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► **To cite this version:**

| Christophe Salvat. Freedom and Rationality: Rousseau on Citizenship. 2008. halshs-00216204

**HAL Id: halshs-00216204**

**<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-00216204>**

Preprint submitted on 24 Jan 2008

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**Document de Travail**  
**n°2007-24**

## **FREEDOM AND RATIONALITY: ROUSSEAU ON CITIZENSHIP**

**Christophe Salvat**

**December 2007**

**DT-GREQAM**

# FREEDOM AND RATIONALITY: ROUSSEAU ON CITIZENSHIP

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## SUMMARY

This paper deals with Rousseau's idea of freedom in terms of rationality and deliberation. It gives support to Berlin's interpretation of the general will as a rational and objective will but dismisses the idea that Rousseau's theory necessarily leads to authoritarianism. The general will, publicly expressed by the law, may be defined as the rational and self-regarding will agents would have if put in an independent and objective state, *i.e.* the state of nature. The general and the particular will, henceforth considered from an individual point of view, theoretically constitute two alternative choices for an agent. A special focus will then be placed on the function of the law in the process of individual deliberation. By signalling the general will, the law urges individuals to deliberate and to question the autonomy of their preferences. I shall argue that citizenship denotes for Rousseau the tendency of individuals to favour the general will and to master their natural weakness of will. The achievement of citizenship, however, strongly relies upon man's identification with the community, *i.e.* patriotism, and upon the emotions stirred by the potential death of the body politic.

CLASSIFICATION JEL : B11. B31. D60

MOTS-CLEFS : Rousseau ; Rationality; Freedom ; Deliberation, Emotions.

# FREEDOM AND RATIONALITY: ROUSSEAU ON CITIZENSHIP

## INTRODUCTION

In *Political Ideas in the Romantic Age*, a book published posthumously, Isaiah Berlin refers to Rousseau's philosophical system as 'a monstrous paradox' (Berlin 2006:124). The superior standard of rationality, embodied by the general will and expressed by the law, contravenes for Berlin the basic principle of autonomy upon which relies Rousseau's very idea of freedom, subsequently justifying all authoritarian regimes. If I admit the idea that there is an objective 'good', then how can I not want it? And if I don't, to what extent may I be forced to act in my best interest? Berlin's response, supported by his reading of John Stuart Mill, was to fully dismiss Rousseau's idea of positive liberty. This article has been instigated by the conviction that, although Berlin rightly interpreted Rousseau in terms of rationality, the conclusions he drew on freedom were incorrect. Rousseau's system is not as paradoxical as Berlin presented it.

The main argument, upon which this thesis relies, is that freedom, far from being a systematic obedience to the general will, can be conversely defined as the continuous exercise of man's capacity of deliberation. By actively expressing a preference for the rational will, individuals learn to master their own dependence consisting of their socially induced preferences (heteronomy), their passions and their natural weakness of the will. In the civil society, man can only be freed through the political institution of the law, which expresses this rational standard and urges individuals to deliberate. The condition in which man succeeds to govern himself through the political community is here referred to as citizenship. Its achievement however strongly relies upon man's identification with the community, i.e. patriotism, and upon the emotions stirred by the potential death of the body politic.

## 1. STANDARD OF RATIONALITY AND SELF-REGARDING PREFERENCES

The first step towards citizenship is paradoxically a logical step back towards a pre-social, or rather an a-social, state where individual idiosyncrasy no longer exists; a state “which no longer exists, which perhaps never did exist, which probably never will exist” (Rousseau 1997b:125). Moral autonomy, understood as intellectual self-sufficiency, constitutes a logical requirement to objectivity and, subsequently, to rationality. This strictly objective, rational and independent standpoint, reinvented by John Rawls (Rawls 1971), is referred to by Rousseau as a state of nature, in consideration of the long tradition of natural right that preceded him, and despite the unusual meaning he conferred to the expression (Derathé 1995). It basically epitomizes for Rousseau the idea of self-regard.

