authorities, a point he emphasises in a fragment forming part of an intended introduction to a work on the Abbé:

85 See Ira O. Wade, "The Abbé de Saint-Pierre and Dubois," Journal of Modern History, 2 (1930), 430-47.

86 Confessions, O.C. I, 404-5.

87 O.C. III, 643.

Plusieurs des projets qu'on y resume furent presentés dans leur temps au ministere: ils ont tous été negligés. Là-dessus on les a traités de chimères et personne ne les a lus; j'ai fait de mon mieux pour les mettre en état de l'être. C'est aux citoyens à les lire dans le même esprit qui les dicta et qui les abrège; c'est au public à les juger. 88

Rousseau's admiration for the Abbé's moral fervour was reinforced by his close scrutiny of Saint-Pierre's works, but he did not rate him as a serious political thinker, and Rousseau's judgement has stood the test of time. In his appraisal of the Abbé's works he had demonstrated that his predecessor was a rationalist who had founded his belief in the inexorable progress of humanity on the advancement of "science", but who had not, despite all his efforts, been able to "prove" that the extension and application of knowledge necessarily led to an improvement in man's moral state. This, after all, was the question to which Rousseau had addressed himself in his first Discours, where he had argued with a powerful logic that the refinement of the contemporary arts and sciences had made the men of his day neither happier nor more virtuous. Rousseau was thus opposing what he saw as the Abbé's utopianism with a realist critique of the entire basis of Saint-Pierre's faith in the progress of "universal reason". He believed that Saint-Pierre's schemes, whilst worthy in their concern for the public good and important because they demonstrated a refusal to accept the status quo, would make no difference at all to the tyranny and international conflict which were the most serious of the problems to which the plans were addressed. Indeed, it was clear to him that if the peace plan were implemented, the power of princes relative to their subjects would be strengthened rather than diminished. In the final analysis this is the most fundamental difference between Saint-

Pierre and Rousseau, for the latter was ready to forgive a great deal of the Abbé's naive optimism in view of his genuine moral sensibility. What he could not overlook was Saint-Pierre's indulgence towards the autocrats and oligarchs of the day, his inability to see beyond this circle to the people, those who really suffered the burdens of despotism and war. Between the gentle and well meaning representative of the nobility whose concern for the improvement of mankind was essentially paternalistic in nature, and the self-styled populist there is a yawning social and theoretical gulf.

CHAPTER 6

THE REPUBLIC

Rousseau demonstrates in his major political works, and reaffirms in his consideration of Saint-Pierre's peace project, that autocratic or oligarchical rule fosters war, and that it is foolish to hope for the building of an international community committed to peace on such foundations. It is thus to states ordered according to principles of political right that we must turn for, at the least, a disposition towards peace. Given the close link which Rousseau establishes between tyranny and war, it is not surprising that he should emphasise the peaceful inclination of "the republic" as he conceives it, whilst his realism never permits him to anticipate an age of perpetual peace. The firm grounding in realism of Rousseau's moralism needs to be underlined, lest it appear that he is prescribing for the future in the expectation that the corruption and depravity of the contemporary world can and will be transcended. As indicated in Chapter 1, in Rousseau's view the best has already been experienced; "redemption" is possible in limited circumstances, but universal progress towards a perfected condition is a notion he explicitly rejects. The Contrat Social presents the "principes du droit politique" by which the small state might achieve a legitimate political order, despite the deficiencies of men "tel qu'ils sont,"¹ and it is significant that Rousseau denoted his authorship of this work with the phrase "par J.J. Rousseau, citoyen de Geneve." Geneva was one of the few states which in his view were capable of moulding their institutions according to the principles he outlined.

In Rousseau's critical works he argues the conventional origin of

1 O.C. III, 351.

the state and gives prominence to the notion of a social pact or contract by which the people have alienated their freedom, exchanging the struggle of "all against all" for submission to a master of masters, albeit in the belief that they are serving their best interest. In his prescriptive works the notion of contract has a central place, in this context providing the key to the problem of how men can unite in a political association without alienating their freedom. Rousseau thus gives a very original turn to a notion which was, in his day, a commonplace of political theorising. Once again it will serve to bring out the singularity of Rousseau's thought by comparison with Hobbes, and in so doing will indicate the assumptions underlying those principles by which a few states might improve their constitution.

Despite the differences in their positions, Hobbes and Rousseau approach the question of the social contract in a way which sets them apart from the natural lawists. Lucio Colletti has explained this succinctly:

The old natural-law theory presupposed a double contract: the one by which men agree to unite to regulate their safety and preservation by common consent, which is the pactum societatis; and the pactum subjectionis, by which, after their agreement, they transfer power to the hands of the sovereign. This 'dualistic' position, adopted by Pufendorf and continuing to Locke, was rejected by Hobbes and Rousseau from opposing points of view. 2

There is no need here to elaborate on the natural law position, which is evidently susceptible of an ambivalent interpretation, according to whether, in the pactum subjectionis, the emphasis is laid on the obligation of the ruler to act for the common good, or on the people's obligation to obey the sovereign regardless of the nature of his rule. The important point, as the quotation from Colletti makes clear, is that the double contract was rejected by both Hobbes and Rousseau in

2 From Rousseau to Lenin, p. 181.

favour of a single contract. The intent, in both cases, is to transcend the old dualism between ruler and ruled by giving the "sovereign" an absolute and indivisible character. In the case of Hobbes, the pactum societatis is dispensed with, for the terms of his contract are such that, a chief or chiefs having been chosen, each man "obligeth himself by contract to every one of the rest, not to resist the will of that one man or council, to which he hath himself. . . ." ³ Some commentators have questioned whether Hobbes' system does in fact resolve the problem of dualism, since the sovereign, although absolute, is still bound to protect the essential interests of his subjects, whose claims to self-preservation and "commodious living" cannot be annulled. However, the concern here is with Hobbes' purpose, which is to explain how, by means of consent, a sovereign can be instituted, having sole exercise of legislative power (and, of course, executive power, although this may be delegated if the sovereign so desires) and able to command continuous obedience from his subjects. Only thus can his prime objective, peace and order amongst men, be secured. Rousseau, by contrast, dispenses with the pactum subjectionis, making a precise distinction between the "sovereign", which is the whole body of the people bound by the contract and exercising legislative authority, and the "government", which is merely the executor of the sovereign's will and is not party to any contract. For the system of Hobbes, in Rousseau's view, simply duplicates the "fraudulent contract" ⁴ by which tyranny originates, and his object is to provide the theoretical foundation for a political association in which not only order, but liberty and justice are secured: "Le Peuple soumis aux lois en doit

³ The Citizen, p. 169.

⁴ See above, ch. 2, p. 75, and note 75.

être l'auteur; il n'appartient qu'à ceux qui s'associent de régler les conditions de la société. . . ."⁵

The atomism of Hobbes' starting point is maintained by the skilful formulation of the terms of his contract: each individual makes an agreement with every other individual. The association which results is no more than an aggregate of men, for the people is only a "person" by virtue of its submission to the ruler. If for some reason the ruler should cease to hold office, and there is no provision for succession, then "the people ceaseth to be a person, and is become a dissolute multitude; . . ."⁶ in other words, a return to the state of nature has taken place. By contrast, the terms of Rousseau's contract are intended to produce a truly corporate unity: here, each man gives himself "to the whole community". The effect is that

au lieu de la personne particuliere de chaque contractant, cet acte d'association produit un corps moral et collectif composé d'autant de membres que l'assemblée a de voix, lequel reçoit de ce même acte son unité, son moi commun, sa vie et sa volonté. ⁷

The state thus conceived is manifestly a considerable departure from the form of association envisaged by Hobbes or indeed by the natural law school, and stands in stark contrast also to those existing states which are the object of Rousseau's condemnation. Whereas such states, in his view, have as their end the interest of the few, the end of the well constituted republic is the common good, dictated by the general will, which can alone "diriger les forces de l'Etat selon la fin de son institution. . . ."⁸

5 Contrat Social, O.C. III, 380.

6 The Citizen, p. 200.

7 Contrat Social, O.C. III, 361.

8 Ibid., 368.

The general will and the realisation of the common good

Rousseau conceives moral freedom as that which can be realised in and through the community, such that the individual, while uniting with others and submitting himself to the law, nevertheless obeys only himself and thus remains "aussi libre qu'auparavant."⁹ The notion of contract thus serves in Rousseau's thought as a representation of the commitment of the individual will to a consciously accepted moi commun, of which each individual is an equal part. It is in this sense that the citizen can be conceived as "une unité fractionnaire", his will a constituent element of the general will.¹⁰ It is not immediately clear how Rousseau imagines this transformation to be possible given the nature of men "as they are". Nor is it self-evident that a body of citizens dedicated to the realisation of the common good would be assured of individual liberty, at least in the liberal sense. The manner in which Rousseau deals with these problems demonstrates the extent of his departure from the ideas of Hobbes and Locke, and also the determination of his attempt to anchor his principles in social and political realities.

Rousseau is very conscious of the difficulty of finding a way to eliminate the competition and conflict which arise necessarily out of social relations, and is convinced that any solution will have drawbacks, since perfection in human society is unattainable. He has an emotional attachment to the imagined condition of the state of nature, to that lost innocence and independence which sadly cannot be recaptured. What might be achieved is a parallel to this condition so that independence and wholeness of being are attained through

9 Ibid., 360.

10 Emile, O.C. IV, 249.

institutions which guarantee equality, the prerequisite for liberty in the political context. Harmony can be realised in such a situation because each man, having equal status and an equal voice in the determination of legislation can be expected to will not only his own good but the good of others - indeed, the good of the whole community, which, because not divided by inequality or fragmented into a variety of conflicting interests, can be conceived as a "common self". Very special conditions are required, however, if this is to be possible: the state must be small, preferably purely agricultural, and every citizen must own enough to be self-sufficient, neither the slave nor the master of others. Moreover, even if these unusual circumstances can be met, or approximated to, the greatest stumbling block remains the warped nature of men "as they are". In the collective actualization of the general will individuals would not be bound by a law that remained external to them; rather, the good of the community would become their good, and the law the means to this end. As Althusser has put it, there will have taken place that "true conversion of the private man into the public man."¹¹ When the community becomes a truly "common self" the need for compromise has been surpassed, and the common good is genuinely willed by each member of the association. As Starobinski has pointed out, Rousseau intends that there should be absolute "transparency" among individuals within the community, no individual or group harbouring a particular interest opposed to that of others.¹² Were this fully achieved, it would not only mean the

11 Politics and History, p. 62.

12 "A supposer qu'une société puisse s'édifier dans la transparence, à supposer que tous les esprits consentent à s'ouvrir les uns pour les autres et qu'ils abdiquent toute volonté secrète et "particulière" - c'est l'hypothèse du Contrat Social. . . ." La transparence et l'obstacle, p. 62.

transcendence of conflict, but would represent also a transcendence of politics, understood in the liberal sense as the ceaseless interplay of conflicting interests. The general will thus represents the attainment to a positive moral freedom which is far removed from the negative freedom of the natural state, where individuals simply pursued their natural inclinations without hindrance. This is the sense in which the state alone provides the conditions in which man can attain virtue. It is an austere ideal which Rousseau equates with the model of "citizenship" presented by Sparta and Rome, but he has little expectation that in the contemporary world it will be possible to replicate even such flawed examples as these.

However, lest it be deemed that the notion of the general will is irrelevant to political practice, Rousseau recognises the need to explain how an association of self-interested individuals might legislate so as to realise the common good. For men as they are, legislation in the well constituted state must be arrived at through the medium of "la volonté de tous." This represents a just way of reaching decisions without assuming men to be possessed of that moral autonomy which is the true end of political association:

Il y a souvent bien de la différence entre la volonté de tous et la volonté générale; celle-ci ne regarde qu'à l'intérêt commun, l'autre regarde à l'intérêt privé, et n'est qu'une somme de volontés particulières: mais ôtez de ces mêmes volontés les plus et les moins qui s'entre-détruisent, reste pour somme des différences la volonté générale. 13

Indeed, as Rousseau adds in a footnote, "S'il n'y avoit point d'intérêts différens, à peine sentiroit-on l'intérêt commun qui ne trouveroit jamais d'obstacle: tout iroit de lui-même, et la politique cesseroit d'être un art."¹⁴ One may speculate as to whether Rousseau's formulation

13 Contrat Social, O.C. III, 371.

14 Ibid.

amounts to anything more than a means of establishing the will of the majority, but there is no doubting that he displays an awareness of the problem of ensuring that purely selfish interests are eliminated from the process of decision making in so far as this is possible. He is adamant that if the will of all is to be an effective guide to the common good, there must be no special or group interests which divide some members of the community from the rest. The more equal the members of the association, and the greater the similitude of lifestyle amongst them, the more readily can the general will be realised.