The ideas of otherness, difference and comparison are thoroughly absent from the state of nature. By contrast with the civil state, Rousseau draws a distinction between a self-regarding and an other-regarding type of self-interest, that he respectively terms *amour de soi* et *amour-propre* (Rousseau 1964b : 219). This famous distinction between the objective and ‘natural’ idea of self-interest and its subjective and social equivalent has sometimes misleadingly been interpreted from a genealogical perspective. *Amour-propre* has indeed widely been considered as the outcome of the transformation throughout history of the once innocuous form of self-interest, *amour de soi*. Most of Rousseau’s commentators, with the exception maybe of Durkheim, Cassirer and Berlin, accordingly considered his analysis of human nature in a historical context. Victor Goldsmith and Robert Derathé, for instance, in their outstanding and authoritative studies of Rousseau’s works, respectively presented self-interest and reason through an evolutionary process marked out by developmental stages (Derathé 1948, 1995; Goldschmidt 1983)<sup>1</sup>.

I want to suggest here that, far from being two historically defined forms of self-interest, the distinction between *amour de soi* and *amour-propre* (as the one on particular and general will developed below) embodies the theoretical opposition between an autonomous and a

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<sup>1</sup> Derathé, aware of Rousseau’s discrepancies but reluctant to give up his genealogical stance, is led to conclude that “the passage from the state of nature to the civil state, or in another way from a purely instinctive to a rational life, remains the weakest part of Rousseau’s system” (Derathé 1948:19, our translation). In the same vain, Victor Goldschmidt, vainly looking for the precise transformation point from *amour de soi* into *amour-propre*, proposed a third and intermediate category, which he incongruously called ‘disinterested egotism’ (Goldschmidt, 1983, pp.452-457).

heteronomous form of self-interest (or will). One must admit that Rousseau himself adopted a very ambivalent position in the *Discourse on Inequality* by simultaneously asserting the hypothetical status of the state of nature and by giving to his discourse a narrative form. *Amour de soi*, “a natural sentiment which inclines every animal to attend to its self-preservation” (Rousseau 1997b:218), represents the idea of self-interest that one would imagine it to be the one of the state of nature. Free of personal comparisons and social representations of the self, *amour de soi* meets the common and premium interest of all human individuals that have been expressed by the natural law, the principle of self-preservation. On the other hand, *amour-propre* is “only a relative sentiment, factitious, and born in society, which inclines every individual to set greater store by himself than by anyone else, inspires men with all the evils they do one another, and is the genuine source of horror” (Rousseau 1997b:218). It is the civil, and for the great majority of men, the only possible conception of self-interest they are capable of. Rationality, in this respect, is in direct causal relation with self-regard.

Other-regarding preferences (with the notable exception of pity to which I shall later return) present for Rousseau substantial adverse effects on rationality and freedom. The first factor to take into account here is heteronomy, or the fact that individual preferences are largely subjected to or determined by external sources such as public opinion. Social differences, otherwise called moral inequalities because they are subjective and relative, are directly linked to the degenerating competition for esteem or wealth which characterises the civil society (Rousseau 1997a:166; Viroli 1988). Like personal bonds, built upon these comparisons, initiate in men an insatiable need to dominate what will eventually subjugate them all, citizenship cannot be soundly conceived from individuals’ particular standpoints. Heteronomy originates, for Rousseau, from man’s social urge to be admired and compared to others: “As ideas and sentiments succeed one another, as the mind and the heart grow active, Mankind continues to grow tame, contacts expand and bonds tighten. [...] Everyone began to look at everyone else and to wish to be looked at himself, and public esteem acquired a price. The one who sang or danced the best; the handsomest, the strongest, the most skillful, or the most eloquent came to be the most highly regarded, and this was the first step at once toward inequality and vice” (Rousseau 1997a: 166). In absence of a legitimate political institution that recognizes all members of the society as equals, public admiration offers an instant, though precarious, membership to the community. Because of the primary need of social bonds, individuals are consequently driven to shape their own preferences (or skills) by the

community's standards, or at least to pretend to be socially acceptable. One of the immediate consequences of this, cunningly pointed out in the *Discours sur les Sciences et les Arts*, is that superior skills or tastes are downgraded to fit with the preferences of the average man. The literary works of Voltaire thus illustrate, says Rousseau, the extent to which a man of genius has to constrain his own talent to please the majority of people. By subjecting my preferences and will to the ones of others, I become morally dependent on them and I am therefore unable to realize myself as I would like to. The society, by embracing or excluding its members according to external judgment, *de facto* deprives them of their freedom.