Rousseau attempts to demonstrate that there need be no contradiction between the individual good and the good of the community:

Pourquoi la volonté générale est elle toujours droite, et pourquoi tous veulent-ils constamment le bonheur de chacun d'eux, si ce n'est parce qu'il n'y a personne qui ne s'approprie ce mot chacun, et qui ne songe à lui-même en votant pour tous? Ce qui prouve que l'égalité de droit et la notion de justice qu'elle produit dérive de la préférence que chacun se donne et par conséquent de la nature de l'homme. . . . 15

Amour de soi therefore provides an adequate foundation for the general will; its perverted form amour-propre can at worst be minimised by making equality of rights, and of wealth, central principles of the political association. At best, amour-propre can be transformed into the love of the citizen for his "greater self", the community. If the state is well constituted then it will be the goal of legislation to facilitate and assist the development of public feeling, in which the creation of a sound educational system will be vitally important. The health and strength of the state will be measurable in terms of the devotion of its citizens, and their commitment to the common good:

C'est du pacte social que le corps politique reçoit l'unité et le moi commun; son gouvernement et ses lois rendent sa constitution plus ou moins robuste, sa vie est

15 Ibid., 373.

dans les cœurs des citoyens, leur courage et leurs mœurs
le rendent plus ou moins durable. . . . 16

In his thinking on the material basis of the republic, as in his conception of the moral freedom which political association facilitates, Rousseau has moved a long way from his contractualist predecessors. It follows logically from Rousseau's belief that the institution of private property has played a key role in man's corruption and in the advance of inequality and conflict that no well ordered state can leave this matter to chance. He could not share Locke's view that the protection of property, regardless of its distribution, by means of law, would be enough to secure justice amongst men. Rather, Rousseau asserted that where there is material inequality, the advantages of political association will be felt exclusively by the rich. If the state is to rest on legitimate foundations, such inequality cannot be tolerated. It is in the Discours sur l'économie politique and the Contrat Social that Rousseau provides an alternative vision. In the latter work he asserts that the whole social system should rest on recognition of the fact that

au lieu de détruire l'égalité naturelle, le pacte fondamental substitue au contraire une égalité morale et légitime à ce que la nature avoit pu mettre d'inégalité physique entre les hommes, et que, pouvant être inégaux en force ou en génie, ils deviennent tous égaux par convention et de droit.

In a note immediately following, he adds:

Sous les mauvais gouvernemens cette égalité n'est qu'apparente et illusoire; elle ne sert qu'à maintenir le pauvre dans sa misere et le riche dans son usurpation. Dans le fait les loix sont toujours utiles à ceux qui possèdent et nuisibles à ceux qui n'ont rien: D'où il suit que l'état social n'est avantageux aux hommes qu'autant qu'ils ont tous quelque chose et qu'aucun d'eux n'a rien de trop. 17

16 Guerre et Etat de guerre, O.C. III, 1900.

17 O.C. III, 367.

As to what Rousseau considers to be the mean in the matter of property, this is determined by the demands of subsistence, by which we can assume he means the capacity to sustain a comfortable but not luxurious life.¹⁸ On the question of how this might be secured, Rousseau is most explicit in the Discours sur l'économie politique. What is required is a system of progressive taxation, levied in proportion to the differences in fortune between individuals, so that he who has only the bare necessities of life will pay nothing at all, whilst those who possess more than such necessities can expect to be taxed on what must be considered "superfluities".¹⁹ In the well ordered state, then, it is not a question of providing welfare for the poor, but of ensuring that "the poor" as such do not exist:

C'est donc une des plus importantes affaires du gouvernement, de prévenir l'extrême inégalité des fortunes, non en enlevant les trésors à leurs possesseurs, mais en ôtant à tous les moyens d'en accumuler, ni en bâtissant des hôpitaux pour les pauvres, mais en garantissant les citoyens de le devenir. 20

Rousseau's intention is manifestly that there be no large differentials in wealth, not an absolute identity of living standards, but sufficient parity to ensure that "nul citoyen ne soit assez opulent pour en pouvoir acheter un autre, et nul assez pauvre pour être contraint de se vendre. . . ." ²¹ Such parity can be most easily achieved in a society in which men make their own honest living on the land, and Rousseau's prescription is thus, as C.B. Macpherson has pointed out, less a

18 Rousseau's ideal of the simple, self-sufficient but comfortable lifestyle is best illustrated in his novel La Nouvelle Héloïse, where the close family group enjoys an abundance of natural produce whilst eschewing all luxury.

19 O.C. III, 271.

20 Ibid., 258.

21 Contrat Social, O.C. III, 391-92.

classless society than "a one class society of working proprietors."²²

Whilst a just political order demands that the individual consider not simply his own good but that of the community, in Rousseau's system the individual will be secure in his own private domain, assured of the necessities of life and not subject to the continual "usurpations" of the rich. In Rousseau's view, he will thus enjoy a liberty far more real than the spurious "freedom" of Locke's system, where the law makes no distinction between rich and poor and thus legitimises existing inequalities. The radical trend in Rousseau's thought is evident: precisely this point was taken up by later socialist thinkers concerned to present a critique of liberalism and its "formal freedom", seen as a mere guise for maintaining the dominance of the ruling class. However, although the seeds of the socialist position are there in Rousseau's work, the arguments are not fully developed and in many respects he is still very close to his liberal predecessor Locke, especially in his stress on the importance of private property as a guarantee of individual liberty. As Jacques Dehaussy comments, Rousseau's insistence on the notion of the self-sufficient individual is explicable in terms of

cet individualisme, qu'il partage avec ses contemporains, et qui veut que la propriété (et surtout la propriété ou, tout au moins, la possession de la terre) constitue, en quelque sorte, l'expansion spatiale de la personnalité humaine, nécessaire pour que celle-ci acquière sa pleine indépendance. ²³

Rousseau's belief that the well ordered state can only function effectively if its citizens are small landowners is therefore founded in his appreciation of the need to encourage independence of others, so that

22 The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 17.

23 "La dialectique de la souveraine liberté dans le Contrat Social," Etudes sur le Contrat Social, p. 140.

amour-propre will not be stimulated, to foster a simple rustic life-style that will steer men away from greed and material competition, and to provide the conditions for individual liberty both in the sense that each is secure in material terms and in the sense that having an identity of interests, conflict of wills should be minimised and the general will more easily actualised. On the last point, Rousseau is emphatic in stating that no social group or particular associations must intervene between the individual and the whole, for this would imperil equality and give rise to competition and the struggle for relative advantage. In the process of deliberation, citizens should have no communication with one another, for if "intrigues" and "partial associations" arise, "la volonté de chacune de ces associations devient générale par rapport à ses membres, et particulière par rapport à l'Etat. . . ." ²⁴ The more uniform the society, the less the diversity of interests, the more readily will the common good be achieved; but as Charvet has commented, in this Rousseau is led to

the denial of any validity to social life, to social interdependencies of individuals and groups. . . . On the one hand we have each individual absolutely for himself, on his own, and on the other hand we have the all-embracing common life. ²⁵

If there is any compensation for this, it must be seen in the absence of "contradictions" which will not trouble such citizens, and in the comfortable family domain which is the basis of each individual's existence. Rousseau idealised the family as the unit which could provide sustenance and companionship within the confines of the small group, thus putting men less at risk from wider entanglements which might engender vice and unhappiness: this is the picture which emerges

²⁴ Contrat Social, O.C. III, 371.

²⁵ The Social Problem in the Philosophy of Rousseau, p. 144.

very forcefully in the Emile and in La Nouvelle Héloïse. The family is the only "partial association" which should be tolerated in the well ordered state: it has its origins in nature and is the source of personal fulfilment and contentment. Beyond this, any group or faction which arises will very probably be destructive in its impact because, as quoted above, the group will develop a "general will" which is particular in relation to the whole body.

Rousseau recognises the difficulties inherent in making equality and self-sufficiency the fundamental principles of the republic, in a world where the pursuit of material wealth has become a consuming goal. The well ordered state thus demands the introduction of an education for citizenship which will sustain the taste for a simple and independent life, and a pride in the community. There is an important distinction between the kind of education Rousseau proposes in the Emile, where the object is to preserve the individual from corruption by maintaining him in a closed community away from pernicious influences, and the kind which is appropriate in the well constituted state. In the latter context, education should be public, and instrumental in fostering concern for the common good. Rousseau was not original in this, for Montesquieu had laid great stress on the place of education in "le gouvernement républicain." According to Montesquieu, it is in the republic that the whole power of education is required, since the "principle" of democratic government, virtue, is essentially a self-renunciation. Montesquieu defines virtue as "l'amour des lois et de la patrie", which requires "une préférence continuelle de l'intérêt public au sein propre. . . ."²⁶ Rousseau's discussion of the general will raises precisely the same problem; education for citizenship is necessary not

26 L'Esprit des Lois, p. 49.

only because a republican constitution is difficult to sustain, but also as a means of making the demands of citizenship the more easily met. For Rousseau had no wish to see unhappy men torn between the private and public realms, resentful of the responsibilities of civic life. This can only be avoided if love of the community, identification with the moi commun, is acquired in childhood. Reason then finds its support in sentiment, the importance of which Rousseau often emphasised. None of this can entirely eliminate the sacrifice which citizenship may sometimes require, but it makes such sacrifices humanly possible.

Rousseau's point of reference, as in other aspects of his political thought, is the Ancient world, which provided examples, in his view, from which his contemporaries might learn. The secret of education for citizenship is not that it deny amour-propre, which is inevitable in society, but that it provides a new focus for it, enabling the individual to love, and take pride in, a larger self. This is constructive, whereas amour-propre in the sense of individual selfishness and vanity is profoundly destructive. Love of country becomes a "passion" which replaces the egoism and self-assertion which otherwise prevails, as Rousseau remarks in the Discours sur l'économie politique:

Il est certain que les plus grands prodiges de vertu ont été produits par l'amour de la patrie: ce sentiment doux et vif qui joint la force de l'amour propre à toute la beauté de la vertu, lui donne une énergie qui sans la défigurer, en fait la plus héroïque de toutes les passions. 27

If individuals are brought up to identify first and foremost with "la patrie" then they will love it with "ce sentiment exquis que tout homme isolé n'a que pour soi-même. . . ." ²⁸ And this, from Rousseau's perspective, far from constituting a restriction of the individual's

27 O.C. III, 255.

28 Ibid., 259.

freedom, represents its enlargement, or rather the exchange of an illusory freedom, vitiated by conflict and unhealthy dependence, for a real freedom in the attainment of a harmonious life with one's countrymen.

Rousseau as "legislator": Corsica and Poland

Following publication of the Contrat Social two opportunities presented themselves which enabled Rousseau to consider how his principles of political right might be applied in concrete situations. The resulting works, the Projet de Constitution pour la Corse and the Considérations sur le Gouvernement de Pologne, are instructive in the further insights they give into the character of the legitimate state as conceived by Rousseau, especially in relation to the defensive needs of Corsica and Poland, threatened as they were by more powerful neighbours.

The circumstances in which Rousseau undertook to devise a "constitution" for Corsica were ones which in his view typified the problem of small states: the Corsicans were struggling to free themselves from Genoese rule with the aim of establishing self-government. In the Contrat Social Rousseau had commented that Corsica was the one country in Europe still capable of being given laws - that is, capable of framing a legitimate political order. This was the case in his view, not simply because it was a small island relatively abundant in natural resources but also due to the calibre of its inhabitants: "La valeur et la constance avec laquelle ce brave peuple a su recouvrer et défendre sa liberté, mériterait bien que quelque homme sage lui apprit à la conserver."²⁹ In 1764 Rousseau was requested by

29 O.C. III, 391.

Buttafuoco to act as that "wise man" and to draw up a new constitution for Corsica, a project on which he commenced after ensuring that he had at his disposal sufficient information regarding the situation of the country. The work however remained unfinished, for this was a troubled period in Rousseau's life; moreover, in 1768 French purchase of the island put an end to hopes of a future for Corsica as an autonomous republic.

What is most striking in the proposals which Rousseau put forward is his stress on the necessary foundation of a sound constitution for Corsica, a thriving agricultural economy which will guarantee her self-sufficiency and which will create the conditions for good citizenship. An agricultural economy is necessary for freedom because it enables the state to avoid dependence on other states and encourages the modest but wholesome lifestyle suitable to an independent and hardy people:

Le seul moyen de maintenir un Etat dans l'indépendance des autres est l'agriculture. Eussiez-vous toutes les richesses du monde si vous n'avez de quoi vous nourrir vous dépendez d'autrui. . . . Le commerce produit la richesse mais l'agriculture assure la liberté. ³⁰

It is a fundamental principle of Rousseau's that: "Quiconque dépend d'autrui et n'a pas ses ressources en lui-même, ne sauroit être libre."³¹

For a small state such as Corsica self-sufficiency is vital because reliance on trade only weakens the economy, makes it more likely that the citizens will develop an appetite for non-essential commodities, and paves the way for great power dominance under the pretext of friendly commerce. In his advice to Corsica Rousseau is following closely his comment in the Contrat Social that a people fit for legislation is one which "peut se passer des autres peuples et dont

³⁰ Constitution pour la Corse, O.C. III, 905.

³¹ Ibid., 903.

tout autre peuple peut se passer," in which connection he notes the example of the republic of Thlascala, which allegedly preferred to do without salt rather than obtaining it from the surrounding Mexican Empire.³² For, in Rousseau's view, great powers are as likely to seek dominance over smaller states by offering to instruct and enrich them as they are by more direct and brutal means.³³ Once attained, a nation's self-sufficiency must not be compromised by contacts with other powers, however attractive such contacts may appear. The way in which Rousseau depicts the subtle lures offered by great powers to lesser states is very similar to his account of the origins of political association, where the rich contrive to present their interest as a common interest shared likewise by their poorer and less powerful fellows. The bond which results is of great advantage to the rich but means enslavement for the rest. Small republics must resist being similarly seduced, as Rousseau warns the Corsicans: "Des alliances, des traités, la foi des hommes, tout cela peut lier le foible au fort et ne lie jamais le fort au foible." Thus, he urges, "laissez les

32 O.C. III, 390-91.

33 In a note to the Constitution pour la Corse, Rousseau remarks that: "La plupart des usurpateurs ont employé l'un de ces deux moyens pour affermir leur puissance. Le premier d'appauvrir les peuples subjugués et de les rendre barbares, l'autre au contraire de les effeminer sous prétexte de les instruire et de les enrichir. La première de ces voyes a constamment produit un effet contraire à son objet, et il en a toujours résulté de la part des peuples vexés des actes de vigueur, des révolutions, des republicues. L'autre voye a toujours eu son effet, et les peuples amollis, corrompues, delicats, raisonneurs, tenant dans l'ignominie de la servitude de beaux discours sur la liberté, ont été tous écrasés sous leurs maitres puis détruits par des conquérans." O.C. III, 1727. Elsewhere, he comments of the Romans that "c'étoit une des maximes de leur politique de fomenter chez leurs ennemis et d'éloigner d'eux mêmes les arts effeminés et sédentaires qui énervent et amolissent les hommes." Guerre et Etat de guerre, O.C. III, 1901.

negociations aux puissances et ne comptez que sur vous."³⁴

The other object of a strong agricultural economy is the provision of proper conditions for citizenship; the republic will not be rich in money but it can be "riche en hommes",³⁵ in the sense of a thriving population of citizens committed to the maintenance of free institutions and freedom from foreign domination. Rousseau makes very explicit the link between the rural way of life and the making of good citizens:

Les paysans sont attachés a leur sol beaucoup plus que les citadins à leurs villes. L'égalité, la simplicité de la vie rustique a pour ceux qui n'en connoissent point d'autre un attrait qui ne leur fait desirer d'en changer. De là le contentement de son état qui rend l'homme paisible, de là l'amour de la patrie qui l'attache à sa constitution. ³⁶

Indeed, Rousseau goes as far as to suggest that full rights of citizenship be accorded only to those who possess enough land to support themselves and family. Such a condition is quite consistent with Rousseau's principles in terms of the importance he accords to the capacity to be materially self-supporting (an emphasis seen likewise in the Emile and demonstrated also in Rousseau's personal determination to support himself rather than rely on the generosity of others) and in that those who have not yet acquired the necessary material base be classed as "aspirans" until such time as they become eligible for full citizenship.³⁷ It is necessary to bear in mind also his favour for a system of progressive taxation serving to equalise wealth, elaborated much earlier in the Discours sur l'économie

³⁴ Constitution pour la Corse, O.C. III, 903.

³⁵ Ibid., 904.

³⁶ Ibid., 905.

³⁷ Ibid., 919.

politique. He is emphatic in stipulating to the Corsicans that: "La loi fondamentale de votre institution doit être l'égalité,"³⁸ with the object that everybody should be able to make a living, but no one should be able to grow rich. In this way Corsican society will not be divided into "riches faineans qui possèdent les terres et en malheureux paysans qui n'ont pas de quoi vivre en les cultivant."³⁹ The working proprietor is the stuff of which good citizens are made: neither the slave nor the master of others, not constantly coveting the possessions of others but secure in his own family domain. The only trades which will be necessary in the republic are the necessary crafts such as carpenting and weaving; not for Corsica the goldsmiths and embroiderers so valued in the princely state.

The strength of the Corsican republic, then, both the vigour of its constitution and its ability to withstand external pressures, will reside in its citizens. No defence can be more sure than a citizens' militia, especially one composed of peasants, whose way of life makes them "patients et robustes."⁴⁰ Good citizens will contribute willingly in the service of the country, and their dedication, along with a policy of autarky, is in Rousseau's view the best protection that Corsica can afford herself in the face of threats from more powerful neighbours.

In Corsica, Rousseau was able to contemplate the possibility of his political principles being applied in circumstances which he regarded as near ideal; in the case of Poland, it was quite a different matter.

³⁸ Ibid., 909-10. "Il faut que tout le monde vive et que personne ne s'enrichisse. C'est la le principe fondamental de la prospérité de la nation. . . ." Ibid., 924.

³⁹ Ibid., 920.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 905.

Poland, in danger of partition at the hands of its neighbours Russia and Prussia, was in the throes of a last effort to assert its independence. An assembly convened in 1769 agreed that since many reforms were necessary, political theorists should be consulted to give advice. Rousseau was approached, as was the Abbé de Mably. Although Rousseau was generally pessimistic regarding the possibilities of redeeming a large and "corrupt" state, he was drawn by the idea of a people engaged in a heroic struggle against enormous odds. Hence his apparently unlikely decision to attempt to utilise the theoretical framework of the Contrat Social in the very circumstances in which he had deemed his ideas inapplicable.

Not surprisingly, Rousseau considers that the "vice radical" which is Poland's greatest problem is her size.⁴¹ He therefore considers it a precondition of any useful constitutional reform that this defect be tackled, and he suggests two possible solutions. First, what he recognises will be considered an unpalatable option, that Poland contract her boundaries; he even considers that it would be of benefit to the state if her neighbours seized part of her territories, as long as the body of the nation was left intact. Second, the adoption of "le système des Gouvernements fédératifs, le seul qui réunisse les avantages des grands et des petits Etats. . . ."⁴² The manner in which Rousseau has had to compromise his principles in considering a constitution for Poland is here very evident, for his suggestion of a federal system of government entails the acceptance of a form of representation. However, Rousseau does not pretend that Poland, as a large state, can perfect its constitution as a smaller state might be able to: "Vos vastes

⁴¹ Rousseau devotes a chapter to this problem and heads it "Vice radical"; Gouvernement de Pologne, O.C. III, 970-71.

⁴² Ibid., 971.

provinces ne comporteront jamais la severe administration des petites Républiques."⁴³

Along with the problem of size, the major question facing the Poles is the character which they wish to give their state. Rousseau presents this as a stark choice: Poland can choose to become "bruyans, brillans, redoutables", or "libre, paisible et sage." He amplifies this choice by suggesting that the former course will require the cultivation of the arts and sciences, a large emphasis on finance and material luxury, professional soldiers and fortresses. All those things, in short, which are prized by princely states. The reward for such endeavour will be that Poland will be counted as a great power, involved in diplomatic negotiations, and, he cautions the Poles with a heavy irony, "il n'y aura pas une guerre en Europe où vous n'ayez l'honneur d'être fourrés. . . ." The alternative is for Poland to shun luxury and worldly renown, to concentrate on agriculture and only the most necessary arts and crafts, and to encourage in the people simple tastes and "un esprit martial sans ambition" (my emphasis).⁴⁴ The result, he assures the Poles, will be that

vous vivrez dans la véritable abondance, dans la justice, et dans la liberté; mais on ne vous cherchera pas querelle, on vous craindra sans en faire semblant, et je vous réponds que les Russes ni d'autres ne viendront plus faire les maîtres chez vous, ou que, si pour leur malheur ils y viennent, ils seront beaucoup plus pressés d'en sortir.⁴⁵

As in his work on Corsica, Rousseau makes it very clear that legitimate political institutions, which will secure justice and liberty, can only be achieved within the context of a simple and self-sufficient way of life, and by cultivating a set of attitudes firmly oriented towards

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid., 1003.

45 Ibid., 1004.

defence of these institutions, but not in any sense geared to the objects of territorial expansion and conquest.

Since Rousseau does not envisage Poland maintaining a standing army - no well constituted republic would do so - he assumes that its defensive capacity will reside in a citizens' militia. Defence of the country should be regarded as the duty of every citizen, not as a burden, but as an honour. Rousseau suggests a system whereby citizens would be trained and drilled by turns, so that a good and numerous army would always be ready if needed. If this is done then it will not be necessary to fortify the country, for patriotism will be the state's effective defence: "Laissez donc votre pays tout ouvert comme Sparte; mais bâtissez-vous comme elle de bonnes citadelles dans les cœurs des Citoyens. . . ." ⁴⁶ If the republic is to rely upon patriotic citizens for its defence, then love of country must be encouraged, primarily through the educational system. For Poland Rousseau recommends a system of free public education, with emphasis on the learning of Poland's history, acquaintance with its laws, and plenty of physical exercise. The aim is that children should grow up with a strong sense of their identity as Poles, essentially unconcerned with affairs beyond the confines of the state:

C'est l'éducation qui doit donner aux ames la force nationale, et diriger tellement leurs opinions et leurs goûts, qu'elles soient patriotes par inclination, par passion, par nécessité. Un enfant en ouvrant les yeux doit voir la patrie et jusqu'à la mort ne doit plus voir qu'elle. ⁴⁷

This has an alarming ring to twentieth-century ears, but in Rousseau's view a public education of this kind is not only necessary for Poland's strength as a state, it is also perfectly congruent with liberty; not

⁴⁶ Ibid., 1018.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 966.

the liberty of natural independence but that enjoyed by those who have "une existence commune et qui soient vraiment liés par la Loi."⁴⁸ The healthy republican spirit will be further encouraged amongst Poles of all ages by public games and festivals. If all this is achieved, comments Rousseau, then however determinedly the Russians may attempt to subjugate Poland, they will not succeed. The secret is to see to it that "un Polonais ne puisse jamais devenir un Russe. . . ."⁴⁹ He acknowledges that the kind of reforms he suggests will not enable Poland to make conquests, since "l'état de liberté ôte à un peuple la force offensive. . . ." But, he concludes, "votre œuvre faite, dans vingt ans les Russes tentent de vous envahir, et ils connoîtront quels soldats sont pour la défense de leurs foyers ces hommes de paix qui ne savent pas attaquer ceux des autres, et qui ont oublié le prix de l'argent."⁵⁰

The republic and its external relations

The republic will necessarily incline towards peace, for nothing in its character or constitution disposes it towards war, save as a final resistance against the invasion of more powerful neighbours. Unlike the princely state, war would be alien to the republic because its institutions are a guarantee of the liberty of the entire people and represent the expression of the collective will. In this situation the majority have not alienated their rights and their power of decision making to subject themselves to the wishes of the few, whose dominance may be secured by oppression within the state and adventurism without. Rather, the "contract" which is the basis of the legitimate

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid., 960.

50 Ibid., 1039.

state is the affirmation that the power of decision making must rest with the people as a whole, and must therefore tend towards the common interest, favouring no particular group or special interest.