Moral dependence is also reinforced by economic development, though exchanges are not *per se* a cause of moral dependence (Salvat 2007b). Blinded by self-delusion, individuals are oblivious of the moral and economic dependence they gradually assent to in order to satisfy their egocentric and competitive passions. Driven by a quasi obsessive desire to be admired, individuals venture into frenzied, expensive and unnecessary spending, which is based on socially imposed preferences. The widening division of labour, which results from this process, reinforces in turn the individuals' interdependence. Conspicuous consumption, such as luxury and fashion, represents a collective irrational behaviour that leads to a distortion of agricultural-industry prices. It appears then for Rousseau that, when individuals are directed by other-regarding preferences and social norms, exchanges are always unfair, ineffective and socially harmful. It has sometimes been argued on these grounds that Rousseau favoured autarky. This idea must however be substantially qualified. The *idea* of autarky provides an imaginary standpoint where man is isolated, self-sufficient and subsequently morally autonomous (Salvat 2007b). Autonomy is an impossible, and most certainly undesirable, state to achieve and one would certainly be mistaken to consider isolation and autarky, taken both from an individual and a national perspective, as Rousseau's political response to

dependence<sup>2</sup>. Economic exchanges have an adverse influence on men's freedom and equality and should be reasonably controlled to avoid any further depravity<sup>3</sup>.

## 2. PARTICULAR VS GENERAL WILL

The first section addressed how Rousseau's idea of the state of nature, and the subsequent distinction between a self- and an other-regarding type of self-interest he developed in the *Second Discourse*, emphasised man's self-deception and weakness of will. The gap between *amour de soi* and *amour-propre*, it has been argued, explains how the civil society impairs individual rationality. A second and, as far as the idea of freedom is concerned, a much more significant antagonism in Rousseau's system, is further introduced in the *Social Contract*: the antagonism between the particular and the general will. They will eventually represent two opposed alternatives of the individuals' deliberation.

The particular will represents the actual, the impassionate and the other-regarding expression of self-interest which is based on inter-personal comparisons (Rousseau 1997a: 166). The particular will, which should not be confused with the individual one, accordingly refers to the will of a passionate and socially embedded self. It singles out personal specificities, however real or affected they may be, and subsequently tends to increase social inequalities. The general will, on the contrary, denotes the rational and socially autonomous will of a theoretical self. It has been studied by countless scholars, but one of its most stimulating and penetrating accounts ironically remains the one given by Rousseau's prominent opponent, Isaiah Berlin. Acutely depicting the general will as the most disinterested part of individual will, Berlin maintains that the individual will forms a theoretical and dispassionate standpoint,

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<sup>2</sup> Fictions, through an identification process, partake in the rationalisation of self-interest. Robinson Crusoe, for instance, embodies for Rousseau the archetype of autonomy. Reading Daniel Defoe's book, through the identification to his character, encourages the reader to reason from this objective, though unreal, standpoint. As paradoxical as it may appear, imagination then contributes to rationality when individual reasoning is impaired by socially induced heteronomy. *Emile or of Education*, in turn, can be considered as a new philosophical version of Robinson. Emile's apprenticeship to moral autonomy, experienced through his identification with Robinson Crusoe, the unique (text)book he is allowed to read, *de facto* mirrors the relationship the reader is experiencing himself when reading *Emile* (Salvat 2007a). A similar argument could be sustained for the almost autarkic domestic economy of Clarens in *La Nouvelle Héloïse* often mistakenly regarded as Rousseau's ideal form of economic organization.

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, the economic measures advocated in the *Discourse of Political Economy*, the *Considerations on the Government of Poland and on its Proposed Reformation*, and the *Constitutional Project for Corsica*.



referred to as the state of nature, which he associates with rationality. The general will is, within the context of the community, the most objective or impartial standpoint one may get on both self-interest and common interest. Unimpaired by social passions and unaffected by external preferences, the general will is “always upright and always tends to the public utility” (Rousseau 1997a:59). It is the will I, as an individual, *could* express from the rational and objective standpoint that Rousseau refers to as the state of nature.