Were the republic to determine to go to war, then, this would have to be a policy deemed to be in the common interest, likely to further the common good. In what sense could such a policy, unless necessitated by aggression from another power, serve the interests of the citizens of the republic? Military adventures could not be undertaken in the knowledge that a subject population, or hired mercenaries, are available to do the fighting: if the republic goes to war then its citizens must determine to put themselves under arms. Whilst princes and their ministers can account the costs of war in terms of human and monetary sacrifice borne by others, the people of a small republic would have to confront the possibility of death, and the certainty of great material cost, in a manner real to every individual within the state. No benefit short of the preservation of the state would dispose citizens in command of their own destiny to will such sacrifice. It is worth remarking in this context that Rousseau considers the act of declaring war to be the task of the government rather than an act of sovereignty, the latter being the determination of the law by the whole people. This is because a declaration of war is "un acte particulier qui détermine le cas de la loi . . .",⁵¹ a distinction which Rousseau wishes to establish because he believes that law properly so called can only consider "les sujets en corps et les actions comme abstraites. . . ."⁵² If this distinction between the determination of general principles and their particular application is not maintained, the corruption of the

51 Contrat Social, O.C. III, 370.

52 Ibid., 379.

general will by particular interests is assured. The people as a whole, in their capacity as sovereign, could thus only dictate the foreign policy of the republic in "abstract" form, stipulating, for example, that the state will only take up arms in self-defence. It would then fall to the government to judge of this matter in any particular instance. This might seem to pose a danger, but it must be remembered that in Rousseau's view the government is merely a commission, revocable by the people at any time. If the government develops a particular interest in war which does not accord with the will of the people, then it can be dismissed; if the people acquiesce to the designs of the government, the state is become corrupt. As Rousseau puts it, "Sitôt que quelqu'un dit des affaires de l'Etat, que m'importe? on doit compter que l'Etat est perdu."⁵³ It should be stressed, then, that peace will remain the disposition of the republic only so long as the institutions of the state continue to serve the general will. If these institutions come to be employed in the interests of a minority, if the divide between the private and the public realms once again opens up so that the majority are excluded from the exercise of political power, the conditions are created for the pursuit of aggressive and expansionist policies.

The absence of a ruling oligarchy able to treat war as a normal means of state policy because its costs are borne by the majority whilst its benefits accrue to the few is the key to the peaceful posture of the republic. The stimulus to war is lacking in the republic since material wealth, greater territories, glory and power are nothing to a people content with a simple wholesome life, prizing above all the liberty and equality embodied in their constitution. As material inequality is at the root of conflict amongst men, so material equality

53 Ibid., 429.

is the only sure foundation for peace, both domestically and in the orientation of the state towards its neighbours. Citizens who are secure in their own modest domain, independent of others for their subsistence, will have no inclination to compete with their fellows for the acquisition of greater wealth, and certainly no incentive to look outside of the state for greater riches. Whilst luxury and power over others breed the desire for more of the same, a simple but ample lifestyle breeds only contentment and a realisation of the non-material values which in more "civilized" society become lost. Since in the republic there will be no élite with the depraved tastes and ceaseless wants of "civilized" man to dominate over the rest, there will be no cause for envy and greed, no bad example which the majority will attempt to emulate. As for greater territories, or influence over other nations, what interest could a body of equal citizens have in such things? Increased territory could not possibly benefit the republic, even if it does lack certain material resources, since the exercise of popular sovereignty is only possible within a small state. In extending their territories, citizens would wilfully be surrendering their liberty. Influence over other states, or recognition in international diplomacy would be of no consequence to those whose only pride is in the value of their own customs and institutions.

Such will be the disposition of the republic unless it becomes corrupted, either by contact with other, less well constituted states, or due to the decline in the spirit of its citizens, the drift towards inequality and competition. Rousseau wishes to ensure against this, as he demonstrates in his advice to Corsica and Poland, by advising the republic to shun contacts and links with other states, and internally by devising a good system of public education and by encouraging public games and celebrations. The aim of these public institutions is to

generate and reinforce patriotism. However, the question arises whether patriotism is necessarily a pacific sentiment, especially in the extremely single minded form that Rousseau recommends. He is not blind to the potentially intolerant character of patriotism, but in accordance with his view that the social state is inherently marred by defects and inconveniences, sees this as an unavoidable drawback:

Toute société partielle, quand elle est étroite et bien unie, s'aliène de la grande. Tout patriote est dur aux étrangers; ils ne sont qu'hommes, ils ne sont rien à ses yeux. Cet inconvénient est inévitable, mais il est foible. L'essentiel est d'être bon aux gens avec qui l'on vit. 54

As an example, Rousseau mentions the Spartans, who he says were selfish and unjust when among strangers whilst quite the reverse among their own countrymen; and he pours scorn on those cosmopolitans who love "les Tartares pour être dispensé d'aimer ses voisins."⁵⁵ Thus whilst Rousseau concedes that patriotism is not generous towards foreigners, he sees this as infinitely preferable to the superficial sentiments of those who are not committed to a community with which they identify closely. Moreover, the patriotic citizen will be indifferent to foreigners rather than hostile to them, rather as man in the state of nature was indifferent towards his fellows. Citizens will not be constantly comparing themselves with the inhabitants of other states, for they have no need to do so; it is only the state as a mere

54 Emile, O.C. IV, 248-49.

55 Ibid. It may seem surprising that Rousseau finds no cause to comment on the character of the Spartan state, organised as it was on a permanent war footing, but preferable in his view to Athens which he saw as enfeebled by an unhealthy concern with artistic pleasures. Rousseau readily admits that the "object" of Sparta was war (see above, Ch. 4, note 39), but the only element of criticism which appears in his writings on the subject of Sparta's constitution concerns the institution of slavery. This he excuses on the grounds that: "Tout ce qui n'est point dans la nature a ses inconvénients, et la société civile plus que tout le reste." Contrat Social, O.C. III, 431.

aggregate of men, bound ultimately by force, and the "artificial" man of civilized society that must ceaselessly "compare themselves in order to know themselves". It has to be remembered that Rousseau thought it precisely the lack of national sentiment which fuels the state of war, rather than the reverse, and a people committed to the maintenance of free institutions within the confines of a small state would hardly be expected to cultivate a policy of expansion and conquest. The "martial spirit" to which Rousseau refers in his writing on Poland is not the bellicose disposition of a people intent on aggression, but a necessary attribute in a world dominated by great powers with expansionist ambitions.

The foreign policy of the republic is therefore determined by the nature of its constitution and its commitment to freedom: one might almost say that it has no foreign policy, since Rousseau recommends as complete a withdrawal from international society as is practically possible. The republic not only renounces trading and commercial links with other states, but all participation in international diplomacy. This might be conceived as a sacrifice if the opportunities renounced are considered to be of value to the nation, but in Rousseau's view they are as nothing compared with the opportunity of self-determination for state and citizens alike. The republic will be a closed community, sufficient unto itself. However, Rousseau is not so blind to the realities of international politics as to suggest that the republic can generate some kind of immunity to inter-state conflict. He is not only aware that the small state is in great danger from larger, predatory powers, but he also fears that the nature of international society itself might embroil the republic in war. This is because international society is a state of nature, not in its purest form, but one akin to de facto society amongst men. Thus for the very reason that states remain

particular interests in relation to one another "il n'est pas impossible qu'une république bien gouvernée fasse une guerre injuste."⁵⁶ State policy directed by the general will would be both rational and good; but this relative to its own special circumstances, not universally so.

There is one type of contact with other states which the republic might cultivate without compromising its independence and, indeed, which might in some circumstances be necessary for its survival. This is the confederation, but obviously of a kind very different from that envisaged by Saint-Pierre. Far from the Abbé's "league of kings", the confederal association appropriate to the republic would be a union of small states sharing a common defensive problem. In the Contrat Social Rousseau introduces the possibility of confederation as a means of compensating for the small size, and hence the vulnerability, of the republic:

Tout bien examiné, je ne vois pas qu'il soit désormais possible au Souverain de conserver parmi nous l'exercice de ses droits si la Cité n'est très petite. Mais si elle est très petite elle sera subjuguée? Non. Je ferai voir ci-après comment on peut réunir la puissance extérieure d'un grand Peuple avec la police aisée et le bon ordre d'un petit Etat.

And in a note he adds, "C'est ce que je m'étois proposé de faire dans la suite de cet ouvrage, lorsqu'en traitant des relations externes j'en serois venu aux confédérations. Matière toute neuve et où les principes sont encore à établir."⁵⁷ Rousseau did not of course complete the work to which he refers, and thus has left us to speculate on the nature of a confederation as conceived by him. It was not only the work of Saint-Pierre which had directed Rousseau's attention to the subject of confederation; as in so many things, Montesquieu had formulated the problem in terms which Rousseau echoed: "Si une république est petite,

56 Discours sur l'économie politique, O.C. III, 246.

57 O.C. III, 431.

elle est détruite par une force étrangère; si elle est grand, elle se détruit par une vice intérieur." The only solution to this problem, Montesquieu goes on, is "la république federative", which "a tous les avantages intérieures du gouvernement républicain, et la force extérieur du monarchique."⁵⁸

The most obvious point to be made regarding the kind of confederal association which can be seen as compatible with Rousseau's principles of political right is that it could in no sense diminish the separate identities of the component members, or usurp their sovereignty. The association would thus be of necessity a very loose one, its defensive purpose clearly defined; were the bond to become any closer, the basis of the individual republic's legitimacy would be undermined. Rousseau hints at this when he comments in the Emile that in the course of inquiring into means of finding some remedy for that "mixed condition" which leaves men but not states subject to law:

Nous examinerons enfin l'espèce de remèdes qu'on a cherchés à ces inconvéniens par les ligues et confédérations, qui, laissant chaque Etat son maitre au dedans, l'arme au dehors contre tout agresseur injuste. Nous rechercherons comment on peut établir une bonne association fédérative, ce qui peut la rendre durable, et jusqu'à quel point on peut étendre le droit de la confédération sans nuire à celui de souveraineté? 59

58 L'Esprit des Lois, p. 157. The terms in which Rousseau counsels a federal system of government for Poland are strikingly similar: "Si la Pologne étoit selon mon desir une confédération de trente-trois petits Etats, elle réuniroit la force des grandes Monarchies et la liberté des petites Républiques. . . ." Gouvernement de Pologne, O.C. III, 1010. Obviously, in Rousseau's view, confederation may present itself as a possible solution to the problem of achieving legitimate government in a large state, as well as a defensive measure for the small state. However, from the Contrat Social it is clear that he considers federal government the right response to Poland's particular problems, not an ideal. Richard Fralin has provided a stimulating discussion of these issues in his Rousseau and Representation (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978).

59 O.C. IV, 848.

Rousseau mentions the project of Saint-Pierre in this context as worthy of consideration, but he is here stating a principle not to be found in the Abbé's work, for all the latter's protestation that his European league would not in any way diminish the independence of princes. As indicated in the previous chapter, the association envisaged by Saint-Pierre was a federation calculated to limit the sovereignty of the component states, and the issue was only of interest to the Abbé in so far as he saw the need to reassure princes that their power would not be diminished as a result of joining the league. From Rousseau's point of view, the matter is of vital importance because he has no wish to see concern with the elimination of war, worthy an aim though this is, gloss over the problem of tyranny. He sees the purpose of confederation as the defence of well governed states, states which cannot remain well governed unless the general will of the people can continue to find expression in a small territory, without interference from some superior body.

If a confederation appropriate to the republic would be of a kind consistent with the autarky and fierce independence essential to its constitution, it is no less certain that its members would have to come together on the basis of equality. Rousseau's warning to Corsica on the danger of forming any kind of association with great powers is his only explicit indicator of this, but it follows logically from his comment on the nature of political association that a bond or agreement must be of equal advantage to all those who enter into it if it is not to be a means of oppression serving the interests of the more powerful. Clearly, this means that the circumstances in which small states will be able to enjoy the advantages of confederation will be few, since Rousseau believes large and corrupt states past redemption. The unhappy conclusion is that however well constituted the republic and however strong

its disposition towards peace, it cannot be proof against war. The greater the determination of the citizens to retain their independence and the better the opportunities for a policy of strict autarky, the longer will the republic be able to retain its freedom. Ultimately, though, the fortunes of small republics remain tied to the vagaries of international politics and the machinations of the great powers.