As a rational and ‘objective’ expression of man’s will, the general will is by definition common to all. Considering men as equal, it focuses only on the common features of community members and on the part of self-interest that individuals all have in common. This is the will I *could* share with all those in the same conditions. The general will is called ‘general’ in consideration of its object, the general or common interest of individuals: “just as a particular will cannot represent the general will, so the general will changes in nature when it has a particular object, and it cannot, being general, pronounce judgment on a particular man or fact” (Rousseau 1997a:62). For this reason, the general will also expresses the preferences of the community considered as a body politic. The term ‘general’ in Rousseau’s writings refers both to the unspecific focus of the will, and to the widespread agreement of the members of a community. Though these two meanings logically overlap, they should not be confused. In the *Social Contract*, Rousseau unmistakably distinguishes the general will from a widely held particular will and states that “what generalizes the will is not so much the number of voices, as it is the common interest which unites them” (Rousseau 1997a:62). Once rational and autonomous, general wills logically converge to the common basics, self-preservation and freedom in particular, but they always remain self-regarding.

Subjective comparisons between individuals, as previously stated, are inseparable from the civil society and its numerous wrongdoings, including the most important of them, the loss of man’s original freedom. But, contrary to the stoics, Rousseau does not believe politics or philosophy capable of changing men’s nature. He confines his own task to looking for “some legitimate and sure rule of administration, *taking men as they are*, and the laws as they can be” (Rousseau 1997a: 41, I underline). His scepticism about man’s ability to reason<sup>4</sup> is at the

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<sup>4</sup> Pierre Force recently outlined a terminological distinction between *reason* and *reflection* which, to some extent, could be useful to tell apart the idea of reason in the state of nature from the activity of reasoning in the civil state (Force 2003). This distinction would then echo the above distinction between love of one-self and self-love. Unfortunately Rousseau never gave sufficient evidences to support this interpretation and, most of all, Force’s genealogical perspective is from our point of view a misleading one.

very basis of his idea of an institutionally achieved rationality. In addition to their limited cognitive faculty, he considers men to have been too long subjected to self-delusion and deceit. By supporting and representing deceptive social standards of rationality, freedom or even beauty, “ordinary men” have been misled by those who took advantage of it. In the first discourse, as in the second, self-delusion hit first and foremost the intellectually, socially and economically weakest part of the people. The false pact of the second *Discourse* institutes political domination by the rich, which relies on the incapacity of the weakest to act on behalf of their objective interest. Blinded by envy and flattery, unable to master the art of rhetoric, the poor deliberately accepted the loss of their liberty to serve and obey the rich<sup>5</sup>.

The law, it will be argued in this paper, conveys the rational and autonomous standard, namely the general will, which man is unable to reach by himself. Freedom, however, differs from a mere commitment to the general will. It requires a *deliberate* and repeated choice for individuals to extract themselves from moral dependence, and to overcome their passionate and self-destructive desires: “Only then, when the voice of duty succeeds impulsion and right succeeds appetite, does man, who until then had looked only to himself, see himself *forced to act on other principles, and to consult his reason before listening to his inclinations.*” (Rousseau 1997a: 53; I underline). The process, by which individuals master their self-destructive passions and act by reason rather than by inclination, is referred to by Rousseau as ‘généralisation’ (Riley 2001; Bernardi 2006). It constitutes one of the most difficult and challenging issues raised by his political philosophy. Rousseau himself compared it to squaring circles (Riley 2001: 124). The issue of generalisation actually introduces the possibility of the general will impinging upon the particular will, which subsequently brings up the problem of legal interferences on individual freedom. The possibility of legal despotism broached by Berlin rests upon the ultimate and definitive identification of particular and general wills (Berlin 1969; 2002). The interpretation I want to defend here is that Rousseau’s idea of freedom excludes this identification, and that freedom characteristically refers to deliberation.

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<sup>5</sup> A similar idea is defended in the *Discourse on the sciences and the arts* where Rousseau rashly states that the sciences, letters and the arts “less despotic and perhaps more powerful” than politics “spread garlands of flowers over the iron chains with which they are laden”, make men “love their slavery, and fashion them into what is called civilized Peoples” (Rousseau 1997b: 6).

### 3. FREEDOM, DELIBERATION AND LAW

The idea I want to suggest here is that the permanent and inherent opposition between the general and the particular will, introduced in the first part, urges individuals to deliberate between these two representations of their interest, and to ultimately make the choice of reason. In order to develop this idea, I shall address two critical issues, the extent to which particular wills can lead individuals to make the rational and ‘objective’ choices (*generalisation*), or to state it another way, to act according to the general will, and secondly the part played by the law in this process (*deliberation*).