CHAPTER 7

MANKIND CONDEMNED TO POLITICS

Rousseau's analysis of the causes of war demonstrates that its origins are to be found in the conflict which arises amongst men as they move from nature to society, conflict which takes the name of "war" when states have been founded in the attempt to contain this conflict. War then becomes a persistent feature of international society because those who most benefit from political association can pursue their interests through the medium of state policy. In the absence of any superior power there is no restraint upon these "particular wills" which now confront each other in a permanent state of war. The two variables here which are, in theory at least, amenable to change are the nature of the state and the nature of international society - the third variable, human nature, is shaped and modified by changes within this social and political milieu. Whilst reform of the state can, in certain cases, halt the drift towards tyranny and hence the disposition towards war, the problem of international society as a "state of nature" remains intractable. What hope then does Rousseau have that war can be eliminated, and since he dismisses Saint-Pierre's plan for a European, and ultimately a world-wide federation, does he have an ideal to put in its place? Previous commentators have given a variety of answers to these questions, and in particular have differed on the matter of whether Rousseau viewed confederation as an ideal or as a purely practical expedient. A brief survey of the major interpretations will thus serve to bring the issues into sharper focus, in the course of which my own conclusions will be made more explicit.

Rousseau and the problem of war: differing interpretations

J.L. Windenberger was the first to attempt a systematic account of

Rousseau's ideas on war and peace as seen in the context of his political thought in general. Given the fragmentary nature of Rousseau's writings on war, Windenberger deliberately adopted two "methods" in order to elicit Rousseau's standpoint. The first he terms the a priori method:

Si l'on examine, en effet, les théories politiques que Rousseau a lui-même explicitement formulées, on arrive logiquement à cette conclusion naturelle, qu'elles sont insuffisantes et qu'elles n'épuisent pas le sujet qu'il voulait étudier. ¹

From this premise Windenberger goes on to determine what is logically necessary in order to make Rousseau's "political edifice" complete. The conclusion thus arrived at is corroborated by the second method, which consists in a straightforward appraisal of Rousseau's explicit statements on international politics. With the aid of these methods Windenberger concludes that Rousseau envisages a "république confédérative des petits états", arising from the same imperative which leads men to associate in political societies. Logically, there must be a "Pacte international" equivalent to the "Pacte social" by which the state is founded.² Rousseau arrives at this prescription, according to Windenberger, after considering and rejecting two other possible solutions to the problem of war. First, the division of large states into smaller ones (which he thought might lessen the likelihood of war because decentralisation would make the prince more accountable to the people). Secondly, the formulation of a code of war, which would mitigate its effects whilst leaving its causes untouched. Having rejected these ideas as impracticable, Rousseau then turns to the notion of confederation, understood quite differently from the kind of

1 Windenberger, La République confédérative, p. 15.

2 Ibid., p. 231.

federal body outlined by Saint-Pierre. Since Rousseau's concern was with small republics, he conceives the organisation which will protect these states from the ravages of war in like manner: a "confederative republic" which will preserve the sovereignty of each member whilst giving them mutual security. Windenberger recognizes that Rousseau sees war as inevitable, and presents the "confederative republic" as the only defensive means available to legitimate and peace loving states. The unity of Rousseau's thought is thus manifest in the parallel solution which he gives to the problem of conflict amongst both individuals and states, the pact of association, and Windenberger elaborates at some length the characteristics of the confederation which in his view represents the necessary culmination of Rousseau's political principles.

La République confédérative des petits états was followed some 6 years later by a work which took a similar standpoint, Lassudrie-Duchêne's Jean-Jacques Rousseau et le Droit des Gens. Lassudrie-Duchêne accepts Windenberger's conclusion that the confederative republic is Rousseau's main answer to the problem of war, but adds that Rousseau saw the laws of war as an important accompaniment, necessary to meliorate the effects of the wars which would inevitably persist. No further work on the scale of Windenberger's and Lassudrie-Duchêne's has since been undertaken, and indeed, it was not until relatively recently that the relation of Rousseau's ideas on war and peace to the rest of his work was again taken up as the key to the understanding of these ideas. C.E. Vaughan, in his two volume edition of Rousseau's political works, had merely expressed his indebtedness to Windenberger, with the qualification that the earlier writer had pressed "the analogy of the Social Contract farther than the facts will warrant."³ Moreover,

3 The Political Writings of Rousseau, I, 97.

the view of Rousseau as a determined advocate of international organization as a safeguard against war persisted in the uncertain climate of the years which followed. An edition of the Extrait appeared in 1927, for instance, with an introduction by Goldsworthy Lowes-Dickinson, an enthusiastic advocate of the League of Nations, applauding Rousseau's perspicacity in realising the need for some form of federal organization as a means of avoiding war.⁴ A similar standpoint was taken in various works surveying ideas on international organization and peace plans, which did not trouble to distinguish clearly between the views of Saint-Pierre and Rousseau, and did little to illuminate the peculiarities of Rousseau's position.⁵ Even in as eminent a work as Kenneth Waltz's more recent Man, the State and War Rousseau is presented as a straightforward advocate of the kind of federation proposed by the Abbé. Waltz arrives at this position after characterising Rousseau's ideas on war as falling within the "third image" category - that is, an explanation which focuses on the nature of international society as the major causal factor rather than on the nature of man or the nature of the state (first and second "images" respectively).⁶

It has been the object of two writers who have taken issue with Waltz's interpretation to bring out both the peculiarity of Rousseau's ideas compared with those of Saint-Pierre and the tensions and ambiguities which characterise his thought. F.H. Hinsley, in a chapter in Power and the Pursuit of Peace, criticises Waltz and others for ignoring the inconsistencies in Rousseau's thought on confederation, and concludes

4 A Project of Perpetual Peace, Rousseau's Essay, trans. E.M. Nuttall (London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1927).

5 See above, Introduction, note 6.

6 Man, the State and War, ch. 6.

that whilst he approved confederation as an ideal, he was convinced of its impracticability. Hinsley, like Windenberger before him, draws the parallel between the ideas of Rousseau on domestic and international politics, but with the point of illustrating the idealistic but essentially inconclusive nature of his thinking in both areas:

In the Contrat Social, as a result of the conflict between his views as a moralist and his recognition that society was essentially the product of circumstance and history, the ideal state - the society that would fulfil the fundamental principles he deduced from his version of the social contract - became no more than an ideal laid up in heaven. In the Jugement the European commonwealth, the means to perpetual peace, became an ideal laid up in heaven, unattainable, for essentially the same reasons. He urged it because as a moralist he wanted to urge a solution. ⁷

Hinsley suggests that had Rousseau put forward a peaceplan to replace Saint-Pierre's, it would have involved "the breakdown of Europe's existing states into federal sub-states on the basis of local rule before the re-association of the sub-states in a confederation of Europe on the model of Switzerland."⁸

Hinsley's analysis was followed by a cogently argued essay by Stanley Hoffman, again attempting to situate Rousseau's ideas on international politics within the body of his political thinking. Hoffman holds that a coherent line of thought can be traced in Rousseau's work which makes his apparent ambiguities on the subject of federation explicable. The social contract, Hoffman argues, does not have a parallel at the international level, and Rousseau views confederation (as distinct from federation) as an expedient which is necessary for small and vulnerable states, not as a final answer to the problem of war but as a "shelter against the storm",⁹ of greater effectiveness than

⁷ Power and the Pursuit of Peace, pp. 59-60.

⁸ Ibid., p. 55.

⁹ The State of War, p. 80.

laws of war which are likely to go unheeded. Rousseau's preferred answer to the problem, according to Hoffman, is a world of ideal states, each directed by the general will and committed to autarky.

Hence

the ideal international society would be like pearls juxtaposed but not on a string: independent states that would observe, in their infrequent and relaxed contacts, the commands of "rational natural law," the rules of the original natural law re-established, by reason, on new foundations. 10

The important qualification is that this constitutes "a "solution" to the problem of war only because it is an evasion of politics", a utopia.¹¹ Hoffman concludes that "Rousseau's contribution is in the nature not of a solution but of a warning."¹²

It is now possible, in the light of these differing interpretations, to establish my own views more fully. The proposition most easily dismissed is that Rousseau was an advocate of the type of federal union recommended by Saint-Pierre, since the "league of kings", even if it were a practicable scheme, would in Rousseau's view only consolidate tyranny. In characterising Rousseau as a "third image" thinker Waltz has overlooked Rousseau's claim that tyranny and war are inseparable, a claim which leads logically to his assumption that the problem of war cannot be tackled without first attending to the constitution of the state. In Waltz's terms, this means that Rousseau's would probably be better characterised as a "second image" explanation, although it is undoubtedly true that Rousseau gives considerable emphasis to the role of international society as the "permissive" cause of war. Whilst the "images" are a helpful analytic device, it is difficult to do justice

10 Ibid., p. 79.

11 Ibid., p. 80.

12 Ibid., p. 87.

to the complexity of Rousseau's thought in attempting to accommodate his ideas within a closely defined category. What is singular in Rousseau's account of conflict amongst men is not his emphasis on one causal factor rather than others, but the unbroken chain of logic which takes him from the natural, peaceful condition of man to the state of war in which tyrants are the dominant actors on the international stage.

It was established in the previous chapter that whilst Rousseau rejected the Abbé's notion of federation he looked sympathetically upon the idea of a confederation of small republics. Nevertheless it should not be assumed that Windenberger was correct in portraying such an association as the international equivalent of the social contract, such that "l'harmonie la plus parfaite relie son système de politique étrangère à ses théories de politique intérieure. . . ." ¹³ In treating seriously Rousseau's contention that he had a coherent "system", Windenberger has fallen into the error of taking Rousseau's "logic" farther than is justifiable, and has thus distorted his ideas. Windenberger starts from the premise that Rousseau's political theory is incomplete or unfinished, not only because Rousseau suggested at the end of the Contrat Social that he had intended to go on and extend his ideas to the international arena, and later appears to have written a manuscript on confederation, but also because he wanted his principles of political right to be universally applied. One can readily accept that Rousseau did not complete the major project, his Institutions politiques, first conceived whilst he was in Venice, with reference to what he has to say on this matter in the Contrat Social and in the Confessions. But to link this with the assertion that Rousseau's

13 La République confédérative, p. 251.

political work is logically incomplete because the social contract, without some "international pact" to back it up, can only be applied in isolated circumstances, is to ignore all that Rousseau emphatically established regarding the constraints by which political change is bounded. Moreover, Windenberger's interpretation also suggests that confederation is not merely a practical necessity for small states, to forestall aggression by great powers, but that it represents a moral end in itself. This is not simply because the "confederative republic" will safeguard the member states and therefore allow them to perfect their constitutions, but because, according to Windenberger, this wider union will bring men closer to universal fellowship. Thus whilst he recognises that Rousseau depicts confederation as primarily a defensive device, "une societe-gendarme", in Windenberger's words, he concludes his study by indicating that love of country can, through the confederations, be extended to a love of mankind: "Aimons d'abord nos concitoyens, aimons ensuite tous les membres de la Confédération, et peu à peu nous aimerons tous les hommes".¹⁴

There are various elements within Windenberger's interpretation which remain of value. Chief amongst these are his commitment to the understanding of Rousseau's ideas as a "system" and the recognition that Rousseau depicts war as the culmination of "la marche des événements qui ont précipité l'humanité dans ce triste esclavage. . . ." ¹⁵ Windenberger also realises the importance of Rousseau's concern to establish "war" as that which takes place between states, linked as it is with his attempt to formulate a "code of war" which would limit the effects of conflict. Windenberger rightly makes Rousseau's emphasis on

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 240.

the small republic central to his analysis, and appreciates Rousseau's dismissal of Saint-Pierre's plans as inconsistent with his principles. He is, moreover, careful to avoid the suggestion that Rousseau held out the prospect of an age of perpetual peace: "La guerre est un fait brutal avec lequel il faut compter. . . ." ¹⁶ It is nevertheless the case that, as Vaughan commented, Windenberger took the analogy of the social contract too far. His attempt to tie up all the apparently loose ends in Rousseau's work merely serves to obscure the tension between Rousseau's moralism and his pessimism regarding the possibilities for political change which, as I have argued, is central to the dynamic of his thought. It is also a serious error of interpretation to suggest, as Windenberger does albeit briefly at the end of his work, that confederation may, in Rousseau's view, lead men to a greater love of humanity. This is an error to which Windenberger's a priori method leads him, although he no doubt also had in mind a passing comment of Rousseau's in the first draft of the Contrat Social - a comment, however, which was not included in the final version of the work and which Rousseau does not repeat elsewhere. ¹⁷ Rousseau makes it abundantly clear throughout his political writings that the status of "citizen" is the highest moral end; a position not without its disadvantages, he acknowledges, since citizenship is exclusive, indeed potentially intolerant of others beyond the association. He cannot, however, regard cosmopolitanism as a greater virtue than patriotism.