The process of bringing objectivity into individuals’ wills, though ethically and rationally justified, seemingly undermines the idea of autonomy and self government, which primarily defines the republican idea of liberty, and may logically lead to political paternalism and despotism (Barnard 1988). Isaiah Berlin, in particular, notoriously claimed that Rousseau’s opposition of an ‘ideal’ or ‘true’ will to the ‘untrue’ will experienced in reality “is one of the most powerful and dangerous arguments in the entire history of human thought” (Berlin, 2006, 124). The point he cogently raised about generalisation is that, if one accepts as true the idea that it is possible to identify what is *objectively* good for all individuals, then one implicitly legitimates any enforcement of the general will for their own good (Berlin 1969). Berlin’s analysis of Rousseau is, I believe, very insightful yet misleading. His association of positive liberty with totalitarianism has undisputedly – but unduly – prevailed since (Hampsher-Monk 1995, Spitz 1995). The claim I want to make however, is that the rational standard embodied in the general will never stands as an individual norm nor does it jeopardize individual freedom. Instead of differentiating a ‘true’ from a ‘non-true’ interest, as suggested by Berlin, the concepts of the particular and the general will actually sanction the distinction drawn between a factual and subjective will and an objective and counter-factual will as shown in the previous section. Individuals are always and necessarily moved by their particular will.

I have presented so far the general will from a sheer individualistic perspective that, though very insightful, left no room for Rousseau’s political philosophy. Reintroducing the idea of the general will as a common interest is now necessary to understand how the community contributes, especially through the law, to individuals’ rationality. However I shall not develop the bottom-up relationship from the individuals’ will to the general will nor the

related political issues on public deliberation and representation (Chapman 1968, Qvortrup 2003, Bernardi 2006). I assume here, with Rousseau, that the nature of the law is to express the general will. Freedom, argues Rousseau, should not be confused with a simple obedience to the law. In total opposition to the partisans of negative liberty, Rousseau claims that individuals' freedom is made possible *by* the institution of the law. Rousseau's concept of freedom, unlike Berlin's, entirely focuses on the source of control of individual action. I am free if I control my actions, and to some extent the institutional limits of my action, through democratic participation, for instance. This last feature has been often and unduly considered as characteristic of the republican tradition. Benjamin Constant, in particular, greatly contributed to this confusion when he compared to the liberty of the ancients, which he associated with political participation, and for which he presented Rousseau as a prominent defender, to the liberty of the moderns. Supported in particular by Quentin Skinner's works, Pettit pointedly denied that authors commonly acknowledged as republican – such as Machiavelli, Price, Priestley, Hamilton and to some extent Rousseau<sup>6</sup> – defined liberty by democratic participation. Political participation, for these authors, arises as a means to institutionally guarantee personal dependence, but does not represent *per se* a basic condition for individual freedom. Pettit forcefully demonstrates that freedom consists of a particular state, in which non-interference is not fortuitous, but guaranteed by the institutions – termed by Pettit as a state where you enjoy non-interference 'robustly or resiliently' (Pettit 1997: 24). The republican idea of freedom, defined by Philip Pettit as non-domination, focuses on the *guarantee* that individuals are not subjected to arbitrary interferences. What really matters, from the perspective of an individual, is the *potential* interference he may be subject to. This guarantee *may* be provided by legitimate political institutions and democratic participation. In a similar way, numerous interpretations, which were often based on Rousseau's admiration for ancient republics, overvalued the role of political participation in his thought (Qvortrup 2003).

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<sup>6</sup> Philip Pettit is reluctant to include Rousseau within the republican tradition he claims affiliation with. Though the idea of liberty as non-domination is based on sovereignty, it should not be confused, says Philip Pettit, with the idea of positive liberty embodied by Rousseau. Being non-dominated does not imply being able to govern oneself. Non-domination, like non-interference, stresses the *absence* of external action or potential action on someone's life, but never actually questions the autonomy of individual will. Rousseau's concept of freedom basically differs from Pettit's on one major point: republican freedom is concerned about potential domination upon individual actions when Rousseau's concept of freedom concentrates on the domination upon individual preferences (heteronomy). Individuals free themselves from dependence in deliberately making the choice of rationality.