16 Ibid., p. 250.

17 "Nous concevons la société générale d'après nos sociétés particulières, l'établissement des petites Républiques nous fait songer à la grande, et nous ne commençons proprement à devenir hommes qu'après avoir été Citoyens." O.C. III, 287. This passage figures in chapter 2 of this first draft, headed "De la société générale du genre humain."

Rousseau's refusal to subscribe to the idea of progress towards a perfected condition, coupled with a moralism which drove him to urge "solutions" to the problems he perceived in the world around him, are rightly emphasised in the more recent interpretation of Hinsley. But Hinsley's assertion that Rousseau's thought tends to "inconclusiveness and defeatism", arising from "his failure to reconcile his historical arguments with the initial assumptions of his moral and political philosophy," cannot be sustained.¹⁸ Hinsley argues that Rousseau became only gradually aware of the importance of history and of circumstance in the development of political institutions, and that he remained unable to square this sense of history with the "wilful use of art and contrivance" embodied in the notion of contract.¹⁹ Indeed, Hinsley asserts that Rousseau talked of society as resulting from a contract. He further argues, in similar fashion to Vaughan, that in his latter works, where Rousseau's historical sense is more evident, he is exhibiting the influence of Montesquieu rather than of Plato and Locke. As regards his ideas on international politics, then, Hinsley sees Rousseau as unable to reconcile the notion of the slow evolution of the international system with the idea of an artificially imposed "federal bond" akin to the social contract.²⁰ Hinsley's analysis is flawed because he fails to recognise the distinction which is clear in Rousseau's work between the historical processes which shape human society and institutions over time, and the notion of contract as both an explanatory device and an indicator of the importance of human choice and the rational will in the determination of political institutions.

18 Power and the Pursuit of Peace, p. 55.

19 Ibid., p. 56.

20 Ibid., p. 57.

Nowhere does Rousseau depict the origins of society as contractual; he expressly reserves the notion of contract for the state because he conceives the state as an artificial body, created and maintained by human will and artifice. It is precisely this, in fact, which sustains his moralism despite his acute awareness of the constraints of time and circumstance, so evident in his works on Corsica and Poland. Since political institutions are the product of human artifice, where circumstances permit improvement can be effected. As regards the subject of confederation, this is not for Rousseau an "ideal laid up in heaven", but rather a practical possibility in some limited circumstances, to be welcomed in those circumstances if it serves to shield small nations from war. Rousseau's realism, coupled with his belief that large states were past redemption, would not have encouraged him to conceive of an alternative to Saint-Pierre's plan in the breakdown of European states into "sub-states" so that these might then join into a confederation. Hinsley, like Windenberger, has made the error of likening the "federal bond" to the contract. There is no international parallel to the contract, for states cannot come together, as can individuals, in the commitment to the realisation of a "general will" amongst them. Were they to do this, they would surrender their identity as separate states with individual cultures and traditions, capable of sustaining citizenship within. Confederation can therefore be no more than a defensive arrangement which will operate only in rare instances, for Rousseau warns small states against entering any form of alliance with larger powers.

It will be evident from this that I share Hoffman's view that Rousseau sees confederation essentially as a "shelter against the storm". It was a possibility which Rousseau deemed worthy of consideration only in connection with small, well constituted states because such states

alone would be disposed to seek peace rather than war, and would inevitably be vulnerable to the aggression of great powers. However, it is necessary to take issue with Hoffman's associated point that Rousseau has an ideal conception of international society which constitutes "an evasion of politics." Hoffman presents Rousseau's ideal, the world of small, autarkic states (equivalent to a new, higher state of nature) as his "principal answer" to the problem of war.²¹

He adds that

Paradoxically, Rousseau, who recognized that man could never revert to the state of nature, advocated for nations a return to an isolation that the march of history had proved impossible long before he wrote. But the paradox is more apparent than real, for he recognized also that most of the states of his day were too corrupt ever to be capable of applying the principles of The Social Contract: only a few small nations could still be saved - obviously not enough to make universal peace possible. ²²

Rousseau did not explicitly address himself to the question of what would constitute the ideal international society: Hoffman's conclusion is therefore arrived at "a priori" and is, I would suggest, misleading because it attaches the label "utopian" to Rousseau and thus serves to obscure the realism which Rousseau invariably displays in his thinking on international politics. Hoffman of course gives recognition to this realism, as the above quotation testifies; but his interpretation fails to do justice to Rousseau's sense of the inescapable constraints which politics imposes on men and states alike, that "yoke of necessity" which receives so much emphasis in the Emile.

Secondly, even if one follows Hoffman in the extension of Rousseau's logic to uncover his supposed conception of the "ideal international society", the ideal as expressed by Hoffman would not, in Rousseau's

²¹ The State of War, p. 80.

²² Ibid., p. 82.

terms, constitute a solution to the problem of war. For Hoffman suggests that in this ideal world the small states "juxtaposed" would observe in their occasional contacts rules of "rational natural law" which would maintain peace amongst them.²³ However, as I have already demonstrated, Rousseau makes it clear that well governed states remain "particular wills" in relation to each other, and he conceives this as a problem which could not be solved by appeal to some transcendent "rational law". It is not a matter Rousseau discusses at length, but it is worth giving consideration to the passing reference he makes in the Discours sur l'économie politique. He is commenting on the nature of the body politic; referring to the "rule of justice" which emanates from the general will within the state, he goes on:

Il est important de remarquer que cette regle de justice, sûre par rapport à tous les citoyens, peut être fautive avec les étrangers; et la raison de ceci est évidente: c'est qu'alors la volonté de l'état quoique générale par rapport à ses membres, ne l'est plus par rapport aux autres états et à leurs membres, mais devient pour eux une volonté particuliere et individuelle, qui a sa regle de justice dans la loi de nature, ce qui rentre également dans le principe établi: car alors la grande ville du monde devient le corps politique dont la loi de nature est toujours la volonté générale, et dont les états et peuples divers ne sont que des membres individuels.

De ces mêmes distinctions appliquées à chaque société politique et à ses membres, découlent les regles les plus universelles et les plus sûres sur lesquelles on puisse juger d'un bon ou d'un mauvais gouvernement, et en général, de la moralité de toutes les actions humaines. ²⁴

Superficially, these remarks might seem to confirm Hoffman's position, since Rousseau makes reference to a "general will" in the "law of nature" over and above states. However, he does not suggest that rational apprehension of this law will regulate the conduct of states in their mutual relations; rather it should be seen as a rule of

23 Ibid., p. 79.

24 O.C. III, 245.

morality by which conduct can be judged. It seems odd that Rousseau should employ the term "general will" in this context, but unless he is being inconsistent, his usage here is different from the more rigorous use of the term in the Contrat Social. It was established in chapter 2 that what Rousseau understands by the law of nature are the two principles of amour de soi and pitié. Applied to international society, Rousseau suggests that the law of nature should provide a guide to action as the same law did for man in the state of nature; the great difference is that in the original condition man adhered automatically to this law, without the need for reflection upon its rightness or utility. In society that natural regulator of conduct becomes lost, and has to be re-established, or more accurately established in a new form. It is possible to achieve this within the state, where the general will arises out of a moi commun with which citizens can identify and thus transcend their purely private and particular interests. The same does not apply at the international level: whilst it is possible to apprehend the rational natural law which, if adhered to, would maintain a peaceful international society, in the absence of any means of generating a real community of interest among nations, it can provide no guarantee of peace. It would appear that Rousseau likens the law of nature to the general will of "la grande ville du monde" because the general will of any community by definition is that which prescribes what is good for the community as a whole. But whilst particular interests remain, the general will cannot be realised, and the law of nature provides merely a universal rule by which the actions of governments can be judged.

To interpret Rousseau in this way is thus to reject Hoffman's reading, which presents Rousseau's ideal as the re-appropriation of the state of nature at a higher, reasoned, level:

Were the whole planet covered with small, essentially self-

sufficient republics, endowed with civic pride but no national vanity and equipped with purely defensive militias, then the world would ipso facto be at peace. A general society of mankind would emerge, composed not of "cosmopolitans" or "world citizens" but of good citizens - men who would have arrived at the modern, or social, equivalent of natural man's amour de soi and compassion, by curbing amour-propre, overcoming those passions which "speak louder than [their] conscience," and practicing patriotism without belligerency. 25

If Hoffman were correct, then Rousseau's would truly be a "second image" solution to the problem of war - or rather, as Hoffman would have it, a non-solution. In my view, Rousseau gives much greater weight than Hoffman acknowledges to the difficulties inherent in the notion of a "society" of states, which presents the same problem that all human society raises: how to reconcile conflicting particular interests. Since this is not possible in international society, a world of small republics would not ipso facto be at peace. Rousseau states unambiguously in the Discours sur l'économie politique that whilst the rules of "particular societies" ought to be subordinate to the duties proper to man, this cannot in reality be the case. Duty can be sustained and justice realised within the state, but can be extended no further. Hence Rousseau cautions:

"Il ne s'ensuit pas pour cela que les délibérations publiques soient toujours équitables; elles peuvent ne l'être pas lorsqu'il s'agit d'affaires étrangères. . . ." 26

Rousseau does indeed provide a "warning" rather than a solution to the problem of war, but this ^{is} less an indication of his retreat into a utopian vision than of his acute sense of the inescapable defects of the social state.

Windenberger, Hinsley and Hoffman have all assumed, in arriving at their very different interpretations of Rousseau's supposed "ideal",

25 The State of War, p. 78.

26 O.C. III, 246.

that because Rousseau did not make his ideas on international relations fully explicit, it is both permissible and necessary to follow the logic of his principles of political right to their logical conclusion. Having argued against these interpretations in terms of the logic which each claims to be following, it is not my wish to conclude by offering another interpretation of Rousseau's "ideal world", the solution to the problem of war assumed to be logically in accord with the prescriptive ideas of the Contrat Social. Apart from the obvious danger of stretching Rousseau's logic too far, I would argue that what Rousseau does have to say on the problems of international politics, rather than suggesting an imagined utopia, can be interpreted more correctly in terms of the realist insight which he brings to bear on these problems. Despite Rousseau's overriding moralism, he could not provide any vision of a world blessed with perpetual peace.

Rousseau, reluctant realist

The singularity of Rousseau's thought, evident in all his works but especially apparent in his speculation on the problem of war, resides in the uneasy combination of a radical moralism with a pronounced sense of the constraints imposed upon moral change by time and circumstance. In common with his fellow philosophes, Rousseau did not consider "human nature" to be a barrier to improvement in social and political practice; indeed, he was more firmly convinced than most of his contemporaries of the inherent goodness of man and of his latent perfectibility. Voltaire, for example, was particularly pessimistic about the prospects of eliminating war because, whilst he conceded that the politics of absolutism had a major role to play in fomenting conflict, he viewed war essentially as an inevitable consequence of man's

imperfections.²⁷ However, if Rousseau was one of the more optimistic Enlightenment thinkers on the question of human nature, he was by no means typical of his age in his attitude towards the future well-being and moral rectitude of mankind. Mainstream Enlightenment thinking placed its faith in reason as the key to progress, and although there was generally less optimism regarding the possibility of finding a solution to the problem of war than there was concerning other social problems, the hope for a more peaceful world in the future lay in the anticipated spread of new ideas and the application of wiser influences in the realm of public policy. Along with the belief that if the intemperate policies of princes and ministers were curbed, conflict would at least be minimised, went the associated view, argued enthusiastically by Saint-Pierre, that greater converse and increased trade among nations would make war a less attractive option than hitherto. Implicit here was the liberal assumption, later to be articulated more fully, that war represents a breakdown of the normal processes of diplomacy and negotiation, and that the more a rational apprehension of the damaging effects of international conflict takes hold, the more regular will be peace among nations.