By publicly expressing the general will as a rule for all, the law actually fulfils three functions; it expresses to individuals their 'objective' interest, it forces them to deliberate, and potentially, it gives them authority over themselves. The law, firstly, *signals* their rational and objective self-interest to all those who are not capable of such an abstraction. Rousseau is fairly pessimistic about man's innate rationality. The law conversely represents the rational, autonomous and minimal will of all individuals taken as equals. These characteristics become common knowledge through the institution of the civil society and the common assent to the social contract. The law consequently provides, and is publicly acknowledged for providing, each individual's objective and minimal interest so that everyone's autonomy is preserved. However heteronomous and socially induced my preferences are, and to whatever extent they make me morally dependent, the presence of the law always offers me the choice of autonomy (Salvat 2007a). It gives me the opportunity to act rationally (even though I may not be a rational being) but it never compels me to do so.

The presence of the law, secondly, urges individuals to make a choice, either to yield to their inclinations, or to renounce them and obey the law. From a Kantian perspective, freedom is always to be preferred by the rational agents that Williams describes as 'committed to being free' (Williams 1985: 65). But, for Rousseau, rationality does not suitably account for the motives of individuals. If people were rational, they would not need the law in the first place. In fact, Rousseau believes people to be continuously struggling between their desires and their duties, between what they subjectively assess as desirable and what they recognize as being their objective interest. It is 'natural' for individuals to experience differences between their inclination and the prescriptions of the law. "As a matter of fact, writes Rousseau in Chapter I, Book II, of the *Social Contract*, "if it is not impossible for a particular will to agree with the general will on some specific point, at least it is impossible for that agreement to be constant and durable; for the particular will tends by its very nature to partiality, and the general will to equality. Even if this agreement did remain constant, it would be the result not of skill but of chance, and it would be even more impossible to guarantee that it would continue to do so." (Rousseau 1997a: 57).

Judith Shklar and Patrick Riley, in particular, correctly emphasized the voluntary feature of Rousseau's political philosophy. In the *Discourse on Inequality*, for instance, Rousseau refers to "the power of willing or rather of choosing" of individuals (quoted by Riley 2001:128). In *Emile*, he asserts that Providence "has made [man] free in order that by choice he do not evil

but good. It has put him in a position to make this choice by using well the faculties with which it has endowed him” (Rousseau 1979:281). This voluntary or active feature of freedom logically implies the possibility for men to make the wrong choice, or not to deliberate at all. History of mankind, such as depicted in the *Second Discourse*, thus illustrates man’s responsibility for his own predicament; “if man is active and free”, says again Rousseau in *Emile*, “he acts on his own. All that he does freely does not enter into the ordered system of providence and cannot be imputed to it.” (Rousseau 1979:281). For Rousseau, even if there is only one ‘good’ alternative (I am theoretically not free to not want my own good), I must *actively* and *freely* choose it. If I don’t, I bear the entire responsibility of it : “I am active when I listen to reason, passive when my passions carry me away; and my worst torment, when I succumb, is to sense that I could have resisted” (Rousseau 1979:279). Therefore individuals become free by acquiring the power to overcome their weakness.

Rousseau opposes the *force* of the law to the weakness of man. The nature of the law is to give the individuals the power not to depend on any external will, but to act according to their own (Hope Mason 1995). Self-deception and weakness of the will, which are ‘naturally’ inherent in man in civil society, prompt individuals to incongruously favour dependence instead of freedom, and this partly accounts for the long history of man’s ill-advised choices related in the *Discourse on Inequality*. By instituting an authority on oneself, the law provides a fundamental means for man to overcome his natural weakness of the will. Judith Shklar pertinently referred to Rousseau’s philosophy as individualism of the weak in opposition to Locke’s individualism of the strong (Shklar 1969). In spite of the legitimacy of its authority, respect for the law essentially relies on the individual’s strength of will, which Rousseau associates with virtue. Being virtuous, or being a citizen, means to be able to master one’s own weaknesses. “My child”, says the preceptor to Emile, “there is no happiness without courage nor virtue without struggle. The word *virtue* comes from *strength*. Strength is the foundation of all virtue. Virtue belongs only to a being that is weak by nature and strong by will. It is in this that the merit of the just man consists; and although we call God good, we do not call Him virtuous, because it requires no effort for Him to do good. [...] Who, then, is the virtuous man? It is he who knows how to conquer his affections; for then he follows his reason and his conscience; he does his duty; he keeps himself in order, and nothing can make him deviate from it. Up to now you were only apparently free. Learn to become your own master. Command your heart, Emile, and you will be virtuous.” (Rousseau 1979: 444-45).