Rousseau was at once more sweeping in his critique of the institutions of "civilized" society and more radical in his prescriptions, but unable nevertheless to subscribe to the notion of progress. He did not limit his criticism to the denunciation of oppression and misused authority of church and state, but produced a wholesale attack on a form of society in which war was but the most extreme manifestation of the

27 Voltaire remarked in his Questions sur l'Encyclopédie that: "All animals are perpetually engaged in warfare, each species is born to devour another species." Quoted in Perkins, "Voltaire's Concept of International Order," p. 144.

unequal distribution of property and power. It followed from his critique that whilst the fundamental structure of society remained unchanged, any improvement brought about by appeals to reason could only be cosmetic. Such was the radical character of Rousseau's moralism, which did not find general acceptance amongst the philosophes. Of Rousseau's contemporaries, only Meslier, Morelly and the Abbé de Mably put a similar emphasis on the institution of property and the scourge of inequality as the root of political oppression and conflict. Likewise, the view was expressed in their works that only a fundamental change designed to effect equality would secure liberty and greater harmony amongst men. Indeed, all three writers went further than Rousseau in suggesting that private property be eliminated altogether. Mably, known personally to Rousseau and already a distinguished philosophe when the latter was still in the early stages of his literary career, developed principles of republican government to which Rousseau's bear a strong similarity. Mably too thought it possible for men to achieve virtue within the republic, to which end they must be prevented from falling into the vices of "avarice and ambition" and encouraged to develop a "love of the laws."²⁸ However, not only did Mably go further than Rousseau in his belief that in the well constituted state "our first law would be to possess nothing of our own", he also differed in that he looked towards a universal harmony which alone could prevent international competition and conflict destroying the equality and liberty realised within the republic.²⁹ Thus along with equality and a

28 Quoted in Charles Vereker, Eighteenth Century Optimism (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 1967), pp. 252-53.

29 Ibid., p. 251. Kingsley Martin comments of Mably that he "differs from Rousseau because the community he imagines is not national but world-wide. Patriotism must be a subordinate virtue: only a universal sentiment of brotherhood will prevent jealousy between States destroying the harmony resulting from economic communism." French Liberal Thought, p. 250.

"religion" to strengthen the teaching of reason and keep the passions at bay, Mably thought that a world federation of republics would be necessary for the attainment of the good life. This universalist perspective Rousseau was unable to share, both because he saw few opportunities for the creation of well ordered republics, and because he believed it impossible to realise any sentiment of brotherhood which transcends the nation. Patriotism must, of necessity, be the highest virtue since men cannot love, nor act justly towards other communities far off and unknown to them. The rational will has no motive except in sentiment, and love of country cannot take men any nearer universal fellowship.

Whilst Rousseau's radical critique of existing institutions, coupled with his sense of the moral imperative for change thus put him among the most uncompromising of the eighteenth century advocates of a new political order, in his prescriptive ideas he feels more keenly the constraints which the enduring characteristics of human society impose upon political action. He is certainly in company with those utopian egalitarians whom Vereker has termed the "redemptive optimists",³⁰ but Rousseau's optimism is limited to his belief in the inherent goodness of men, and his capacity for perfectibility which could be realised only in rare circumstances. In his attitude towards the future Rousseau's mentality is not progressive, but stoic. It is perhaps the greatest paradox of Rousseau's thought that whilst he is utterly convinced that the nature of man entitles him to happiness and fits him for virtue, he sees the majority of mankind, for all time, as condemned to unhappiness and vice.

In locating his vision of a possible harmony amongst men firmly

³⁰ Eighteenth Century Optimism, Part 3.

within the particularity of the state, and in seeing no way of going beyond this particularity, Rousseau can offer no alternative to international power politics. It was intimated in the previous chapter that the way in which Rousseau conceives the possibility of overcoming conflict within the state can be seen as a transcendence of politics. Rousseau realised how slim was the possibility of attaining a truly general will within the republic, but considered it nevertheless an ideal which could at least be approached, and one towards which small states seeking legitimate rule should work. In the international realm there is no remotely comparable possibility; it is neither feasible to envisage a world community, a "general society of the human race" (even if willed by autonomous communities), nor a reappropriation of the "pure" state of nature in which states, like natural men, would coexist but without any real social intercourse. Thus whilst it is possible to conceive that perfect harmony may, for a time at least, be realised within the small community (this is even more likely within the close family group, as in La Nouvelle Héloïse) international society is necessarily and for all time the realm of politics and the arena of conflict. Since international politics in a world of unequal states inevitably serves the interests of the most powerful, the only positive recommendation that Rousseau has for the small state is that it withdraw from international politics in so far as this is possible. Far from partaking of that liberal optimism which sees political activity, in the reconciliation of conflicting interests, as the guarantee of freedom, Rousseau has a grim acceptance that men for the most part, and states inevitably, are "condemned to politics."³¹

31 This phrase is used by Maurice Keens-Soper in his introduction to Rousseau's writings on international politics in The Theory of International Relations, ed. M.G. Forsyth, H.M.A. Keens-Soper and P. Savigear (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1970), p. 130.

Rousseau's moralism thus sits uneasily with a reluctant realism, a refusal to duck the complexities of inter-state conflict and an acute awareness of the importance of power in determining relations between states which set him alongside the more readily recognised realists, Machiavelli and Hobbes. Rousseau can be said to have a realist view of international relations in that he assumes that there can be no essential harmony of interest among nations, and that war or the threat of war will inevitably remain indispensable to rulers who dictate public policy, indeed, even to well governed states which still have their own particular interest. He sees no compensatory advantages in the nature of a competitive states system; he could hardly share Machiavelli's acceptance, even glorification, of war as a means to princely power and the greater strength of the state. Nor could Rousseau share the view of Hobbes that the state of war among nations is tolerable because the commonwealth provides for man's basic needs, and affords him the protection which is lacking in the state of nature. For Rousseau war can never be seen as a mere inconvenience, but is always conceived by him as a moral problem. Nevertheless it is one to which he believes there is no effective solution; hence it is a perennial problem, an inescapable fact of the human condition given that the natural order cannot be recaptured. Rousseau held out no greater hope than his realist predecessors that reason might guide men towards some means of conducting their affairs without resort to conflict. Reason has its role to play, certainly, in its application to the state which is not too corrupt to undertake reform, and in the recognition that there must be "laws of war" to mitigate the worst effects of conflict. In the final analysis, though, Rousseau cannot avoid the conclusion that power rather than reason will continue to be the major determinant in international relations.

It is a further peculiarity of Rousseau's position that whilst he accepts the Grotian view that the international order is a society without government, rather than a pure condition of anarchy, he rejects the accompanying assumption that it is a society with its own laws appropriate to its working and mutually advantageous in their observance. On the contrary, the very fact that states do coexist in a kind of society is a cause for additional pessimism, for in the absence of any coercive power the might of the strongest is bound to prevail. From this condition Rousseau can perceive no escape; states cannot achieve the almost completely isolated existence which men enjoyed in the state of nature, nor is there any way forward to some kind of world government or a universal community of mankind. Ever uncompromising, Rousseau also rejects the liberal position intermediate between these two extremes, the pragmatic path of accommodation, where possible, between conflicting interests, always with the appeal to reason in mind. Unable to take this more sanguine view of international politics, Rousseau is convinced that there can be no real accommodation or compromise between conflicting interests where some are powerful and some weak. Voluntary restraint cannot be expected from the powerful nor lack of ambition from the weak. The small hope that the legitimate state has of finding some shelter from the ravages of international conflict resides in those contingent historical circumstances which may render it capable of cultivating a policy of autarky and thus able deliberately to turn away from the international arena. Likewise Rousseau conceives confederation as a means of shielding small states from the risk of war rather than as facilitating an entry into the wider domain of international politics.

I have characterised Rousseau as a reluctant realist; reluctant both because he could not abandon the belief that war is a moral problem

to which a solution ought to be sought, and because he remains convinced of the moral imperative for action in pursuit of a rationally determined end, wherever this is possible. His pessimism regarding the future is tempered by the belief, acquired from the Stoics, that all life is a cycle of growth and decay. Just as the life of an individual offers opportunities for saving him from corruption if the correct principles are applied, so, occasionally, may states be "born" in which conditions allow a legitimate political order to be constructed. Even where circumstances are far from favourable the motive to reform must be strong, as Rousseau indicates in his attempts to tackle the problems of Corsica and Poland. War remains the most intractable of human problems, but Rousseau's fundamental claim is that peace cannot arise out of institutions which embody inequality and oppression. Popular sovereignty and material equality are the prerequisites for peace within the body politic, a peace which arises out of justice, in contrast to an order imposed by the few for their own benefit. A state which embodies peace within will not be disposed towards conflict with its neighbours; but from this point Rousseau's moralism can take him no further. The "yoke of necessity" weighs upon the social and political theorist as it does upon the ordinary man; the constraints of circumstance circumscribe all moral and political action. Rousseau was in an important sense anticipating Marx, who in The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte wrote that:

"Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past." 32

The tragic dimension of Rousseau's vision is that whilst he firmly

32 Collected Works, 11, 103.

believes in the application of human reason and will in the pursuit of justice, he is not able to couple this with a belief in universal progress towards a more just social and political order. The state of war is a condition from which men may seek and find temporary respite, but which can never be finally transcended.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

EDITIONS OF ROUSSEAU'S WORKS

- Oeuvres Complètes. Edition published under the direction of Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond. Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Gallimard), 1959 to date.
- Essai sur l'origine des langues. Edited by Charles Porset. Paris: A.G. Nizet, 1970.
- Lettre à d'Alembert sur les spectacles. Introduction by Michel Launay. Paris: Garnier Flammarion, 1967.
- Correspondance complète de Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Edited by R.A. Leigh. Geneva: Institut et Musée Voltaire, 1965-1982.
- The Political Writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Edited by C.E. Vaughan. 2 vols. 1915; rpt. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962.
- Rousseau: Political Writings. Translated and edited by Frederick Watkins. New York: Nelson, 1953.
- The Social Contract. Translated and introduced by Maurice Cranston. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968.
- The Social Contract and Discourses. Translated with an introduction by G.D.H. Cole, revised and augmented by J.H. Brumfitt and John C. Hall. London: J.M. Dent, 1973.
- Emile. Translated by Barbara Foxley. Introduction by André Boutet de Monvel. London: J.M. Dent, 1911.
- The Confessions. Translated with an introduction by J.M. Cohen. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1953.
- The Reveries of the Solitary Walker. Translated with an interpretative essay by Charles E. Butterworth. New York: New York University Press, 1979.

WORKS BY OTHER AUTHORS

A. Books

- Alembert, Jean le Rond d'. Discours préliminaire de l'Encyclopédie. Paris: Editions Gonthier, 1965.
- Althusser, Louis. Politics and History: Montesquieu, Rousseau, Hegel and Marx. Translated by Ben Brewster. London: New Left Books, 1972.

- Becker, Carl. The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers.
New Haven: Yale University Press, 1932.
- Burgelin, Pierre. La Philosophie de l'Existence de Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950.
- Butterfield, Herbert, and Wight, Martin, editors. Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics.
London: George Allen & Unwin, 1966.
- Cassirer, Ernst. The Philosophy of the Enlightenment. Translated by Fritz C.A. Koelln and James P. Pettegrove. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951.
- . The Question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Translated and edited by Peter Gay. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963.
- Charvet, John. The Social Problem in the Philosophy of Rousseau.
London: Cambridge University Press. 1974.
- Chateau, Jean. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, sa philosophie de l'education.
Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1962.
- Cobban, Alfred. Rousseau and the Modern State. 2nd ed. 1934; rpt.
London: George Allen & Unwin, 1964.
- Colletti, Lucio. From Rousseau to Lenin: Studies in Ideology and Society. Translated by John Merrington and Judith White. London: New Left Books, 1972.
- Cranston, Maurice, and Peters, Richard S., editors. Hobbes and Rousseau: a Collection of Critical Essays. New York: Doubleday, 1972.
- Cranston, Maurice. Jean-Jacques: the Early Life and Works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 1712-1754. London: Allen Lane, 1983.
- Della Volpe, Galvano. Rousseau and Marx. Translated and introduced by John Fraser. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1978.
- Derathé, Robert. Le rationalisme de Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1948.
- . Jean-Jacques Rousseau et la science politique de son temps.
Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950.
- Diderot, Denis. The Encyclopedia. Selections edited and translated by Stephen J. Gendzier. New York: Harper and Row, 1967.
- Drouet, Joseph. L'Abbé de Saint-Pierre, l'homme et l'oeuvre. Paris: Champion, 1912.
- Durkheim, Emile. Montesquieu et Rousseau, précurseurs de la sociologie.
Paris: Marcel Rivière, 1953.