For Rousseau, freedom results from the *deliberate* choice of the general will. It is only through deliberation that individuals free themselves from their passive subjection to other's wills, and by the same token from their own passions. The institution of a legitimate law gives the control of decision making to individuals, or to borrow Riley's phrasing "to endow human beings with a will, a really efficacious 'power' of choosing" (Riley 2001: 146). This has been referred to by Rousseau as the civil state moral freedom (*liberté morale*) "which alone makes man truly the master of himself; for the impulsion of mere appetite is slavery, and obedience to the law one has prescribed to oneself is freedom" (Rousseau 1997a: 54). But, as noted by John Mason Hope, an individual's weaknesses may not to be fully overcome in civil society but, through a republican political institution, the individual may find a reasonable balance between his social desires and his civil and rational duties (Mason Hope 1989). I shall hereafter refer this state as citizenship.

#### 4. CITIZENSHIP AND PATRIOTISM

The idea of citizenship I want to introduce now denotes the ability of an agent to reach a reasonable balance between his desires and his duties and to satisfy his immediate and social preferences without eventually endangering his own capacity of choice. Citizenship thus refers to a fragile equilibrium between individuals' heteronomous preferences and their commitment towards rationality. Man's commitment to the political institution is weak since it only rests upon one's commitment towards oneself. The rational and moral dimensions of the general will do not constitute a sufficient incentive for men to deliberate in their best interest. The question to be addressed now is: to what extent the legitimate institution of a body gives individuals the strength they need to be virtuous (and henceforth rational)? Or, to say it another way, how does the law force men to be free? The final section of this paper intends, in particular, to emphasize individuals' identification with the community and to address the intricate relationship between patriotism, emotions and freedom.

Citizenship, claims Rousseau in the *Discourse on Political Economy*, relies on two conditions, (public) education and patriotism. Education is usually recognised as fundamental in Rousseau's thought, and despite some qualms about whether it be public or private, most of

his commentators agree that education is the key to freedom in modern societies. Patrick Riley, in particular, considers that “any tension between ‘will’ and the authority that ‘generalizes’ it is only a *provisional* problem” to be solved through time by education (Riley 2001: 133). I would like to qualify this claim, and show that, though essential, education is not that determinant. First of all, as I previously argued, generalisation is not a process towards an eventual identification of the general and the particular wills. The tension between them is not ‘provisional’ but inherent to their opposite nature. Generalisation denotes the deliberative practice by which objective and common interest bear on particular wills. Education undeniably contributes to this by guiding men to set apart their objective and rational interest from their social and subjective desires, but it does not determine the outcome of the deliberation. Reason for Rousseau is not by itself an incentive to rational actions, it only provides the ability to deliberate. Rousseau is noticeably at odds with the Enlightenment’s faith in the universal and unlimited benefits of education. He agrees still that education, as a learning process of autonomous thinking, participates and to some extent conditions the achievements of a legitimate political institution, but it does not replace it.

Patriotism, on the other hand, can have an influence on the outcome of the deliberation. It creates a psychological association between individuals’ autonomous and self-regarding preferences and the interest of the body politic. As a patriot, I consider the preservation of the body politic as an *extension* of my own preservation, regardless of the fate of others citizens. Patriotism differs from subjective preferences based on comparisons and desires to be distinguished; since it is only concerned with the community’s preservation. Patriotism henceforth prompts men to deliberate in the sense of the general will, without determining its outcome. F.M. Barnard, in his essay on Rousseau and Herder, draws attention to the apparent contradiction of rationalities respectively conveyed by patriotism and citizenship (Barnard 1988: 55). The combination of citizenship that relies on reasoned deliberation, and of the non-rational sentiment of patriotism actually raises the question of the status of emotions in deliberation. Freedom, it has been argued, denotes individuals’ control of their passionate and impulsive nature through reiterated deliberations. Patriotism does not challenge the nature of citizenship, it contributes to it.

The mechanism by which individuals are shoved to rationality essentially relies, I want finally to suggest, upon the emotions induced by a potential threat on the body politic. Emotions, especially when related to death, play a fundamental role in the individual deliberation and in



upholding individuals' sovereignty and freedom. Sovereignty, which "is nothing but the exercise of the general will" (Rousseau 1997a:57), grows naturally and progressively weaker as men get more reluctant to individually strive for the freedom they collectively enjoy. Freedom requires, insists Rousseau, a permanent endeavour from every man "*to consult his reason before listening to his inclinations.*" The idea of death, with which Rousseau has been greatly concerned in his literary and political works, plays a predominant role in this process. It is observing the suffering of my fellow men and of their impending death that arouses in me the natural sentiment of pity in the state of nature, and hence "contributes to the mutual preservation of the entire species" (Rousseau 1997b:154). However pity is hardly to be met in civil societies<sup>7</sup> (Rousseau 1997b:268). The spontaneous impulse of the civil man is to care for what is close to him in preference to what is distant, since the feeling for humanity vanishes and weakens as it spreads out around the world (Rousseau 1964b: 254). A good political constitution aims to extend this capacity of reaction to the whole body politic. The analogy drawn from the family (Rousseau refers to the body politic as 'the large family' in the *Discourse on Political Economy*), notably participates in this process. The view of the 'death' of the body politic, considered both as a unity and as a group, echoes the individuals own death, laying a strong emphasis on their objective interest. The body politic, states Rousseau in book III of the *Social Contract*, "no less than the body man", is destined to die from the natural degeneration of the sovereign authority which Rousseau compares to the heart of the body politic. The emotion sparked by the prospect of the body politic's death acts as a sobering reminder of the individual's own vulnerability. Instead of representing a rational argument for deliberation, the ideas of vulnerability and death that Rousseau brings into play primarily aim to address individual's strength of will (Rousseau 1979:446). In this regard, Rousseau follows the Republican tradition, which from the Greek luck to the Italian *fortuna*, characteristically emphasizes the potential dangers menacing the community (Nussbaum 1986; Pocock 1975).

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<sup>7</sup> In the theoretical state of nature, pity is a universal emotion one experiences, through identification, before the suffering or the death of any member of the human species. It is a self-regarding feeling, since I see in the man in the weak position someone similar to myself, i.e. a member of the human species. In the civil society, however, individuals do not naturally identify with the others, and benevolence is pretty much limited to the family.

## CONCLUSION

Citizenship, according to Rousseau's analytical framework, requires three basic conditions to coincide, a standard of rationality, freedom of choice and an ethical incentive. The standard of rationality is expressed by the law. If not universal, it is conveniently equally shared by all the members of the community. The non-coercive nature of the law, secondly, guarantees that individuals consciously assent to the above standard of rationality. Lastly, the political community appropriately gives ethical incentives to its members by instilling in them the sense of belonging to 'a large family'. The likelihood of men identifying with the body politic depends on the strength of their affection for it, and on its ability to present itself as a political extension of their own self, both conditions are hardly met in modern societies. A good political constitution, thinks Rousseau, should then be designed to spur on patriotism. The analogy implicitly developed between the body politic and the family in the *Discourse on Political Economy*, despite Rousseau's hard stance against political paternalism, significantly contributes to its strengthening. The idea of vulnerability raised by Rousseau, notably through the death of the body politic, far from undermining his theory, plays a decisive part in structuring prudential practices that ensure the very possibility of citizenship. One could argue, however, that though patriotism is positive since it takes part in the generalisation of individuals' particular wills, it also relies on an arguable idealisation of family and its associated inequalities. To support patriotism, the State needs to create or reinforce a patriarchal culture. Compelling family policies, proposed for instance in the *Constitutional Project for Corsica*, are thus advocated by Rousseau despite their strong discriminating effects (Fraisse 2000, Pateman 1988). Rousseau's political philosophy, designed to remedy to the shortcomings of the Enlightenment's universalism, partly fails to free itself from the social and sexual prejudices that the domestic model conveys. This paradoxically proves how a system designated to defend the ideas of autonomy and equality can actually rely on traditional preconceptions of the family as a natural and unequal community.

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