- Forsyth, M.G., Keens-Soper, H.M.A., and Savigear, P., editors. The Theory of International Relations: Selected Texts from Gentili to Treitschke. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1970.
- Forsyth, Murray. Unions of States: the Theory and Practice of Confederation. Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1981.
- Fralin, Richard. Rousseau and Representation: a Study of the Development of his Concept of Political Institutions. New York: Columbia University Press, 1978.
- Friedrich, Carl Joachim. Inevitable Peace. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1948.
- Gallie, W.B. Philosophers of Peace and War: Kant, Clausewitz, Marx, Engels and Tolstoy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978.
- Gay, Peter. The Enlightenment: an Interpretation. 2 vols. New York: Random House, 1966-1969.
- . The Party of Humanity: Essays in the French Enlightenment. New York: Norton, 1971.
- Gierke, Otto von. The Development of Political Theory. Translated by Bernard Freyd. New York: Norton, 1939.
- Goumy, Edouard. Etude sur la vie et les écrits de l'abbé de Saint-Pierre. Paris, 1859.
- Green, Thomas Hill. Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation. London: Longmans, 1941.
- Grimsley, Ronald. Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Brighton: Harvester Press, 1983.
- Groethuysen, Bernard. Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Paris: Gallimard, 1949.
- Grotius, Hugo. On the Law of War and Peace. Translated by Francis W. Kelsey. The Classics of International Law, No. 3. Edited by James Brown Scott. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1925.
- Guéhenno, Jean. Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Translated by John and Doreen Weightman. 2 vols. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966.
- Harvey, Simon; Hobson, Marian; Kelly, David; Taylor, Samuel, S.B., editors. Reappraisals of Rousseau: Studies in Honour of R.A. Leigh. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980.
- Hemleben, S.J. Plans for World Peace Through Six Centuries. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1943.
- Hendel, Charles William. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Moralists. 2 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934.
- . editor. Citizen of Geneva: Selections from the Letters of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. New York: Oxford University Press, 1937.

- Hinsley, F.H. Power and the Pursuit of Peace: Theory and Practice in the History of Relations between States. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967.
- . Nationalism and the International System. Twentieth Century Studies, No. 5. Edited by Donald Tyerman. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1973.
- Hobbes, Thomas. Leviathan. Edited with an introduction by Michael Oakeshott. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957.
- . Man and Citizen. Edited with an introduction by Bernard Gert. New York: Doubleday, 1972.
- Hoffman, Stanley. The State of War: Essays in the Theory and Practice of International Politics. London: Pall Mall Press, 1965.
- Howard, Michael. War and the Liberal Conscience. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981.
- Hubert, René. Rousseau et l'Encyclopédie: essai sur la formation des idées politiques de Rousseau (1742-1756). Paris: Gamber, 1928.
- Jouvenel, Bertrand de. "Essai sur la politique de Rousseau." Du Contrat Social. Geneva: Editions du Cheval Ailé, 1947.
- Kant, Immanuel. Kant's Political Writings. Translated by H.B. Nisbet. Edited with an introduction by Hans Reiss. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970.
- Lassudrie-Duchêne, Georges. Jean-Jacques Rousseau et le Droit des Gens. Paris: H. Jouve, 1906.
- Launay, Michel. Jean-Jacques Rousseau écrivain politique (1712-1762). Cannes: C.E.L.; Grenoble: A.C.E.R., 1971.
- Lederman, László. Les précurseurs de l'organisation internationale. Neuchâtel: La Baconnière, 1945.
- Locke, John. Two Treatises of Government. Edited with an introduction by Peter Laslett. New York: Mentor Books, 1965.
- Machiavelli, Niccolò. The Prince. Translated with an introduction by George Bull. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1961.
- Macpherson, C.B. The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962.
- . The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- Marriott, Sir J.A.R. Commonwealth or Anarchy?: a Survey of Projects of Peace from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century. London: P. Allan, 1937.
- Martin, Kingsley. French Liberal Thought in the Eighteenth Century: a Study of Political Ideas from Bayle to Condorcet. 3rd ed. 1929; rpt. New York: Harper and Row, 1963.

- Marx, Karl, and Engels, Frederick. Collected Works. Vols. 6 and 11. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1976 and 1979.
- Masters, Roger D. The Political Philosophy of Rousseau. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968.
- Molinari, Georges de. L'abbé de Saint-Pierre. Paris, 1857.
- Montesquieu, Charles Louis de Secondat, baron de. L'Esprit des Lois. Paris: le club français du livre, 1967.
- More, Thomas. Utopia. Introduction by John Warrington. New York: J.M. Dent, 1974.
- Oakeshott, Michael. On Human Conduct. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975.
- Palmer, Robert R. The Age of the Democratic Revolution: a Political History of Europe and America, 1760-1800. Vol. 1: The Challenge. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959.
- Perkins, Merle L. The Moral and Political Philosophy of the Abbé de Saint-Pierre. Geneva: Librairie E. Droz, 1959.
- Polin, Raymond. La politique de la solitude: essai sur la philosophie politique de Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Paris: Editions Sirey, 1971.
- Pufendorf, Samuel von. On the Duty of Man and Citizen. Translated by Frank Gardner Moore. The Classics of International Law, No. 10. Edited by James Brown Scott. New York: Oxford University Press, 1927.
- On the Law of Nature and Nations. Translated by C.H. Oldfather and W.A. Oldfather. The Classics of International Law, No. 17. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934.
- Reynolds, Charles. Theory and Explanation in International Politics. London: Martin Robertson, 1973.
- Saint-Pierre, Charles François Irénée Castel, Abbé de. Projet pour rendre la paix perpétuelle en Europe. 2 vols. Utrecht: Antoine Shouten, 1712.
- Ouvrages de Morale et de Politique. 17 vols. Rotterdam: Beman, 1729-1741.
- Schinz, Albert. La Pensée de Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1929.
- Etat présent des travaux sur Jean-Jacques Rousseau. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1941.
- Shklar, Judith N. Men and Citizens: a Study of Rousseau's Social Theory. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969.
- Souleyman, E.V. The Vision of World Peace in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century France. New York: G.P. Putnams, 1941.

- Starobinski, Jean. Jean-Jacques Rousseau: la transparence et l'obstacle. Paris: Gallimard, 1971.
- Strauss, Leo. Natural Right and History. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953.
- Vereker, Charles. Eighteenth Century Optimism: a Study of the Interrelations of Moral and Social Theory in English and French Thought between 1689 and 1789. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1967.
- Waltz, Kenneth N. Man, the State and War: a Theoretical Analysis. New York: Columbia University Press, 1959.
- Windenberger, J.L. La république confédérative des petits états: essai sur le système de politique étrangère de J.-J. Rousseau. Paris: Picard, 1900.
- Wright, Ernest Hunter. The Meaning of Rousseau. London: Oxford University Press, 1929.

B. Articles

- Burgelin, Pierre. "The Second Education of Emile." Yale French Studies, XXVIII (Fall-Winter 1961-1962), 106-11.
- Delbez, Louis. "La notion métaphysique de guerre." Revue Générale de Droit International Public, 23, No. 3 (1952), 460-88.
- Derathé, Robert. "Rousseau et le problème de la monarchie." Le Contrat Social, vol. 6, part 3 (May-June 1962), 165-68.
- Durkheim, Emile. "Le Contrat Social de Rousseau." Revue de Métaphysique et Morale, XXV (1918), 1-23.
- Fabre, Jean. "Realité et utopie dans la pensée politique de Rousseau." Annales de la Société Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 35 (1959-1962), 181-221.
- Fetscher, Iring. "Rousseau's Concepts of Freedom in the Light of his Philosophy of History." Nomos, vol. IV (1962), 29-56.
- "Rousseau, auteur d'intention conservatrice et d'action révolutionnaire," in Rousseau et la philosophie politique, pp. 51-75.
- Gorceix, S. "Du nouveau sur un vieux projet de paix perpétuelle en Europe, de C.I.C. de Saint-Pierre." Mercure France, 251 (May 1934), 522-37.
- Haymann, Franz. "La loi naturelle dans la philosophie politique de Jean-Jacques Rousseau." Annales de la Société Jean-Jacques Rousseau, XXX (1943-1945), 65-110.

- Jouvenel, Bertrand de. "Rousseau the Pessimistic Evolutionist," in Yale French Studies, pp. 83-96.
- . "Theorie des formes de gouvernement chez Rousseau." Le Contrat Social, VI (November-December 1962), 343-51.
- Lanson, Gustave. "L'unité de la pensée de Jean-Jacques Rousseau." Annales de la Société Jean-Jacques Rousseau, VIII (1912), 1-31.
- Leigh, R.A. "Liberté et autorité dans le Contrat Social," in Jean-Jacques Rousseau et son oeuvre: problèmes et recherches, pp. 249-62.
- Marriott, Sir J.A.R. "Projects of World Peace." Quarterly Review, 267 (July 1936), 153-69.
- Meyer, E. "L'abbé de Saint-Pierre, Jean-Jacques Rousseau et Briand Kellogg." Grande Revue, CXXVII (1928), 403-13.
- Mestre, Achille. "La notion de personnalité morale chez Rousseau." Revue de Droit Politique et de la Science Politique, 17 (January-June 1902), 447-68.
- Morel, Jean. "Recherches sur le sources du Discours de l'inégalité." Annales de la Société Jean-Jacques Rousseau, V (1909), 119-98.
- Nys, Ernest. "A propos de la Paix perpétuelle de l'Abbé de Saint-Pierre, Emeric Crucé et Ernest Landgrove de Hesse Rheinfels." Revue de Droit International, 22 (1890), 371-84.
- . "Le Droit des Gens et les écrits de Jean-Jacques Rousseau." Revue de Droit International, 9 (1907), 77-89.
- Perkins, Merle L. "Voltaire's Concept of International Order." Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century, edited by Theodore Besterman, XXVI (1965), 92-111.
- Pomeau, R. "De la Paix perpétuelle à la Nation armée." La Table Ronde (March 1960), pp. 73-85.
- Riley, Patrick. "Rousseau as a Theorist of National and International Federalism." Publius, vol. 3, part 1 (Spring 1973), 5-17.
- Shklar, Judith N. "Rousseau's Images of Authority." American Political Science Review, LVIII (December 1964), 919-32.
- Starobinski, Jean. "Tout le mal vient de l'inégalité." Europe (November-December 1961), pp. 135-49.
- Stelling-Michaud, Sven. "Ce que Jean-Jacques Rousseau doit à l'Abbé de Saint-Pierre," in Etudes sur le Contrat Social de Jean-Jacques Rousseau, pp. 35-45.
- Strauss, Leo. "On the Intention of Rousseau." Social Research, XIV (December 1947), 455-87.
- Wade, Ira O. "The Abbé de Saint-Pierre and Dubois." Journal of Modern History, 2 (1930), 430-47.

Weil, Eric. "J.-J. Rousseau et sa Politique." Critique, 8, No. 56
(January 1952), 4-28.

C. Collections of Articles

Entretiens sur Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Annales de la Société Jean-Jacques Rousseau, XXXV (1959-1962). Geneva: Jullien, 1963.

Etudes sur le Contrat Social de Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Actes des journées d'étude tenues à Dijon les 3, 4, 5, et 6 mai 1962.
Paris: Société Les Belles Lettres, 1964.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Yale French Studies, XXVIII (Fall-Winter 1961-1962). New Haven, 1962.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau et son oeuvre: problèmes et recherches.
Commémoration et colloque de Paris (16-20 October 1962). Paris: Klincksieck, 1964.

Rousseau et la philosophie politique. Annales de philosophie politique, special publication No. 5. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965.

D. Other Sources

Saint-Pierre, Charles François Irénée Castel, Abbé de. MS 7929,
Bibliothèque de la Ville de Neuchâtel.

ROUSSEAU AND THE PROBLEM OF WAR

CHRISTINE JANE CARTER

Rousseau accounts for the occurrence and persistence of war in terms of the gulf between nature and society, an opposition which provides the key to the understanding of his "system". Man, naturally independent and peaceably inclined, is drawn into conflict with his fellows as material changes force him into social relations and destroy natural equality. Out of this struggle, the state is born, in the desire of the few to secure and legitimate their domination over the many. Far from ending the state of war, the tyranny thus engendered shifts the focus of conflict from the individual to the body politic. Rousseau thus presents a philosophy of history which has a moral purpose: to enable man to judge of the evils of his condition, and to provide a standard of right by which he might work to change it. However, Rousseau is a realist, acutely aware of the complex processes which shape social and political institutions over time, and of the powerful interests which operate to maintain the status quo. Hence he cannot share the optimism of the rationalist Abbé de Saint-Pierre that princes may be persuaded to bring an end to the state of war in Europe by founding a confederation. Rousseau's view is that effective action must be preventive: an Emile may be raised in social isolation, a small state may perfect its republican constitution whilst shielding itself from the corrupting world of international politics. Equality and self-sufficiency are the only bases on which peace amongst men can be founded; the tragedy of Rousseau's vision is that this can never be universally realised. Whilst men are morally impelled to seek ways of meliorating conflict or of transcending it within the state, there is no final answer to the problem of war.